

Jon Kaplan's Legacy Lives On at the Toronto Fringe Festival

Toronto Fringe Announces the New Young Reviewers Program, Supported by the Jon Kaplan Legacy Fund

June 8, 2021 (Toronto, ON) The Toronto Fringe is pleased to announce that one of its most cherished and innovative youth programs, the Teenjur Young Critics Program, is deepening its scope and sustainability this year **thanks to a generous investment from the Jon Kaplan Legacy Fund**. The program has been renamed as the New Young Reviewers Program and is currently recruiting applicants for the 2021 summer program. This program feels like the perfect way to honour Jon and the impact he had on Fringe artists, staff, and volunteers over the years. Jon was a fixture in the Fringe family, stewarding the careers of hundreds of emerging artists, and championing the festival in his column at NOW Magazine.

Jon never missed the Fringe. His promotion of the first Toronto Fringe in NOW Magazine, and his annual goal of seeing and reviewing as many Fringe shows as possible, set the reviewing standard for decades. Jon was always ready to offer constructive feedback to emerging festival artists, or cheer up tired festival staff with a smile and a hug when needed. And this support went on for nearly three decades. In fact, [here is a photo of Jon from one of the very first Toronto Fringe Festivals](#). (Eddie Roy, Jon and Ellen-Ray Hennessy c. 1989.) Photo courtesy of Gregory Nixon.

The New Young Reviewers Program (previously, Teenjur Young Critics), supported by the Jon Kaplan Legacy Fund, is a workshop series and writing group for emerging theatre and performance reviewers Canada-wide, ages 15 and up.

Led by **Signy Lynch** (Contemporary Theatre Review, Canadian Theatre Review, Intermission Magazine) and **Stephanie Fung** (Kingston Theatre Alliance, Canadian Theatre Review, Single Thread Theatre), this program will focus on introducing participants to the basics of theatre reviewing and help them develop responses to Toronto Fringe performances. It will also encourage participants to explore new, creative approaches to criticism that are emerging in the field, and to begin to define themselves as critics and reviewers. Participants will also award a Teen Spirit prize to one company from the Digital Toronto Fringe for the show that connects most with a teen audience.

Toronto Fringe has space for up to 10 participants in the New Young Reviewers Program. Cost to attend is FREE to participate and Fringe is offering a bursary of \$150 to each of those selected. [Learn more about the New Young Reviewers Program here](#).

From Don Cole, President of the Jon Kaplan Legacy Fund: "The Toronto Fringe was a great yearly celebration of theatre and one of Jon's favourite times of year. He darted across the city to catch multiple shows each day, socialized in the tent, chatted with people in line to share opinions about what to see, connected with friends who were performing, and always made sure to seek out the year's best new artists and shows. We're honoured to continue Jon's love of the Fringe, and his legacy as a beloved arts writer, through our support of the New Young Reviewers Program."

From Lucy Eveleigh, Executive Director of the Toronto Fringe: "I am so pleased to be able to find such a natural partnership between our program and the Jon Kaplan Legacy Fund. I miss seeing Jon around the Fringe so much. Being able to keep such a close connection alive means a great deal to me."

About the Jon Kaplan Legacy Fund:

For over three decades, theatre reviewer Jon Kaplan wrote about and celebrated Toronto theatre. He was a strong supporter of young artists and diverse voices. Following his death in 2017, the Jon Kaplan Legacy Fund was created to provide recognition and financial support for theatre makers at all stages of their careers.

About the Toronto Fringe:

Toronto Fringe is a grassroots, charitable organization that runs the Toronto Fringe Festival each July, the Next Stage Theatre Festival each January, and 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.

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