



PRESS HISTORY

For

Olivia O Musical

About the Show

Olivia O, The Musical is a new musical developed collaboratively in Vancouver, BC and New York, NY. It tells the story of Olivia Ortiz, a 14-year-old undocumented migrant from Guatemala who is separated from her mother at the US–Mexican border. Set in El Paso, Texas, the show follows Olivia through a foster home and immigration system while her aunt Isabel builds a community of activists to find her.

The show has been described as a “cross between Oliver Twist and West Side Story,” with a soul-stirring score infused with Latin beats. It explores migration, immigration policy, family, community, and love.

Book & Lyrics: Diane Currie Sam and Jessica Carmona | Original Music: Gil Yaron |

New/Additional Music Composition: Angela Ortiz

Awards & Recognition

2026 – Adams Prize for Musical Theatre (Toronto Fringe Festival)

Olivia O was awarded the prestigious Adams Prize for Musical Theatre by the Toronto Fringe Festival in 2026. The prize is sponsored by the Pat and Tony Adams Freedom Fund for the Arts and is awarded annually to a standout new Canadian musical.

BroadwayWorld reported the festival announcing Olivia O among its 2026 award-winning productions in its review of the 38th Annual Toronto Fringe Festival venues, alongside coverage in Streets of Toronto.

2025 – Tom Hendry Award, Playwrights Guild of Canada

Olivia O won the Tom Hendry Award (Dan School of Drama & Music Musical Award) from the Playwrights Guild of Canada for Best New Musical of 2025. The Tom Hendry Awards celebrate excellence in new Canadian plays. Writer/lyricist Diane Currie Sam described the recognition as carrying “particular weight” as a Canadian artist: “To be recognized in Canada, by fellow playwrights and theatre artists, means so much to me. This is where I live, where I write, and where this story was born.”

2024 – Artivist Award, Adelphi University / Sing for Hope Foundation

Jessica Carmona and Diane Currie Sam received the 2024 Artivist Award, presented by Adelphi University’s Artivism initiative and sponsored by the Sing for Hope

Foundation. The award celebrates artists who use creative work for social transformation. Olivia O was also featured in the Adelphi University Artivism Newsletter and presented as part of the Artivism speaker series ("Olivia O, The Musical – A Cross-Border Exploration of Art and Human Liberation," February 26, 2024).

NAMT Recommended Musical

Olivia O was selected as a 2025 NAMT (National Alliance for Musical Theatre) recommended musical, a significant industry recognition.

Production History & Festival

Appearances

March 2024 – Theatre on the Verge Festival of New Musicals, Philadelphia

Concert Reading at the Abington Art Center, Jenkintown, PA (March 23, 2024, 6:30 pm). This was the show's inaugural public festival appearance, listed on BroadwayWorld for Central Pennsylvania.

2024 – SheDFW Festival, Dallas, TX

Olivia O was chosen as the musical selection and presented a fully-staged production at the SheDFW Festival Dallas, Texas under the direction of Jennica Carmona.

September–October 2024 – Spark Theatre Festival NYC /

The Chain Theater

Olivia O presented a fully-staged production at the Spark Theatre Festival NYC at The Chain Theater (an Off-Off-Broadway production). The NYC festival premiere was listed on TheaterMania.com (September 5, 2024 listing). BroadwayWorld announced that Ava Nicole Frances — a two-time BroadwayWorld Award winner and American Idol finalist — would lead the cast (September 24, 2024).

Press & Media Coverage

BroadwayWorld

Multiple listings and articles across BroadwayWorld's regional and national coverage:

- Concert Reading listing for Theatre on the Verge Festival (Central Pennsylvania section, 2024)
- "Ava Nicole Frances To Lead OLIVIA O Cast At Spark Theatre Festival NYC" — by Chloe Rabinowitz, September 24, 2024

- “TORONTO FRINGE Unveils Venues For 38th Annual Festival” — by A.A. Cristi, April 15, 2026, naming Olivia O as an award-winning production

TheaterMania

Olivia O was listed on TheaterMania.com for its New York City festival premiere at the Spark Theatre Festival (listed September 5, 2024), described as “a story of hope with soul-stirring scores & Latin beats.”

Streets of Toronto

Streets of Toronto covered the 2026 Toronto Fringe festival announcement (April 15, 2026), noting Olivia O as one of the award-winning productions and highlighting the festival’s history of launching major works like Kim's Convenience and The Drowsy Chaperone.

Adelphi University / Artivism Newsletter

The show received a dedicated feature in the Adelphi University Artivism Newsletter (Issue 4: “Olivia O, The Musical – A Conversation with Jessica Carmona and Diane Currie Sam, Co-Librettists and Lyricists”). Olivia O was also featured on Adelphi’s Artivism event page and the Artist Award listing.

Industry Praise

The following endorsements appear in the show's official press materials and producer information kit:

"Olivia O, The Musical is a very moving and heartfelt piece with powerful music and compelling characters."

— **Playwrights Guild of Canada**

"I can not stress enough how powerful, important and full of love this show is."

— **SheDFW Review, Dallas, TX**

"It is a beautiful and very moving new musical work and I look forward to the day I can be in the audience at its premiere performance. The powerful and emotional story is matched by your composer's incredible music."

— **Robert McQueen, Associate Director — Broadway & national touring productions of MAMMA MIA**

"Diane and Jessica have written a beautiful, unique, moving and important musical called OLIVIA O. As a Broadway veteran and teacher of songwriting for many years, I can enthusiastically recommend their engrossing story and fabulous melodies in this exquisite musical. You will embrace and be heartwarmed by their lead characters — something so rarely found in a

musical. OLIVIA O finds success as a character and will find enormous success as a musical!"

— **Bob Garrett, Acclaimed Broadway singer, songwriter & vocal coach (Phantom of the Opera, The Color Purple, FAME)**

"The powerful and emotional story is matched by incredible music."

— **Michael Creber, Juno Award-winning keyboardist, composer & Grammy-nominated producer**

"Such good work. The lyrics, the story all come together. I read it and was immediately struck by how strong it was. It lit a fire in me! The story has so much heart, but it also has legs!"

— **Nicolle Natrass, Actor (CAEA/ACTRA), Dramaturg/Director & Playwright; Jessie Richardson Theatre Award nominee**

"Fantastic. Well paced. Well written. Great music. ... It's about family, it's about community. That's what I really like about this piece. It's a fun show. It's a beautiful show, it's an engaging show."

— **From the Producer Information Kit responses**

Summary Timeline

2024 — Featured presentation at Adelphi University Artivism series (February)

2024 — Concert Reading, Theatre on the Verge Festival, Jenkintown PA (March 23)

2024 — Fully-staged production, SheDFW Festival, Lyric Stage, Dallas TX

2024 — NYC premiere listing on TheaterMania (September)

2024 — Lead actress announcement on BroadwayWorld (September 24)

2024 — Fully-staged production, Spark Theatre Festival NYC / The Chain Theater (Fall)

2024 — Artist Award — Adelphi University / Sing for Hope Foundation

2025 — Tom Hendry Award for Best New Musical — Playwrights Guild of Canada (October)

2026 — Adams Prize for Musical Theatre — Toronto Fringe Festival (announced February)

2026 — BroadwayWorld & Streets of Toronto coverage of Toronto Fringe announcement (April)

2026 — Toronto Fringe Festival, Factory Mainstage, Toronto ON (June 30–July 12)

For media inquiries and producer information, visit oliviaomusical.com or email diane@beabetterstory.com