CELEBRATING 10 YEARS!

PLAY THE FOOL FESTIVAL

10 YEARS

SEPT. 25-27, 2026

Our festival gathers in Amiskwaciwâskahikan, known colonially as Edmonton, Alberta. This land is the traditional territory of many Indigenous People, the Metis, and the First Nations of Treaty 6. This land has thousands of years of history; it was land that was fought over, land that gives back, land that continues to hold the spirit, strength, love, stories, and traditions of First Nations Peoples. In the spirit of the treaty and its oral agreements we acknowledge that we all benefit from this land and it is our duty as treaty people to nourish and respect it.

We recognize that there are many inequities in our current systems, especially for those in our community who are Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour. We want the festival to be a space that is mindful and welcoming of the histories and experiences of artists and audiences alike. Clowning as an artform has existed in many forms across cultures and ages, as an outlet for creativity, play, social commentary, and storytelling. We strive to create a space that encourages artists to tell their stories, and that challenges us to think, feel, and laugh.

FESTIVAL PRODUCER

Welcome back, my fellow clowns! Play the Fool is celebrating TEN YEARS! Over a decade ago I had an idea - to showcase the amazing clown artists and talent that I saw locally and beyond. With hard work, dedication, and help from some incredible humans/fellow clowns, we made it to our 10th anniversary. It continues to be my great honour and joy to create a space for clown and physical theatre artists to showcase their stories. Our fools will delight you as they fill your cups with a weekend of laughter and play. Each year this festival is made possible thanks to the incredible artists, staff, volunteers, and supporters that help us Play the Fool, and most importantly, to audiences like you. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts and the tip of our red noses.

We hope you enjoy our 10th anniversary!

Julie Kiraly
Festival Producer

SHOWS

PTF X MUNT: A CABARET OF CHAOS

Come see our best bits & greatest hits!

90 mins + intermission | Ages 18A
Friday, Sept 25th @ 9pm

MUNT Performance Association crashes into Play the Fool for a night of gloriously unhinged cabaret. Expect the same anything-goes spirit that fuels MUNT's beloved PepperMUNT Cabaret, bold acts, big risks, and a room full of chaos, now built specifically for the Play the Fool stage.
Featuring acts by: Sophie May Healey, Gabi Stachniak, Sam Chaulk, Sarah Ormandy, Aidan Laudersmith, and Stretcher Hartout.

Hosted by Harper Oud and Nicole Maloney!
And don't forget about our house band!
Curated by Jake Tkaczyk

Q2Q: CLOWN SHORTS

60 mins | Ages 18A
Saturday, Sept 26th @ 7pm

A collection of clown delights by queer artists and creators. Supported by our wonderful friends at Fringe Theatre Adventures and the City of Edmonton.

Curated by Rainier Pearl-Styles

FEATURING:
Alexa Rodominski & Aldrick Dugarte
Dayna Lea Hoffmann
Nico Maiorana
Taylor Coffey

SUPPORTED BY: FRINGE THEATRE

THE ROOKIE CABARET

Festival Favorite since 2017!

60 mins | Ages 18A
Saturday Sept 26th @ 9pm | Curated and directed by Christine Lesiak
Content warnings: Consensual audience interaction, cartoonish violence

Play the Fool's Rookie Mentorship Program has been a festival highlight since its first year in 2017. This years' showcase features 7 emerging clowns and physical comedy artists in 6 turns. Artists work one-on-one and as an ensemble to take their idea from concept to stage.
Past participants have gone on to expand and develop the work they started in the Rookie Cabaret into full-length shows.

THIS YEAR WE HAVE 7 ACTS, FEATURING:
Sarah Adam - Bev in If the Shoe Fits
Camryn Bauer - Tird The Magpie
David Donaldson - Gary in A Joyful Noise
Cliff Kelly - Sifford in If the Shoe Fits
Samantha Ketsa - La femme in Parlour Games
Alexandra Lepage - Owange in Spilled Blood
Jamie Plant - Quiznoes in Off The Hook

ADOPT A ROOKIE
at playthefool.ca

SPONSORED BY:

GRINDSTONE
Theatre School

WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE SUPPORT OF THE CANADA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS

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LET'S MEET THE ARTISTS!

SARAH ADAM

Sarah is a dance artist, teacher, and baby clown who is discovering just how wild and beautiful the world of clown can be. She holds a BFA (Honours) from Toronto Metropolitan University and has spent the past three decades dancing, teaching, choreographing, and performing in Calgary, New York, and Edmonton. After years of making dance her home, Sarah has found clown to be a way to embrace play, absurdity and delicious physical comedy. She is excited to keep wandering deeper into this weird and wonderful practice and is very grateful to the Rookie Cabaret for this opportunity.

