

## Announcing the 2019 Next Stage Theatre Festival

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\*\*\*Please add to all listings.

Toronto, ON (September 11, 2018) – The **Next Stage Theatre Festival**, Toronto’s boutique winter theatre festival, returns this January. Curated by the **Toronto Fringe**, twelve shows will be presented for the festival’s 12<sup>th</sup> anniversary, **showcasing strong voices and well-written new plays**. The festival will take place at the **Factory Theatre** and a site-specific venue from **January 9 to 20, 2019**.

This year, the Toronto Fringe **broadened the eligibility criteria** so that any artist or company who had been involved in a Canadian Association of Fringe Festivals (CAFF) show in any capacity, and could demonstrate their connection to Fringe, were welcome to apply. Because of this change, a **record number of applications** were received from companies across Toronto and Canada.

**Lucy Eveleigh**, Executive Director of the Toronto Fringe, explains, “Next Stage is a festival known to the loyal Fringe audience and other local patrons of the arts as a taste-maker for the Toronto indie theatre and performance scene. Because of the intimate nature of this festival, it gives us a chance to curate and present a selection of shows that we know to be of high quality, and that we hope will speak to the importance of the arts in our community, our city, and our lives.”

The 2019 line up focuses on important stories told well. In ***Dinner with the Duchess***, a new play by Dora and Sterling award-winning playwright **Nick Green**, a retiring violin virtuoso gives her final interview to a young, up-and-coming music journalist of colour. ***Cannibal*** by first-time playwright **Thom Nyhuus** is a terrifying and fascinating exploration of relationships, centred around a woman whose hit play borrows from her own experience of losing a child. Playwright, director, and Fringe favourite **Ali Joy Richardson** presents her newest play, ***A Bear Awake in Winter***, exploring bullying and sexual assault in a Dartmouth, Nova Scotia high school band room. The premiere of a new play written and performed by Toronto legends **David S. Craig** and **Richard Greenblatt** is the first site-specific show presented as part of Next Stage. ***Athabasca*** is a tense thriller which takes place in an office tower in Fort McMurray, where an oil executive and a journalist turned environmental activist are locked in a life-or-death struggle. Details for the site-specific venue will be announced when tickets go on sale in November.

Race relations and cultural mis/understanding are themes explored in shows by companies from across the country. ***Foreign Tongue***, a new musical by Toronto-based/former Yugoslavia-born **Lola Xenos**, shows the “New Canadian” experience from the point of view of a Canadian woman who has a stroke and awakes up with a heavy Russian accent. After the death of their son, an immigrant Chinese couple in **Minh Ly’s *Ga Ting* (家庭)** invites their son’s Caucasian boyfriend to dinner. This will be the second show at Next Stage to feature English and Cantonese dialogue with English surtitles. In ***Lucky*** we meet Nina, a first generation Filipina-Canadian whose struggle with her parents’ expectations results in wildly dangerous consequences. Montreal-based playwright **Marie Leofeli Barlizo** drew inspiration for this play from the true crime story of Jennifer Pan.

The audience experience enters the superstitious and mysterious with award-winning magician **Nicholas Wallace** in his new show ***Strange and Unusual***, which features an illusion that fooled even Vegas magic icons Penn & Teller.

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Audience participation is encouraged in *Lauren & Amanda Do It*, a sex talk show hosted by Ottawa performers **Lauren Cauchy** and **Amanda Logan**. And *Raising Stanley / Life with Tulia*, a collaboration between storyteller **Kim Kilpatrick**, painter **Karen Bailey**, and director **Bronwyn Steinberg**, is an accessible theatre experience utilizing storytelling and video with audio description to tell the story of guide dogs, those who use them, and those who raise them. Vancouver-based artist **Diana Bang** asks her audience to witness the transformation and coming-of-age of a Korean-Canadian woman in her mid 30s in *Possessed*. And finally, Gene Kelly's life and times are given new life by young dancers and singers in the 2018 Toronto Fringe hit, *Anatomy of a Dancer*.

