

THE ENSEMBLE at Toronto Fringe 2025

The Extra Mile <https://theextramile.ca/2025-toronto-fringe-festival/>

Saying I don't like absurdist theatre would be an understatement. I REALLY don't like absurdist theatre...but I loved *The Ensemble*. It was genuinely funny, thought provoking, a great tribute to the world of theatre. Lines and monologues are delivered with ease and passion, not a word feeling out of place. The concept is pretty simple, what happens when the leads of a play do not come out on stage, and the ensemble, made up of characters like guard 1 and prisoner 3 have to scramble to figure out their new roles, how to keep the audience entertained—and if they even have any control over their fate. To make matters worse, the theatre doors seem to be locked. This play dives into deep topics like if we have true free will if there is an “author” writing the story.

Christel Bartelse's direction is phenomenal, having the cast make full use of the Michael Young Theatre, breaking the fourth wall to bits and bringing the space to life as their oddball characters spiral into chaos. Though there isn't a weak member in the cast, the Three Capuchin Monks (Maya Granic, Julia Middleton, Kaleb Piper) absolutely stole the show for me. And maybe this is silly of me to say, but it was such a delight to see such a large cast on stage, performing cohesively on stage with each other. If you get the chance to see these incredible performers expertly deliver a manic, almost nonsensical story with commitment and joy, go, but keep an open mind.

When I asked a friend what she thought of the show she said, “It is...very fringey” meaning it falls into the strange, experimental, and almost bizarre category of Fringe, but honestly, that is what thrives best in the festival. We focus too much on the blockbusters and lose touch of what the Fringe Festival is meant to do: give a platform to theatre creators to try something new and exciting.

Hye's Musings 2025 Fringe Picks <https://hyemusings.ca/hyes-picks-2025-toronto-fringe/>

The Ensemble is a play adapted from José Sanchis Sinisterra's work *Los Figurantes*, exploring free will, identity, and just how many people you can fit on a stage. There are no small parts—only cowards.

Intermission Magazine <https://www.intermissionmagazine.ca/reviews/toronto-fringe-2025/>

Walking around the Distillery District, I was approached by cloak-clad figures asking if I had seen their missing lead actors. I later re-encountered these amusing characters in *The Ensemble*, Aliyah Bourgeault and Emmet Logue's riff on José Sanchis Sinisterra's *Los Figurantes* that explores what happens when those missing leads never make it onstage, and the audience is left with the ensemble to entertain them.

Over 60 minutes, a cast of 14 George Brown students and graduates brings energy to roles that would typically be in the background, but carry the show here. Under Christel Bartelse's direction, the actors' frantic movements help make the often-crowded stage pulse with life and chaos.

Bitá Baakhlagh's clever lighting shifts help move the focus from the collective to the unique personalities of individuals. Guard 1 (Cooper Bilton) wants to think. Guard 2 (Diana Eremeeva) would rather count cows. Prisoner 3 (Dale Rideout) wants to say hi to mom. And the Three Capuchin Monks (Maya Granic, Julia Middleton, Kaleb Piper) speak eerily in-sync, though perhaps unwillingly.

The tension between the characters' desires and the author's intentions fuels a discussion about free will and identity, achieved through open-ended questions, arguments, and even an attempt to leave the theatre. At times, this

discussion feels repetitive; but then Page (Mila Trichilo) addresses this with a self-aware comment, and my audience laughed boisterously as they did throughout.

In an era emphasizing “main character energy,” *The Ensemble* is existential, meta, and filled with many nameless characters that I’d happily call my favourites.

Cup of Hemlock Theatre Youtube Review

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CtBoqIHnLCI&t=581s>

THE ENSEMBLE at Second City 2025

Istvan Dugalin <https://istvandugalin.com/2025/10/17/the-ensemble/>

Everything is a remix and all that, but I’ve definitely been here before—in this meta-theatrical space, with the actor-character dichotomy expanding and contracting as an existential scenario unfolds. *Six Characters in Search of an Author* by Luigi Pirandello comes to mind. With **The Ensemble**, presented by Perchance Productions and The Second City, **Aliyah Bourgeault** and **Emmet Logue** have adapted José Sanchis Sinisterra’s *Los Figurantes*, which is playing around in the same absurdist sandbox.

