

Ottawa Fringe Festival
FRINGE 101 notes
January 16, 2017

GENERAL INFO

The Ottawa Fringe

The Ottawa Fringe Festival is one of about 25 Fringe Festivals across Canada and the United States. We are a member of the Canadian Association of Fringe Festivals (CAFF). To be a member of CAFF we must follow the core principles of the organization:

1. Participants will be selected on a non-juried basis, through a first-come, first served process, or lottery;
2. 100% of net box office revenue is returned to artists (revenue minus applicable taxes and ticketing fees)
3. Fringe Festival producers have no control over the artistic content of each performance. The artistic freedom of the participants is unrestrained.
4. Festivals must provide an easily accessible opportunity for all audiences and all artists to participate in Fringe Festivals.

The Ottawa Fringe has been around since 1997, making it one of the younger to middle-aged festivals on the circuit. This will be our 21st Fringe, and the culmination of our 20th anniversary celebrations!

This year the Ottawa Fringe runs Thursday June 8 – Sunday June 18, with our Preview Night Party on Wednesday June 7.

The Line-up & Lottery

The majority of the line-up is determined via lottery (which already happened) and BYOV applications (which are ongoing, deadline Feb 13)

We tier our lottery geographically, holding 50% of our spots for local companies (Ottawa-Gatineau); 30% for national (anywhere in Canada not Ottawa-Gatineau); and 20% international (anywhere not in Canada). This year we received 177 lottery applications for 42 lottery spots

CAFF Lottery

If you're interested in touring, CAFF also holds a lottery which allows you to apply to all the festivals you're interested in participating in with one application (though you have to select a minimum of 5 festivals to qualify). This lottery is held in the fall before individual festivals hold their own lotteries.

BYOVs

BYOV stands for “bring your own venue”. If you don’t know, a BYOV is a venue or location outside the regular indoor venues that the Fringe Festival operates and programs via the application lottery. Companies may choose to participate in the festival as a BYOV if their work is site specific, or if they were not drawn in the lottery but are still interested in mounting a production as part of the Ottawa Fringe Festival.

In the past some BYOVs have been Café Alt, Studio 311 in the UofO Department of Theatre, Mercury Lounge, St. Paul’s Eastern United Church, and The Courtroom in Arts Court.

2017 Festival

Festival dates are June 8-18.

This is slightly earlier than in past years (one week, to be exact). We moved our dates to accommodate the Canada150 madness that will sweep the city in June/July this year.

Staff

The Ottawa Fringe has a year-round staff of 7, which are:

- Patrick Gauthier, Festival Director
- Heather Marie Connors, General Manager
- Emily Carvell, Associate Festival Director
- Kimberly McCarthy-Kearney, Marketing and Communications Coordinator
- Ted Forbes, Technical Director
- Chantal Hayman, FOH & Volunteer Manager
- Kevin Waghorn, Managing Director

We also hire 20+ additional seasonal staff members to assist with the running of the festival in May/June.

Volunteers

In addition to our paid staff, the Fringe relies HEAVILY on our volunteer base of about 250 per year. Volunteers do jobs as varied as working box office and FOH (what we rely on them for most heavily), information for audiences, surveys, Fringe Club security, and data entry.

We thank our volunteers by offering them one free admission for every 3-hour shift they work.

Please treat them with respect - they’re doing this for free and for the love of theatre, after all - and if you have any volunteer issues please contact either myself, or Chantal Hayman.

We’re always looking for volunteers as well! If you would like to join the team, email volunteer@ottawafringe.com or fill out our application form at www.ottawafringe.com/volunteer.

Forms to be filled out

Letter of Agreement: which outlines the Festival's responsibilities to you and you to the Festival, will be available in the spring; you need to submit this to us – signed – before we will release your money in June.

To make the festival happen we require information from you - this helps with venue assignments as well as publicizing your show.

For all of you here there are some forms to be filled out online:

But where can you access these forms?

Performers Page

We've set up a performers page on our website (go to <http://ottawafringe.com/performers/>) or go to our website and scroll to the bottom and you'll see a link.

The page has archives of past Artist Communiqués, venue info, as well as the Producer's Handbook – and other useful links and info. It will be updated regularly as we approach the festival, so check back every couple of weeks.

Note: only the Primary Contact receives our Artist Communiqués (and will be the only person we communicate with). Please let your other company members know about the performers page, or fwd them the communiqués.

On that performers page is...

Producer's Handbook

This is a document that's been a long time coming. It's your one-stop place for all the info you need to produce your show at the Fringe. This workshop is hitting all the highlights, but I would encourage everyone to have a read and share with other members of your company.