### General Information:

The 2019 Next Stage Theatre Festival runs from **January 9-20, 2018** at **Factory Theatre**, 125 Bathurst Street. Shows will play in the Mainspace, Studio, Antechamber, and one site-specific venue (location TBA).

### Tickets:

Advance tickets and passes available as of **November 26, 2018**. Next Stage **Early Bird savings of 15%** can be accessed for single tickets until December 7, 2018. Tickets can be purchased online at [www.fringetoronto.com](http://www.fringetoronto.com) or by phone at 416-966-1062. Tickets are \$15 for Mainspace, Studio, and site-specific shows (60-90 minutes), and \$12 for Antechamber shows (30 minutes).

### Schedule:

The 2019 Next Stage Festival Schedule will be available by the end of November. For more information visit [www.fringetoronto.com](http://www.fringetoronto.com)

For all media inquires, contact Toronto Fringe Communications Manager, Tessa Cernik, at [communications@fringetoronto.com](mailto:communications@fringetoronto.com) and 416-966-1062 ext. 225.

## Factory Theatre Mainspace

### Anatomy of a Dancer

Presented by: [Breakaway Entertainment](#)

Creative Director/Choreographer: Adam Martino

Genre: Dance

#### About the show:

"You dance love, and you dance joy, and you dance dreams. And I know if I can make you smile by jumping over a couple of couches or running through a rainstorm, then I'll be very glad to be a song and dance man." - Gene Kelly. *Anatomy of A Dancer* pays homage to one of North America's most influential performers, Gene Kelly. Kelly's life and career are reinterpreted for the twenty-first century stage by Toronto-based musicians and dancers. Featuring well-loved hits like "Singing in the Rain" and "I Got Rhythm", this show will have you dancing in the aisles.

#### About Adam Martino:

Adam Martino has worked in the entertainment industry for over 25 years, working with many of the top choreographers and companies in North America and overseas. In addition to performing and choreographing,

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Martino is a faculty member at many of Toronto's top dance schools, including City Dance Corps and Millennium Dance Complex, teaching the next generation of song and dance men and women.

**Why you should see it:**

*Anatomy of a Dancer* premiered at the 2018 Toronto Fringe Festival. NOW Magazine called the production "smartly constructed; the ensemble numbers genuinely rousing, and the Kelly cannon is nothing if not toe-tapping."

### **A Bear Awake in Winter**

Presented by: [Binocular Theatre](#)

Playwright/Director: Ali Joy Richardson

Genre: Drama

**About the show:**

2007. Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. A high school band class. A new teacher from Toronto wants to be an inspiration to his jaded students, but is afraid to come out to them. A boy bullies a girl in deeply insidious ways until she takes matters into her own hands. An act of violence at a school dance fractures and frightens the community. This is a dark, funny, and difficult story about the fight to stand up for yourself. 7 actors, 6 band instruments, 1 week in which their world goes sideways.

**From Ali Joy Richardson:**

"This play scares me: it lives unapologetically in my hometown and my personal teenaged years. It exposes parts of my heart that are still confusing and embarrassing to me. I feel like I should have all that sorted by now, but most days I still feel I am choosing a tricky balance of being publicly political and personally private, much like the characters in *A Bear Awake in Winter*."

**Why you should see it:**

Ali Joy Richardson's latest work, *How to be Fearless! (With Roxy Roberts)*, premiered at the 2018 Toronto Fringe Festival, to sold-out houses. She currently serves as the Artistic Producer of the Paprika Festival, is a member of Nightwood Theatre's 2018 Write from the Hip playwriting unit, and was a director in residence through Canadian Stage's 2018 RBC Emerging Artist Program.

### **Dinner with the Duchess**

Presented by: The Duchess Collective

Playwright: Nick Green

Director: Geordie Johnson

Dramaturg: Marjorie Chan

Genre: Drama

**About the Play:**

*Dinner with the Duchess*, a riveting new play from Dora and Sterling Award winning playwright Nick Green, explores

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sexism in a world of classical music, contemporary race relations, and the high price of creating art through a look into tumultuous life of a renowned violin virtuoso. With a powerhouse performance by Margaret, the virtuosic retiring violinist, better known as "the Duchess," this psychological drama is a thrill ride for anyone who's ever dared to pursue their dreams.