CAMRYN BAUER

Camryn "Cam" Bauer is a non-binary artist from Beaumont, Alberta and a recent graduate of MacEwan's Music Theatre BFA. Cam is quite new to clown but is eager to learn and excited to have this amazing opportunity. They would like to thank the Batrabbit Collective for giving them the confidence to apply for the Rookie Cabaret, Elm Tree Theatre for helping them develop their bird impersonation skills, and the Reuse Centre for supplying them with the materials for their costume. Outside of performing Cam is also a theatre educator, production assistant, and an avid bird-watcher!

DAVID DONALDSON

David is thrilled to perform in the Rookie Cabaret at the Play the Fool Festival. As a formally trained opera singer, he is delighted to put other talents on display! Outside of the Rookie Cabaret, David is a proud cast member of the Grindstone Theatre's improvised musical ensemble, The 11 O'Clock Number.

CLIFF KELLY

Cliff Kelly is an Actor and Fight Choreographer based in Edmonton AB. He holds a BFA from the University of Lethbridge and is a credited Intermediate Actor Combatant with Fight Directors Canada. Cliff has worked with numerous theatre companies in Alberta as a performer, choreographer, prop builder and stage manager, but is beyond thrilled (and slightly terrified) to participate in the Rookie Cabaret as his first foray into clowning. Cliff was a founding member of the Accidental Humour Company, but since their disbanding has taken a longer than anticipated hiatus from the stage. Cliff would love to thank his beautiful and fearless wife for convincing him to play and try their hand at this weird and wonderful craft of clown. Enjoy the show!

SAMANTHA KETSA

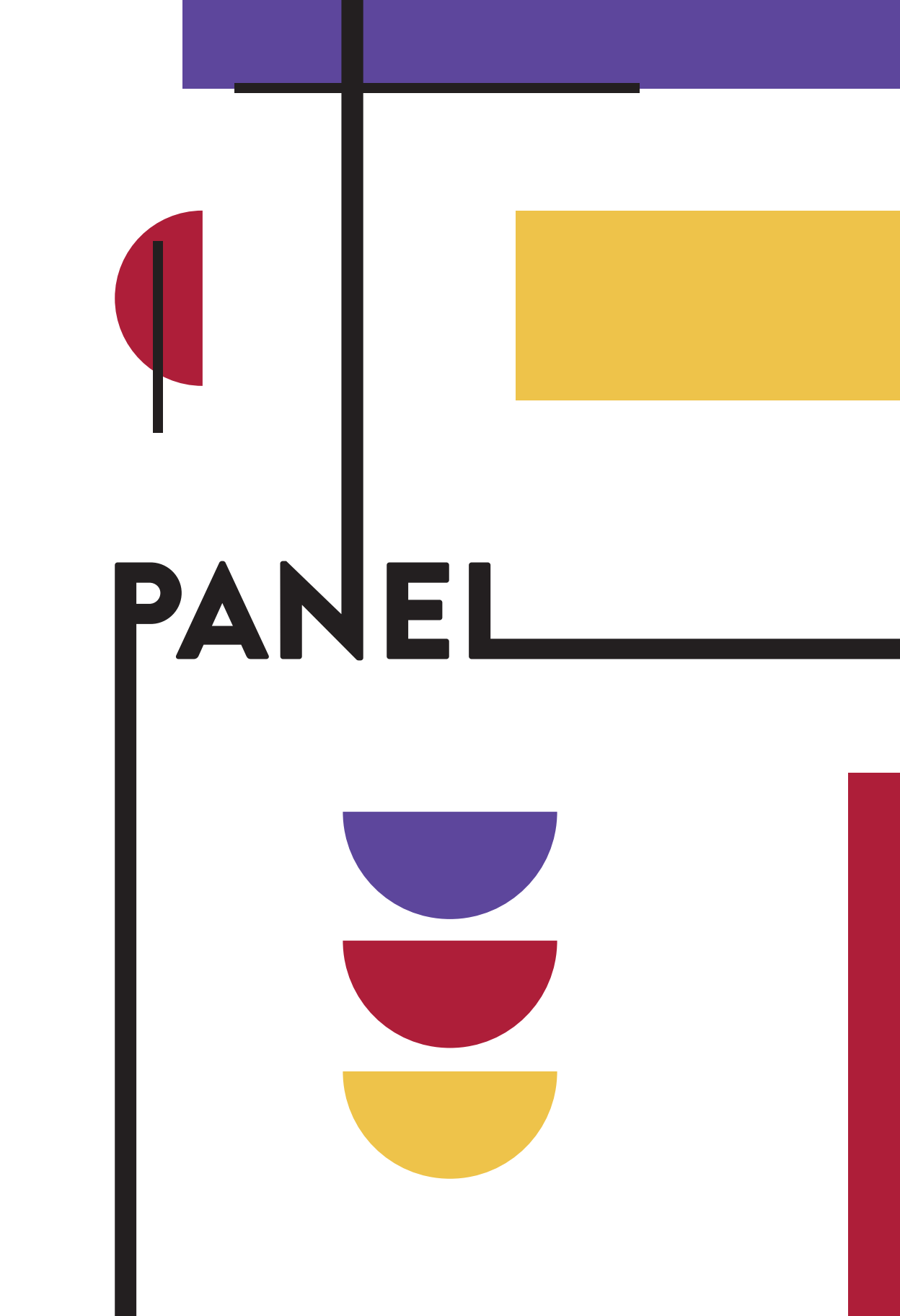
Samantha Ketsa (she/they) is a multidisciplinary artist, artistic director of Baker Miller Pink, and your loudest friend. She received her BFA in Dance from the University of Calgary. Samantha's choreography has been supported by organizations across Alberta including the Banff Centre, Springboard Performance, Dancers' Studio West, Nextfest, One Yellow Rabbit's High Performance Rodeo, Vertigo Theatre, and Decidedly Jazz Danceworks. Samantha's interests centre inter-arts collaboration and state-based storytelling. Samantha's clown, La femme, was originally developed during the 2026 Dancers' Intensive at the Banff Centre, with support from Marie Gyselbrecht. Samantha's work in clown and physical comedy is informed by her training with Linnea Swan and Melanie Kloetzel, as well as close mentorship with her understudy, rehearsal director, administrative assistant, and muse Binx Ketsa. Samantha is grateful to Christine and our Rookie cohort; she hopes you enjoy the festival!