Artist Check-In

Each company must check in at the Fringe Festival office before their technical rehearsal to pick up your welcome package, and sign your letter of agreement with the festival.

Check in times will be sent out in May.

Budgeting

We get a lot of questions asking about budgeting - should we make a budget? The answer is YES!

Last year, the average house for Festival productions was 33.25/performance (remember that's the average), and average revenue was \$1700 - take that into account when putting together a budget.

Some shows obviously do make more and less than that - last year's highest grossing show made about \$8500 – this is very unusual – with 3 other shows making \$3000+ and the lowest grossing was about \$475 – so there can be a wide range.

DON'T PLAN THAT YOUR SHOW WILL BE A HIT. Budget conservatively - think about the above numbers or about 30% of your venue size as a starting point. Be surprised when your show sells out and you rake in the cash.

Since you have limited time for set-up and tear down (more on that later) it's best to keep your set/costume/prop elements minimal anyway.

Fundraising

If you want a bigger budget, think about fundraising as part of your pre-Fringe process. Hold it early (before April) to give yourself a sense of what kind of budget you may have. Be realistic in how much you can raise though: one fundraising party won't net you \$2000.

You may want to consider crowdfunding – we recommend FWYC (Canadian, lowest platform fees of any crowdfunding site; fwyc.ca); IndieGogo & Kickstarter are also popular options.

Billeting

We try as hard as possible to provide all out of town artists with a free place to stay while they're in Ottawa. If you're interested/able to take in a performer (or two) during the festival it would help the festival out, and also be good karma (you never know if you may be on tour one day and need a place to stay)

We make sure to match guests and hosts appropriately, and most are happy with whatever you can provide (a bed or couch or even an air mattress). As a token of appreciation all hosts are provided with an all access VIP pass to the Fringe.

We will be sending out billeting info in March, please consider hosting a performer if you have the space.

Festival Awards and Rideau Awards

Each year the Fringe assembles a jury who are tasked with seeing all the shows and determining our closing night awards. We'll continue this in 2017.

Festival artists will have the opportunity to opt in or out of consideration for the Festival awards. Opting in means opening up up to 10 comps for festival jurors to see your show. Opting out means you won't be considered.

The Rideau Awards are Ottawa's professional theatre awards. If you would like to submit your Fringe show for consideration you must apply by April 1. To check eligibility go to <http://www.prixrideauawards.ca/>

Best of Fest

One company from each of our regular venues (i.e. not BYOVs) that has the highest percentage of sales after their first four performances will be named BEST OF FEST and will receive an extra performance on the closing night of the festival.

Best of Fest shows are a fundraiser for the Fringe, with 50% going to the artist and 50% for the Fringe.

Let us know during check-in if you want to be considered. If you're not available the evening of June 26 you won't be eligible.

WHAT WE PROVIDE and WHAT YOU PROVIDE

You are responsible for creating your show and bringing it to the festival, and this includes all required set, costumes, and props you may need. You are also responsible for your show-specific marketing including posters, handbills, press release and whatever else you may want to do.

We provide you with technician (regular venues only), box office and ticket sales, front of house services/volunteers, and general festival marketing through the Fringe Program and other various avenues.

THIS IS IMPORTANT: you are responsible for marketing your show. We do general festival marketing, and will often make interesting pitches to media about specific groups of shows (e.g. couple of years ago there were two plays about God being staged in churches), but the majority of your marketing needs to be done by you.

The Fringe Program

The program is the main piece of marketing we create, which features all 55ish shows in the festival. Each company only gets about 1/6 of a page, and about 1/3 of that space is dedicated to your show times and dates.

What you put in the program is very important - it's the audience's first encounter with your show, usually. Make good use of your 60ish word description, and make sure you have a good image

Venues and Scheduling

This year the Ottawa Fringe will have five regular venues, just like 2016. They are:

- Arts Court Theatre

- Academic Hall
- Studio Léonard-Beaulne
- ODD Box
- La Nouvelle Scene, Studio B

Companies receive six performances over the course of the festival, with a mix of early evening, prime time, late night, and matinee performances. The Ottawa Fringe never schedules performances before 5:00 pm on weekdays. All of our venues sit between 65-170 people.

Each company will be assigned a venue based on their filling out of the Technical Questionnaire, and assignments are determined by your technical needs, cast size, availability, and so forth.

We make every reasonable effort to accommodate your availability when putting together the schedule (and of course, the more notice you give us the better), however, we make no guarantee that all requests will be honoured, especially those that are created due to an actor being in multiple shows.