### **More about the playwright:**

Nick Green is a Dora and Sterling Award-winning playwright. The author of 15 plays and musicals, his work focuses largely on historical and contemporary issues related to sexuality and gender in Canada.

### **Why should you see it?**

Most recently, Nick's play *Body Politic* enjoyed a successful run at Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, produced in collaboration with lemonTree Productions, winning the 2017 Dora Mavor Moore Award for Best New Play and a nomination for Best Production of a Play.

## Foreign Tongue

Presented by: playinc.

Book & Lyrics: Lola Xenos

Music: Daniel Abrahamson

Additional Music: Justin Hiscox

Genre: Musical

### **About the show:**

A musical comedy about first generation immigrants and the Canadian who becomes one of them. Kathy Woodrough, a young, busy, single urban professional, experiences a stroke, falls into a coma, and upon awakening six weeks later, discovers that she speaks with a thick Russian accent. Her diagnosis is Foreign Accent Syndrome, a real medical condition that leaves her mistaken for a refugee. Through her experience as a "New Canadian", Kathy finds true love and friendship, but can she face the consequences of her clumsy lie?

### **More about Lola Xenos:**

Lola Xenos is an immigrant to Canada from former Yugoslavia and she speaks English with an accent. Her inspiration for *Foreign Tongue* came from a [2010 article in the Toronto Star](#) about a real case of the very rare Foreign Accent Syndrome. *Foreign Tongue* is her first full-length musical and has received three workshops at the Ryerson School of Performance to great acclaim.

### **Why you should see it:**

As Xenos puts it, "Humor is our tool in exposing all brands of stereotypes. Music is our tool of bringing harmony to diverse voices literally and figuratively. We play with stereotypes that result from marginalization and discrimination because of the way someone speaks English, but also cultural stereotypes and those based on gender (to name a few)." Don't miss how this musical comedy examines the translation of humour across cultural divides.

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### Strange and Unusual

Presented by: Flat Earth Global

Director/Co-Creator: Luke Brown

Performer/Co-Creator: [Nick Wallace](#)

Genre: Magic

**About the show:**

From the creative team behind the stage show *SÉANCE*, illusionist Nicholas Wallace explores the world of conspiracy theories, superstition, psychics and all things strange and unusual. Borrowing from the world of Hitchcock and the *Twilight Zone*, *Strange & Unusual* is a unique mixture of storytelling and illusion. It is an interactive exploration of how and why humans are hardwired to believe in “weird things”, and a celebration of the importance of mystery.

**From the co-creators:**

“The question a magician gets asked more than any other is ‘how did you do that?’ But there is a far more interesting question to ask: why? Magic as a performance art is one of the strongest forms of theatre. It is very rarely pushed to this limit, but it can be a tool used to explore a larger idea, it can be a spontaneous form of participatory theatre, and there is great irony in using deception to reveal a greater truth.”

**Why you should see it:**

Nicholas Wallace is an award-winning illusionist who most recently fooled legendary Las Vegas magicians Penn & Teller on their hit television show, *Fool Us*. He has been named the Canadian Champion of Magic by the Canadian Association of Magicians, and is the 2018 recipient of the Allan Slaight Award for Canadian Rising Star.

## Factory Theatre Studio

### Cannibal

Presented by: Scrap Paper Theatre

Playwright: Thom Nyhuus

Director: Courtney Ch’ng Lancaster

Producers: Annie Clarke and Emma Westray

Genre: Drama

**About the show:**

Bridget Walker has written a hit new play about the abduction of her son. Critics are raving. Those closest to her are sent reeling. *Cannibal* explores the cost of sharing your own story, the collective nature of grief, and what it means to be indebted to someone you love. It is a story of surviving the unsurvivable.

