

Acclaimed Playwright **Oren Safdie** brings provocative coming-of-age drama **GRATITUDE** to the **2026 Toronto Fringe Festival**

Hyper-Allergenic Productions Presents the Toronto Premiere of the darkly funny and unflinching new play at **Soulpepper Theatre's RBC Finance Studio**

Toronto, ON – May 19, 2026

Hyper-Allergenic Productions will present the Toronto premiere of **Gratitude**, the provocative coming-of-age play written and directed by acclaimed playwright **Oren Safdie**, as part of the **2026 Toronto Fringe Festival** from **July 2–12** at **Soulpepper Theatre's RBC Finance Studio**. Featuring performances by **Quin Welch, Isaac Silvers, Maya Ousachi** and **Hudson Orfe**, the production explores the complexities of adolescence, sexuality, cultural identity and the emotional volatility of first love.

Known for bold and boundary-pushing works including **Private Jokes, Public Places** at **Tarragon Theatre** and the recent one-man show **Beyond Ken Dryden** at **Soulpepper Theatre**, Safdie returns with a deeply personal and emotionally charged story inspired in part by his own experiences growing up in Montreal.

Gratitude follows 15-year-old *Dariya*, a student at an elite Montreal private school who becomes infatuated with *Drew*, the class heartthrob. Torn between her traditional upbringing and a growing desire for freedom and self-discovery, *Dariya* finds herself navigating peer pressure, sexual awakening and the complicated power dynamics that emerge during adolescence. What begins as an innocent crush soon spirals into a life-altering series of events affecting four teenagers struggling to understand themselves and one another.

Originally developed from Safdie's own memories of attending **St. George's School** in Montreal, the play was inspired by a chilling real-life moment when Safdie received a threatening phone call from a fellow student before starting Grade 11. From that experience emerged a story examining the intensity of youth, the dangers of desire and the fragile line between vulnerability and power.

*"Gratitude is really about the emotional chaos of adolescence. The longing to be accepted, desired and understood, while also grappling with identity, sexuality and the pressures placed on us by family, culture and our peers," says **Oren Safdie**. "What fascinated me was how quickly innocent feelings can escalate into something far more dangerous and life-altering. Even though the play is deeply personal to me, I think audiences will recognize how universal those experiences of insecurity, longing and confusion really are."*

The production is directed by Safdie alongside performers from the prestigious **Interlochen Center for the Arts**, where Safdie currently teaches. Joining the production as co-director is emerging actor and director **Fatima Lopez**, a recent graduate of the **National Theatre School**, who will work closely on the staging and direction of the play's intimacy-driven scenes.

Following critically acclaimed productions in Montreal and New York, **Gratitude** now makes its Toronto debut at the Toronto Fringe Festival with a fresh cast of emerging young performers.

SHOW DATES AND TIMES

**July 2 - 1:00 PM, July 4 - 6:30 PM, July 5 - 6:00 PM, July 6 - 10:15 PM,
July 7 - 8:15 PM, July 8 - 3:00 PM, July 10 - 3:00 PM, July 12 - 9:15 PM**

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