BYOV companies are able to set their own schedules, but those schedules must be sent to and approved by the Fringe. The Fringe holds the right to change, edit, or completely schedule all performances in a BYOV.

The Fringe Club

Those of you who have Fringed before have likely been to what we've called the Courtyard/Fringe Club/Beer Tent. Last year it was at Club SAW for week two of the festival, and we used various locations in week one.

This year, we're still exploring our options as to where it will be, as SAW will be torn up as part of the continuing redevelopment of this building.

The Fringe Club is the Hub of the festival. It's where audiences and artists come to meet, chat, and relax. It's a great place to network, meet other festival artists, and promote your show.

We encourage you to spend as much time there as possible!

Preview Night/Preview Party

Preview night will be held in Arts Court Theatre on June 7. Admission will be free and any performers wishing to perform/pitch 2 minutes of their show will be welcome to do so.

Following the previews will be a party in the Arts Court Studio.

Box Office and Ticketing

We collect all ticket revenue on behalf of artists and return 100% of their sales to them.

Tickets are \$12 to all performances.

There will be surcharges on advance tickets - \$2 per ticket.

Audience members can purchase a FourPlay package - 4 tickets for \$40 (plus surcharges). This is only available online in advance, and FourPlay packages will only be on sale until 11:59pm on June 8. Artists get \$10 for each FourPlay ticket sold.

We also offer 5, 10, and 20-show passes: these are available to audiences who want to see multiple shows – you get \$8.50 per ticket. These can only be used at the door.

The Ottawa Fringe has a “no latecomers, no refunds, no exceptions” policy. Since some of our venues are unable to accommodate latecomers, we keep this policy as equal as possible. Even if you say it’s okay to let latecomers in, we won’t allow it.

Since your box office is your own we don’t offer refunds (if say someone bought an advance ticket and was late). You, however, are free to refund their money if you choose.

How to get Tickets

Tickets are available on our website, over the phone, or at the Main Fringe Box Office (located on the second floor of Arts Court) about one month before the festival; 100% of tickets will be available for purchase in advance.

Tickets can be purchased:

- Online, 24 hours a day at ottawafringe.com; up to 11:59pm the day before the show
- At one of our Box Office (Main, SLB) up to one hour before the show
- At the venue, one hour before the show

Complimentary Tickets

Since you get all the money from your Box Office, you get to decide how many complimentary tickets are handed out for your show. The Fringe does provide passes to accredited members of the media and VIPs (which includes staff and sponsors), which must be honoured at the door. Besides that you can decide how many comps to offer to per performance and how they can be claimed (a list, a password, whatever). We offer several types of comp tickets:

All artists reserve the right to set a limit on the number of complimentary tickets. This information must be given to your box office volunteers 1 hour before every show. If you don’t tell them anything they will assume there is no limit.

- **Company/Artist Comps**

Comps decided by you. These can be for your friends, your sponsors, family, whoever.

To give these comps out you can provide us with a comp list, or set a password that people must use. It is your responsibility to communicate this with FOH.

Putting someone on your comp list does not guarantee them a ticket. They must still come and pick it up. If they arrive and your show is sold out, too bad for them.

- **Volunteer Comps**

The festival couldn't run without its volunteers, and as a way of thanking them volunteers are "paid" by receiving one free ticket for each shift they work;

- **Media Passes**

For accredited online, print, and radio/TV reporters and reviewers. Note: that every time a media pass is used for your show doesn't always mean a review will follow. Some media may be following up on stories, or may have already interviewed you and are now coming to see your show

We make every effort to make sure media aren't using their passes to see shows they don't intend to cover. Those found abusing the passes will have them revoked.

- **Promo and VIP Passes**

Promo Passes are for contest winners and private/corporate sponsors; VIP Passes go to Fringe jury members, billets, artistic directors, funders, board members, and staff

The ticket revenue is yours and you have the ability to accept/limit comp tickets at your performances.

However, we will not put a cap on media and VIP passes, because we do not want to risk not letting in a reviewer or a sponsor that paid for the venue you're performing in to see your show.

Fringe Pins

Since 100% of ticket revenue is returned to the performers, the Fringe needs to find a way to bring in some cash. Since ticket fees are revenue neutral, we sell Fringe pins.

Pins are a \$3 one time purchase, and are required to see any Fringe show. It doesn't matter if you're seeing one show or 15, you gotta have one. And if you lose it, you need to buy another.

Special pricing

In past years we have offered companies opportunities to set a special ticket price for a particular performance they are looking to draw an audience to. This year we will again be offering artists a chance to set one performance at 50% off (this is optional, of course).

