

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ottawa's Contemporary Theatre Festival Returns for its 16th Season!

January 19, 2026 - Get ready, Ottawa! The 16th annual *undercurrents festival*, presented by Ottawa Fringe, is back this winter from February 4 - 14. A bold incubator for new and evolving works that are in direct conversation with the world we are living in right now, *undercurrents* has a show for everyone. Don't miss this bold celebration of contemporary theatre in both official languages!

"The 2026 *undercurrents* festival presents bold, timely Canadian stories, exploring climate, justice, identity, and community. Premieres, solos, and ensemble works – many bilingual – push boundaries, spark conversation, and put the pressing issues of our moment front and centre.", says Executive Director, Alain Richer.



With 22 performances over 10 days, *undercurrents* brings together urgent pieces of theatre shaped by our present moment, with artists responding to today's crises through innovative, boundary-pushing storytelling. From fresh works by up-and-coming local playwrights to riveting national theatre, there is so much to discover at *undercurrents*.

Kicking off the festival on Wednesday, February 4th, is the world-premiere of **That is Not a Toy** by Ottawa's Alan Shain. Best known for his solo show about sex and the single wheelchair guy, *Still Waiting for That Special Bus*, Shain's *That is Not a Toy* asks "What happens when a sister brings her brother to his physiotherapy appointment? Who is in charge? What is with all this equipment, anyway?"

From Ottawa's Skeleton Key Theatre, **Sound** carries the echoes of generations of women living under oppression in Iran, their moments of silence, survival, and defiance merging into one collective voice that chants "Women. Life. Freedom.". It serves as proof that in a place designed to erase them, to exist is to rebel. *Sound* is both intimate testimony and an urgent political act. It is storytelling as resistance, performance as protest, and you get to be its witness.

Hailing from Edmonton, Donkey Dog Theatre's **Re:Construct(ion)** is an award-winning smash hit show with performances in both English and French. A trans man and his idealized cis self

have made you a meditation—no, a paint night—actually, no, a rumble—anything to finally get it right this time. *Re:Construct(ion)* is a poetic, surprising, and irreverent unboxing of idealized masculinity.

Presented in French with English captioning, **ÇA RIME AVEC VINAIGRE** is a solo performance from Toronto's Katia Café-Fébrissy that tells the story of a mother's fight to protect her child at all costs. A slice of life piece narrated and performed by the playwright herself, *ÇA RIME AVEC VINAIGRE* (Rhymes with Vinegar) is based on the real-life experiences of a boy and his loved ones that highlights the systemic inequalities that persist in our society. A co-presentation with Alliance française d'Ottawa, *ÇA RIME AVEC VINAIGRE* returns to undercurrents a fully-fledged production after a workshop performance in 2023.

From the brilliant minds of Ottawa's Kristina Watt Villegas and the 100 Watt Youth Ensemble, **12 (2.0)** is a bilingual play about climate change that longs to hope. En 2018, scientists warned there were only 12 years. Now it's 2026. The world has been living on a tipping point for over 8 years. Le temps a passé; but what has changed? Everything and nothing. Oui. Et alors? A group of youth committed to taking climate action the way they know best - theatre - attempt to perform for you the play they created 8 years ago, again.

Another world-premier, **Wind** is a documentary theatre play from Ottawa & Dover Centre's Cullen Elijah McGrail that blends humour, politics, and family dynamics into a beautifully nuanced story sure to provoke discussion. When Will returns home to his family's farm after graduating from university, he feels like an outsider. His neighbours don't remember him, his dad doesn't know what to do with him, and he can't find a job. When he notices his neighbours up in arms over a recent wind farm development in the area, he jumps at the chance to join in the conversation and get to know his neighbours better... and maybe write his first big play while he's at it.

Rounding out the festival is **Mother Sea**, an English-language premiere of a production known to Ottawa audiences as *Manman la mer*. *Mother Sea* tells the story of Marjolaine, a Haitian Canadian storyteller, who embarks on a journey of self-discovery, cultural reconnection, and healing. Created in both Toronto and Ottawa, the narrative is deeply rooted in Afro-Haitian mythology and traditions, blending storytelling, music, and dance to explore themes of identity, family, and heritage. The script incorporates Haitian Creole, traditional songs, and cultural symbols, creating an immersive experience that celebrates Haitian culture and storytelling.

TICKETS:

More information about the shows and tickets can be found here:

ottawafringe.com/undercurrents. *undercurrents* tickets are sold at a "Pick Your Price" model of \$10, \$20 or \$50. Accessible pricing means you decide what price you pay for your experience at *undercurrents*, no questions asked.

SCHEDULE:

A full festival schedule and media kit and program can be found [here](#).

For more information and interview requests, please contact:

Sam Woods (He/Him)

Engagement & Development Manager

Ottawa Fringe Festival & *undercurrents*

sam@ottawafringe.com

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About *undercurrents*: Produced by Ottawa Fringe, *undercurrents* showcases the best original, contemporary theatre being created by Ottawa performers and visiting artists.