ALEXANDRA LEPAGE

Alexandra Lepage is a multidisciplinary French-Canadian artist, born and raised in Treaty 6 territory. In 2025, they graduated from the BFA Acting program, freeing themselves from the chains of academia. Since then, she has not stopped exploring different art forms to enliven her creative spirit! Some examples are, dancing by being part of The Lobbyists ensemble at the 2026 Expanse Festival. After graduating, she also resumed writing for non-academic purposes, starting with Dilemma, a play based on personal experiences that she plans to produce in the future. Now, her next artistic challenge is clowning! Although her experience in clowning is small, her passion for the art has only grown after being taught by Mike Kennard. She always knew that she would dive back into clowning for more crazy shenanigans! They hope you enjoy all the wacky antics of the Rookie Cabaret!

JAMIE PLANT

Jamie Plant is an artist from Spruce Grove, Alberta. She loves and creates art in all its many forms and is always excited to try new things, even though it is so scary every single time. In 2026, she had the wonderful opportunity to work on her first ever Fringe production, brought on by Holy! Scoundrels! Theatre! as set and prop designer for Jeff and Grungled KNOW FRILLS. She has made some of the best friends she could have ever hoped to through clowning. Working with and learning from Jan Henderson and Christine Lesiak has changed her life. She recently gave herself a very dramatic haircut and cried for well over an hour about it.


PANEL

BUILDING THE BIT: CREATING COHESIVE WORLDS IN CLOWN & PHYSICAL THEATRE

90 mins | Sunday Sept 27th @ 4:30pm | ONLINE at playthefool.ca

A world only works if the audience can find their way into it. This online panel digs into how clown and physical theatre artists build complete, specific worlds, through design, dramaturgy, character, rhythm, and the relationship between performer and audience, so that even the strangest or most absurd logic still feels legible. What are the rules of the world we're building, how do we let an audience play within them, and how do we signal when we're breaking them?

Join Christine Lesiak, Sophie May Healey, and Kate Braidwood and Andrew Phoenix of the Wonderheads for a conversation on the craft behind cohesive worldbuilding.

Moderated by Jake Tkaczyk

JAKE TKACZYK (He/Him)

Jake Tkaczyk, Moderator (He/Him) is an Edmonton-based theatre artist with a passion for creating new and engaging work collaboratively. He is currently in the midst of his PhD in Creative Practice from the Transart Institute and Liverpool John Moores' University. Jake has worked as an actor, director, creator, and educator in central Alberta. Jake had the extreme pleasure of working as an Artist Intern at Northern Light Theatre for a few years and is currently the General Manager of Workshop West Playwrights' Theatre. Jake spent two years working as the Program Manager, Performing Arts at the Banff Centre. Jake recently received the AFA Young Artist Prize.

