

Next Stage Kept Audiences Warm with Critically-Acclaimed Hits and Sold Out Houses

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

January 15, 2018, Toronto, ON – Over 12 days of record-breaking winter temperatures, **7300** performance-lovers bundled up and made their way through the snow and freezing rain to kick off their 2018 with ten of the best theatre, dance, and comedy productions in the city. The **Next Stage Theatre Festival** continues to be a highly anticipated event where artists and patrons alike can cozy up together at the Factory Theatre to experience ground-breaking performances.

Next Stage 2018 was **one of the best-selling festivals** in recent years, and the Toronto Fringe is very proud to be able to give back **\$86,000** to the ten production companies and the festival. There were a total of 25 sold out performances during the twelve days of the festival, including many sell-outs for new musical *Rumspringa Break!* (book by Matt Murray, lyrics by Akiva Romer-Segal, music by Colleen Dauncey) and *Leila Live!* (written and performed by Izad Etemadi), and an almost completely sold out run for *Good Morning, Viet Mom* (written and performed by Franco Nguyen).

Highlights

Next Stage in the Media:

The 2018 Next Stage shows received lots of positive critical praise from local and national media outlets. [NOW Magazine](#) gave **the most amount of Ns** to a Next Stage Festival in recent years, including 8 NNNN reviews. The [Globe and Mail](#) praised the “minimalism” of productions at Next Stage (and Fringe festivals in general), stating that seeing **“dance and theatre stripped to their very basics”** is a favourite part of the festival as the high quality of performances shine through. [The Toronto Star](#) recognized Next Stage’s importance as **a gathering place for the theatre community** in Toronto, particularly this year amid the tumult of allegations of assault at theatres and schools in the city.

Community Engagement:

The two [#UrgentExchanges](#), hosted by our partners at **Generator**, ignited conversations with over 100 members of the performance community over two days. Topics of diversity, accessibility, and financial models in independent theatre were discussed by a panel of speakers on January 4. On January 6, Generator facilitated an open community discussion in response to the allegations of assault by Albert Schultz and the lawsuits brought forward by former Soulpepper performers, before diving into presentations on seven different models for change in response to the #MeToo movement.

In collaboration with the production team of *JONNO*, the Toronto Fringe facilitated two **“Safe Space”** sessions at Jimmy’s Coffee on January 10 and 11. As the Next Stage play included depictions of sexual assault and themes of consent and victim-blaming, these sessions offered audience members a chance to sit quietly and reflect on the production, or participate in an open discussion with playwright Alix Sobler, director Paul Van Dyck, and the cast. Both sessions were very well attended and provided another opportunity for dialogue around the issues our community is currently facing.

NEXT STAGE

A Special Fundraiser Performance:

Martin Dockery performed his hit one-man-show *Delirium* on Saturday night, January 13, to a full house of donors, board members, artists, and friends, for a tremendously successful fundraiser, kicking off the **30th anniversary of the Toronto Fringe** in 2018. The performance was preceded by free samples of food and drink provided by Steam Whistle Brewery, the Paddock Tavern, and Panago Pizza, and a champagne toast for Visionaries' Circle donors.

New life for Next Stage shows:

Franco Nguyen's *Good Morning, Viet Mom* **was the runaway hit** of the 2018 Next Stage, and has been announced as part of Cahoots Theatre Company's 2018/2019 season. This reworked production of his sold-out 2017 Toronto Fringe show *soaring in liquid skies* captured the hearts of audiences with its humour and poignancy. It's third iteration will surely be another great success!

What's Next for the Toronto Fringe

With Next Stage wrapped up, we turn our attention to planning the 2018 Toronto Fringe Festival and celebrating our 30th year by looking forward to the bright future of the Fringe in our city. Stay tuned for new programming initiatives at our pop-up Fringe Patio at the Scadding Court Community Centre at Dundas and Bathurst, reflecting the diversity and artistry of our community.

Save the date:

The 30th Annual Toronto Fringe Festival
July 4-15, 2018

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