**More from the company:**

“The goal of Scrap Paper Theatre is to reflect today’s audiences: our wishes, our anxieties, the pressing issues of today, all examined in our own distinct and complex voices. There is an entirely new generation of young people

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with their own set of values, ideals, and concerns, and we want to explore these new realities through a lens designed to entertain, invigorate, and inspire.”

**Why you should see it:**

*Cannibal* gives action to ideas that at the present time exist mostly in quiet conversations between friends. Ideas full of contradictions, that lead to questions, impossible to get to the bottom of. One of the most striking aspects of the play is the questions it asks about relationships: why we are in them, what it means to be in them, and what binds us to other people.

## Ga Ting

### 家庭

Presented by: The Ga Ting Company and The Artillery Collective

Playwright: Minh Ly

Director: Aaron Jan

Genre: Drama

**About the show:**

*Ga Ting*, Cantonese for “family”, is a powerful and emotionally charged story about an immigrant Chinese couple coming to terms with the death of their son, Kevin. When Kevin’s Caucasian boyfriend is invited for dinner after the funeral, the evening devolves into a fiery cultural and generational clash. It is one family’s struggle to accept their son as he was, not as they wished him to be.

**From Minh Ly:**

“Playwrights have written so-called ‘gay plays’ with gay themes and issues. However, I have not experienced a piece that is specific to the cultural issues I have grown up with in regards to homosexuality. Homosexuality is totally taboo in many communities. It is not accepted, talked about, or even recognized to exist. Sexuality and cultural clash frame this piece, but the universal themes of communication, loss, regret, and acceptance connect with anyone.”

**Why you should see it:**

*Ga Ting* has been produced twice in British Columbia: first at the Richmond Cultural Centre in Richmond, BC, with a second mounting presented by the Cultch in Vancouver, BC. This presentation at Next Stage will be *Ga Ting*’s east coast debut, and it will be the second show at Next Stage to use both Cantonese and English dialogue with surtitles, after the 2017 hit *Silk Bath*.

## Lucky

Presented by: barlizo productions

Playwright/Producer: Marie Leofeli Barlizo

Director: Sophie Gee

Genre: Drama

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### **About the show:**

Nina, a Filipina who feels she can no longer meet her parents' high expectations, decides to end it all. But when she meets Sylvain, a former skinhead and subway train driver who suffers from PTSD, she tempts him with an offer that could solve all her problems. As Sylvain begins to realize that Nina is not who she claims to be, he too must face the question: can we ever break free of our past to become who we truly want to be? Inspired by the [2010 true crime committed by Jennifer Pan](#), a young Vietnamese woman from Toronto.

### **From Marie Leofeli Barlizo:**

"*Lucky* explores the stereotype of Asians being the model minority – submissive, intelligent, and well-behaved. It is a dangerous stereotype, suggesting that if Asians are successful, despite the challenges of immigration, then racial discrimination doesn't exist. It also causes rifts between the various cultural communities (and underprivileged whites) because it seemingly elevates Asians to a higher status. This in turn erases Asian stories and the issues we face as a community."

### **Why you should see it:**

*Lucky* is an exploration of how fear of the "other" affects the perception and treatment of immigrants, and how cultural expectations can affect happiness and self-esteem. It is a topical story to be told in Toronto.

## **Raising Stanley / Life with Tulia**

Presented by: Raising Stanley / Life With Tulia Collective

Storyteller: Kim Kilpatrick

Painter: Karen Bailey

Director: Bronwyn Steinberg

Genre: Storytelling

### **About the show:**

What is life like working with a guide dog? How was that dog raised? *Raising Stanley / Life With Tulia* vividly documents the journey from puppy to working guide dog for the blind. It is a multi-disciplinary theatrical collaboration by storyteller Kim Kilpatrick, painter Karen Bailey, and director Bronwyn Steinberg that delves into issues of identity, accessibility, and canine service.

### **From the creators:**

"Our priority is to create a theatrical experience that is tailored for audiences that include visually impaired and deaf members as well as those that are sighted and hearing. Whether your experience is through sound, sight, or the combination of both, you are fully included in the stories, the paintings and even the stories that led Karen to do the paintings."