W: jaketkaczyk.com | IG: jdtkaczyk

PANELLISTS

CHRISTINE LESIAK

Christine Lesiak (she/her) is an award-winning Edmonton-based theatre artist, educator, and Artistic Director of her independent theatre company, Small Matters Productions (www.smallmatters.ca). She specializes in clowning performance, collaborative writing and devising, and interactive comedy. She has co-created and performed in all 11 of Small Matters' original works, including the multiple-Sterling award-winning production, The Spinsters (2023-25), and the interactive comedy hit, For Science! (touring, 2018-26). She has dramaturged, directed and consulted on dozens of full-length shows, including Lee Boyes' Big Business (2023-24) and AM Choreography's THE BIRDS (2025). She consults, dramaturges, and directs nationally and internationally. Christine has trained extensively in various styles of clowning, puppetry and physical theatre with specialists from around the world, and has worked with hundreds of students; singers, dancers, improvisors, non-performers and theatre creators. She was festival director of Play the Fool, Edmonton's festival of clown theatre and physical comedy from 2017-24, and is thrilled to continue on as the director of The Rookie Cabaret Mentorship Program. @christinelesiak @smallmattersP

WONDERHEADS

WONDERHEADS is a physical theatre company specializing in mask performance, puppetry, and visual storytelling. Working without words, they use full-face masks and inventive puppetry to bring whimsical, funny, and emotionally resonant stories to life on stage. The company's co-founding 'heads' are Kate Braidwood and Andrew Phoenix, whose original productions have been touring North America since 2009, earning praise from the CBC as "Utter magic" and The Globe and Mail as "Powerful, surprising, and moving." Their work has been honoured with six Critics' Choice Awards, twelve Best of Fest awards, and the Scion Motivate award for entrepreneurship in the creative arts. WONDERHEADS also shares its passion for visual storytelling through workshops, residencies, and master classes. The company is based in Victoria, BC, Canada — the traditional and unceded territory of the Lekwungen People, now known as the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations.

SOPHIE MAY HEALEY

Sophie May Healey (she/they) is a queer Nikkei performer and writer based in amiskwaciwâskahikan/Edmonton. She holds a BFA in Acting from the University of Alberta and a certificate from Ecole Philippe Gaulier (where she was once kicked off the stage 5 seconds into her performance). Her work engages with horror, feminism, the Weird, and queer identity. Her alternative comedy cabaret acts have been featured everywhere from Paris to PepperMUNT. When she's not working in theatre, she can be found doing scary little crafts, painting, and drawing. Select performance credits include Hysteria's House (marrow theatre), My Testimonial (Workshop West Playwright's Theatre), The Doorstep Plays (Theatre Yes), Brick Shithouse (fenceless theatre), Helen (Trunk Theatre), All the Little Animals I Have Eaten (Shadow Theatre).

FESTIVAL WELCOME & PATIO

Friday Sept 25th @ 8pm

KICK OFF THE FESTIVAL ON THE PLAY THE FOOL PATIO FOR FREE LIVE ENTERTAINMENT BY JAY FLAIR AND AYTAHN ROSS!

CELEBRATING

10 YEARS

2026 STAFF

Producer - Julie Kiraly
Rookie Program Director - Christine Lesiak
Cabaret Program Curator - Jake Tkaczyk
Q2Q Program Curator - Rainier Pearl-Styles
Production Stage Manager - Frances Girard
Assistant Stage Manager - Jess Haight
Graphic Designer - Jaimie Lievers
Photography - Brianne Jang

THANK YOU

AJ Parcasio
Anastasia Maywood
Asha Campbell
Devon
Eddie McDonald
Fringe Theatre Adventures
Grindstone Theatre School
Hit That Jive Board of Directors
Ian Walker
Jan Henderson
John Marian
Jules Pepin
MUNT Performance
October People Productions
Rebecca Funk
Renita & Tom Lowry
Sandra Olarte

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AND

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FRINGE THEATRE ADVENTURES

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MUNT PERFORMANCE

is supported by the Edmonton Arts Council and the City of Edmonton

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is supported by the Province of Alberta through Alberta Foundation for the Arts.

Alberta Foundation for the Arts

We acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts.

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PLAY THE FOOL FESTIVAL

PLAY THE FOOL

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

SEPT. 25-27, 2026

FRI.
SEPT. 25

8:00 PM
FESTIVAL WELCOME & PATIO

9:00 PM
PTF X MUNT: A CABARET OF CHAOS

SAT.
SEPT. 26

7:00 PM
Q2Q: CLOWN SHORTS

9:00 PM
ROOKIE CABARET

SUN.
SEPT. 27

4:30 PM
ONLINE PANEL