Volunteer Appreciation: we also encourage artists to schedule one "volunteer appreciation show" where volunteers can get in free without the use of one of their vouchers. If you schedule

this show early in your run it often helps attract more attention to your show (volunteers love to talk about what shows they've seen).

Artist Payout

"But how do I get my money?" you're probably asking. Artists will receive their ticket revenue in two payouts: one on June 13 (covering all performances June 8-11) and one June 20 (shows June 12-18).

You'll also be provided with daily email reports as to how your tickets are selling, so you'll know where you stand financially. Note that these reports only cover sales through our website and box offices. Tickets sold at the venue will be reported when you receive your cheques.

Payouts will be by cheque only and cheques will be made out to the name you gave us when you applied to the festival

FOH Policies

1. Fringe shows always start on time

If a show starts late, it will end late and that can create a domino effect for the rest of the days programming in that venue and others. It means that patrons and media will be racing to their next show. We understand that in live theatre things are ever-changing and sometimes this results in your show running longer than anticipated. You will be given a warning the first time it happens. If it happens a second time, even by a minute or two, your technicians have the authority to "pull the plug" - lights up, doors open, and audience exiting no matter where you are in the show. When you are rehearsing your show, please remember that applause, laughter and bows all take up time, which is considered part of your allotted time.

2. No Latecomers and no Re-entry (as described above)

ABSOLUTELY NO LATECOMERS ARE ADMITTED AND THERE IS NO RE-ENTRY. This rule is non-negotiable. In some of our venues, it is extremely disruptive if audience members enter once a show has started – so to keep things fair across the board (and to prevent someone from saying "but they let me in late at Arts Court Theatre!") we don't allow latecomers anywhere.

It is also a safety concern - because our ushers are volunteers, we cannot guarantee that we will have enough to staff each venue so patrons will be exiting and re-entering in darkness. This applies to you, your director, your producer, your agent, your family and your best friend. Once the doors are closed on a show they stay closed. Anyone who leaves a show, for any reason, will not be re-admitted. If your guests are driving, strongly suggest that they give themselves extra time to park and to use the washroom beforehand as necessary. Please take this rule seriously, there are no exceptions.

3. No Refunds (again, as above)

THE FRINGE DOES NOT ADMINISTER REFUNDS. If a patron has already purchased a ticket for a show, they will not be allowed to enter after the show has started (no latecomers admitted). Often, in such cases, ticket-holders demand a refund. The Venue Manager will not issue any refunds - the box office revenue belongs to you, so it is you who decides whether refunds will be given, or comps issued for another performance. If the patron demands a refund, the Venue Manager will refer them to your FOH representative to deal with. We ask that you contact them regardless of your decision, but it is your decision.

4. Show Turn Over

The following is a breakdown of how show turn-over works:

END OF SHOW

10 MINUTES: Audience exits theatre/Company strikes show

10 MINUTES: Next Company sets up show

10 MINUTES: Audience Enters

START OF NEXT SHOW

If a show is sold-out and the house manager is concerned about getting the audience loaded into the theatre in a timely manner, the venue technician might ask if the audience can begin taking their seats during the last 5 minutes or so of your set-up. If your show is the last show of the day, you must still strike and be out of the theatre in your 10 minutes as our technicians have to close down the theatre and end their shifts.

BORING STUFF NO ONE WANTS TO THINK ABOUT

Taxes

ALL companies are responsible for collecting and remitting their own HST where applicable. The Fringe DOES NOT remit HST on behalf of our participating companies - this is completely your responsibility. If CRA comes after us because you didn't remit we will send them your way. You are personally responsible for reporting HST based on your personal circumstances.

If your company earns revenue greater than \$30,000.00 per year, Revenue Canada states that you must apply for an HST number. If your company makes less than this amount, it's your choice whether to get an HST number or not. If you do register a number with Revenue Canada, you can claim the HST your company pays as an input tax credit on your next tax return. Registered companies must also collect and remit HST from their ticket price.

Insurance

We do NOT have insurance to cover Participants, your sets, props, costumes or personal belongings. If you wish to have this sort of coverage, you must arrange it yourself.

Permissions and Unions

You are responsible for securing any and all rights and permissions for your production (royalties, music fees, etc.). Should we receive an Inquiry regarding rights for your performance, we will forward the request to you immediately, and recommend that you deal with the issue ASAP.

If any member of your company belongs to a professional association (CAEA, ACTRA, UDA), you are responsible for any permissions required to engage them. Please note that Equity (The Canadian Actors Equity Association) has released a new Festival Policy that CAEA members can access for your company - they will only send agreements to their own members.

Questions can be directed to: patrick@ottawafringe.com