### **Why you should see it:**

This production offers totally accessible experience that both informs and entertains while establishing a model for accessibility in the arts. Utilizing video and audio description, this show takes on a new, innovative format. Plus, you can't go wrong with a dog on stage.

## Factory Theatre Antechamber

### **Lauren & Amanda Do It**

Presented by: [Toasted Theatre Company](#)

Creator/Performer: Lauren Cauchy

Creator/Performer: Alli Harris

Creator/Performer/Producer: Amanda Logan

Genre: Talk Show

#### **About the show:**

Afternoon delight, hanky panky, souring the kraut. Doin' It. Join Lauren, Amanda, and musical accompanist Alli in a late-night (or mid-day) award-winning talk show all about sex positivity. Think *The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon*, but with one hot lesbian as The Roots, and two rad babes as Jimmy. Every show, a new special guest will be interviewed about their sex life.

#### **About the company:**

The idea for *Lauren & Amanda Do It* came after a car ride conversation between the two leads about hand jobs and slut-shaming. Through the shows development, it became clear that Lauren and Amanda were creating something more than a silly sex show. They were creating and facilitating important, open discussion so necessary in the post-#MeToo era.

#### **Why you should see this show:**

*Lauren & Amanda Do It* took home the Jury's Choice Award from the 2017 Ottawa Fringe, and rave reviews from audience and critics alike. Come every night of the festival to see different guests discuss different topics.

### **Possessed**

Presented by: Classy Little Bitch Productions

Playwright/Performer: [Diana Bang](#)

Director/Dramaturg: Dawn Milman

Genre: Performance Art/Theatre

#### **About the show:**

*Possessed* digs into the psyche of a Korean-Canadian woman in her mid 30s during a point of crisis. She calls upon spirits, ancestors, and gods to help guide her at this critical point in time. With influences from sketch comedy, Vancouver-based performer Diana Bang sets up a ritual towards empowerment and a new kind of womanhood. It is a coming-of-age story that asks the audience to be witnesses to her transformation.

#### **More from Diana Bang:**

"This piece is an intimate, messy, in-your-face, movement-heavy ritual/rite of passage towards empowerment. We meet a woman on her 35th birthday feeling grief over her state in life, having lost a relationship, her career and not

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living up to the expectations of women her age. In other words, she has lost faith in herself and is in the midst of a crisis. I want the audience to reach a communal catharsis through an expulsion of laughter and tears.”

**Why you should see it:**

Bang’s one-woman-show *SELF-ish* received a NNNN review for its presentation at the 2017 Toronto Fringe Festival. She is also a founding member of Canada’s premiere Asian sketch comedy group, Assaulted Fish.

### Site-Specific (location TBA)

#### **Athabasca**

Presented by: [Convergence Theatre](#)

Playwright/Performer: David S. Craig

Playwright/Performer: Richard Greenblatt

Director/Producer: Aaron Willis

Dramaturg/Producer: Julie Tepperman

Genre: Drama

**About the show:**

*Athabasca* is a provocative new drama from award-winning playwrights David S. Craig and Richard Greenblatt. In an office tower in Fort McMurray, an oil executive is suddenly confronted by a desperate journalist turned environmental activist determined to do whatever it takes to shut down the Athabasca Oil Sands.

**From the creators:**

“We recognize that this is a story told by two older white men. The oil executive is of his time and status, and the journalist is an ex-hippie, lefty environmentalist who is equally from a position of privilege. The generation of aging Boomers is responsible for much of the mess we find ourselves in now. Their legacy is up for scrutiny, and they are the most appropriate – and responsible – protagonists.”

**Why you should see this show:**

Big Oil, carbon emissions, and climate change are all front-of-mind for Canadians, especially in the wake of the court ruling against the Trans Mountain Pipeline expansion. Don’t miss this theatrical interrogation of politics and human effects on environment from two of Canada’s finest playwrights.

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