

Toronto Fringe Reveals Programming for Next Stage Series

(February 19, 2025) **Toronto Fringe** is pleased to announce the 2025 **Next Stage Series** will be presented during the 37th annual **Toronto Fringe Festival** taking place July 2-13, 2025. The **Next Stage Series** will feature four shows including *Justice for Maurice Henry Carter*, and **BABZ JOHNSTON: Songs by a WANNABE** at Michael Young Theatre, and *Have Fun Kids*, and *Siranoush* at Tank House Theatre.

Next Stage Theatre Festival is the Toronto Fringe's boutique, curated performance festival that allows for elevation and creative risk-taking by notable emerging companies who are poised and ready for their next stage. In the new **Next Stage Series** model, Fringe audiences have the chance to experience four productions that are moving to the “next stage” of their development. The **Next Stage Series** participants will receive the same level of support to elevate their shows as previous Next Stage productions, including extended tech time, marketing support, and training and mentorship.

The 2025 Next Stage Series Line-Up: In Alphabetical Order

BABZ JOHNSTON: Songs by a WANNABE

Created by Barbara Johnston

Company: Wannabe

Producers: Alan Kliffer and Ann Merriam

Venue: Michael Young Theatre

Barbara (Babz) Johnston is back for the second instalment of her one-woman musical series. In *BABZ JOHNSTON: Songs by a WANNABE* we find career Spice Girls Impersonator (and award-winning theatre artist/writer and current *Mirvish Come From Away* company member) in a moment of reckoning as she chronicles the thrills and perils of a life lived in someone else's platforms.

Have Fun Kids

Written by Laura Anne Harris, Directed by Jessie Fraser

Company: Convection Productions

Venue: Tank House Theatre

At the edge of the event horizon is a tipping point, a place where memories hover for infinity, or so it seems, before they are gone forever. Featuring the words of Jordan Mechano, join storyteller Laura Anne Harris, (*Destiny, USA, Pitch Blonde*) as she invites you in to explore the edges of her own lived and inherited memories of loss and love.

Justice for Maurice Henry Carter

Written by Donald Molnar & Alicia Payne

Company: Arbez Drama Projects

Venue: Michael Young Theatre

Two men, one Black, one White, become brothers while fighting to overcome a wrongful conviction. A choir/chorus helps tell this true story through spirituals, hymns, and gospel music woven throughout.

Siranoush

Written by Lara Arabian, Directed by Carla Melo

Company: CorpOluz Theatre

Venue: Tank House Theatre

A multimedia, multilingual one-woman show that explores the writer/performer's desire to dig deeper into her cultural roots through a reimagining of Siranoush, a 19th century ethnic Armenian actress who was a trailblazer both on and off the stage. Tapping into ancestral knowledge and diasporic memory, the performance takes us across time and space to explore the power of theatre as a way of cultural survival and female empowerment.

Toronto Fringe previously announced it will create a new festival hub at Soulepper Theatre for the 37th annual festival. This new hub allows Toronto Fringe to host five performance venues in one building, including Soulepper's Michael Young Theatre, Tank House Theatre, Garland Cabaret, TD Studio, and RBC Studio, in addition to animating the atrium and courtyard with the legendary Fringe Patio, festival box office, and free ancillary programming.

The **Next Stage Series** was curated by the 2024 curation committee of Laura Paduch, Lucy Eveleigh, Derrick Chua, Virgilia Griffith, and Indrit Kasapi.

Toronto Fringe is a grassroots, charitable organization that runs the Toronto Fringe Festival each July and the Next Stage Theatre Festival. Toronto Fringe offers various year-round programs that benefit youth, emerging artists, BIPOC artists, artists with disabilities, and the performing arts community at large. Embedded in Fringe's operations are the values of Access, Accountability, Creativity, Exploration, and Support.

Toronto Fringe Festival

July 2-13, 2025

Next Stage Series Tickets are \$25

Tickets and passes on sale in June 2025

www.fringetoronto.com

Media Contact: Damien Nelson, Damien@wantandable.ca