

# LOVE, SHAKESPEARE, AND ROPE

*Synopsis — Of a Feather — 2026 Toronto Fringe Festival*

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Four centuries ago, William Shakespeare wrote 154 sonnets about wanting people he could not hold. *Love, Shakespeare, and Rope* takes him at his word and makes the holding literal. In this evening-length work, *Of a Feather* lifts a selection of the sonnets off the page and into the air, using Japanese-inspired acrobatic suspension rope — shibari — as the language in which longing, devotion, and jealousy are spoken.

The show unfolds as a series of interconnected scenes, each drawn from a different sonnet and bound together by a single thematic thread: the many flavours of love. One scene burns with obsession; another tightens into possessiveness; a third coils with jealousy before loosening, finally, into something tender and caring. There are no named characters and no single plot to follow. Instead, the audience watches love change shape — the way it actually does — as bodies are wrapped, suspended, balanced, and released.

Rope here is both image and argument. A rigger ties; a model is lifted and held; and the tension between them — the literal pull of the line, the trust required to hang from it — becomes a way of dramatizing what the sonnets only describe. When the verse speaks of being captive to a lover, a performer hangs captive in the air. When it speaks of holding on too tightly, the rope says so before a single word is spoken. The result is poetry you can feel in your stomach: athletic, intimate, and a little perilous.

Staged in the candlelit, gothic surrounds of Birdhaus, the piece pairs the romance of the language with the spectacle of live suspension. It is sensual and grown-up — an 18+ production — but it is built to welcome newcomers as much as seasoned rope enthusiasts. There is no explicit nudity; what there is, instead, is closeness, risk, beauty, and a great deal of skill. Audiences need no prior knowledge of Shakespeare or of rope to be drawn in. The work meets them with the oldest subject there is and shows it to them in a form most will never have seen.

Created collectively by the ensemble under the co-direction of Tifereth and BH.Rope, *Love, Shakespeare, and Rope* is a celebration of the sonnets' emotional honesty and of rope as a living art form — an invitation to watch the Bard's most famous lines about wanting, keeping, and letting go play out, quite literally, in mid-air.