

Next Stage Launched the 2019 Theatre Season with Sold-Out Shows and Electric Buzz

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

January 21, 2019, Toronto, ON – The twelve days of the annual **Next Stage Theatre Festival** created some of the **best theatre buzz in the city**. With many sold-out shows, increased revenue and attendance, and excellent reviews, the 2019 festival was the second best selling in its 12-year history.

Produced and curated by the **Toronto Fringe**, this year's festival included the **most ever productions from outside of the GTA**. Shows in the line-up hailed from Ottawa (*Raising Stanley / Life with Tulia, Lauren & Amanda Do It*), Montreal (*LUCKY*), and as far away as Vancouver (*Possessed*). Next Stage also introduced a **site-specific show** into the festival for the first time ever to great success. **Athabasca**, by Toronto-favourite Convergence Theatre, sold-out its entire run, creating an immersive experience in an office at 77 Mowat Avenue.

Hits like *Ga Ting* (by Minh Ly), *Cannibal* (by Thomas Nyhuus), *Foreign Tongue* (book & lyrics by Lola Xenos, music by Daniel Abrahamson & Justin Hiscox), and *Lauren & Amanda Do It* (written & performed by Lauren Cauchy & Amanda Logan) also played to sold out houses, bringing the total number of sell-out shows to 26, including 3 on the opening night of the festival and 8 on the closing weekend. The Toronto Fringe is very proud to be able to return over **\$97,000** to the productions and the festival, an increase of **13%** from 2018. Attendance to the festival also increased by **10%** from 2018 with almost **3,000** performance-lovers bundling up and making their way through freezing wind, snow, and severe weather warnings to take in the shows, purchasing over **7,900** tickets.

Next Stage in the Media:

In addition to the buzz in the Toronto theatre community, the 2019 Next Stage shows received lots of positive critical praise from media outlets. [NOW Magazine](#) gave the highest amount of Ns to a Next Stage Festival in recent years, including 7 NNNN reviews. [The Toronto Star](#) reviewed half of the shows in the festival to great acclaim, describing the productions as "significant entertainment", some even "deserving of a longer run".

Accessibility at the Festival:

Following the mandate of the Toronto Fringe to increase accessibility to their festivals, Next Stage 2019 included a number of assisted performances and special accommodations for patrons. *Raising Stanley / Life with Tulia* (a collaboration with storyteller Kim Kilpatrick, painter Karen Bailey, and director Bronwyn Steinberg), shared stories of guide dogs and accessibility with **open audio description** incorporated into all performances, and **large format and Braille programs** available for patrons.

Lauren & Amanda Do It offered **relaxed measures** for all performances in their run, so patrons had the freedom to make noise, come and go as needed, and feel comfortable in a less restrictive theatre environment. **ASL interpretation** was offered at one performance each of *Raising Stanley / Life with Tulia* and *Cannibal*, and **closed audio description** was offered at one performance of *Ga Ting*. All measures were very well received by patrons, and helped introduce a new community to Next Stage and to Fringe as a whole.

NEXT STAGE

A One-Night-Only Fundraiser Performance:

Tracey Erin Smith premiered her new solo show *Thin Places* on the final night of Next Stage. She performed to a packed house of donors, board members, artists, and friends, and **raised over \$5,000** for the Toronto Fringe. The performance was preceded by free samples of food and drink provided by Steam Whistle Brewery and the Paddock Tavern, and a champagne toast for Visionaries' Circle donors.

What's Next for the Toronto Fringe:

With Next Stage wrapped up, we turn our attention to planning the 2019 Toronto Fringe Festival. Stay tuned for new programming initiatives and an expanded free music fest at POSTSCRIPT, the Fringe Patio at the Scadding Court Community Centre, reflecting the diversity and artistry of our community.

Save the date:

Toronto Fringe Festival
July 3-14, 2019

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