I’m not familiar with Sinisterra’s play, so I’m not sure how faithful this is to his intentions. A quick glance online suggests this doesn’t stray too far from it. Having locked the main players up in their dressing rooms, the ensemble of a sprawling period play scramble about the stage looking for meaning in the absence of the leads. While indulging a variety of actorly tendencies and manifesting their theatrical destinies, they debate how much control they actually have in this scenario. They eventually discover that their impulses may not be as spontaneous or self-determined as they think.

Cooper Bilton and **Diana Eremeeva** establish my favourite interpersonal dynamic right at the top as pair of spear-holding guards awkwardly struggling to exist purposefully in a space where the repeated fanfare sound cue never once produces an entrance. From there we meet a variety of bit players with generic names that betray their lack of dramatic specificity—a Page, Three Capuchin Monks, Prisoner 3, Conspirator 9, Ladies 5 and 6, you get the gist. Perhaps the most hilarious to me is Town, the one lone dude left to represent an entire background population.

I don't find the script quite as clever or philosophically intriguing as I imagine it's trying to be. Again, I'm not sure if the original play is more effective on that front, but this lacks the genuine pathos that gives absurdist humour proper dimension. (Metalworker 8's monologue comes pretty close.) Overall, this feels a little too freewheeling for its introspective ambitions. Though the characters talk about it, the concept of free will isn't being wrestled with in any substantial way. The tension between performance and true identity—the actual actors' names keep slipping, collapsing the space between real and unreal—is intriguing, but never fully pays off.

That said, I don't want you to think I didn't have a good time, because I absolutely did. This has plenty of entertainment value. The actual *ensemble*, for instance, are an endearing and disparate bunch with solid comedic chops. Bourgeault, Logue, Bilton and Eremeeva are joined onstage by **Mila Trichilo, Iza Rincón, Aaron Ford, Julia Middleton, Morgan Roy, Jack Mosney, Kaleb Piper, Dale Rideout, Maya Granic,** and **Chrisevina Tsoura**. Individually and as a unit, they are distinctive and compelling as scenes clump them together and spread them apart. There is also plenty of shop talk for theatre folks. While dramaturges are a legitimate part of the theatre-making process, they are consistently the butt of an in-joke whenever a play mentions them. (Perhaps as an industry we should unpack that.)

The unruly action often devolves into mayhem and director **Christel Bartelse** has done a fine job of giving the chaos a dynamic shape and rhythm we can properly track. This

is especially note-worthy as the wide and shallow playing space is, I suspect, a significant challenge.

One of my favourite bits is when the ensemble decide to commit to the original play *on their own*, going through the motions and treating us to a handful of brief, hilariously nonsensical scenes as they plow through with the pivotal characters absent. This sequence doesn't last long, which was disappointing as it aligns so perfectly with my particular sense of absurdist humour.

I missed this at the *Toronto Fringe Festival* this past summer and am glad I could catch this remount. Despite my issues with the play itself, the cast is killing it!

My Entertainment World

<https://www.myentertainmentworld.ca/2025/10/toronto-theatre-review-perchance-productions-ensemble-at-the-second-city/>

Ensemble, while at times aimless, is a hilarious rallying cry for our cop #3s, angry citizen #2s, guard #4s and other nameless numbered thespians who just want some f****ng respect.

As someone who in university and high school consistently got the ensemble numbered roles, this one felt personal! (And yes the exclamation point is necessary). The narrative by Aliyah Bourgeault and Emmet Logue can be at times aimless with moments that become more empty filling the space. However, it utilizes it's wide...ensemble (see what I did there) and clever deconstruction of theatrical tropes to tell a funny story about purpose, theatre, meaning, dignity and agency. Directed by Christel Bartels, the cast of Cooper Bilton, Diana Eremeeva, Mila Trichilo, Maya Granic, Julia Middleton, Kaleb Piper, Dale Rideout, Iza Rincón, Aliyah Bourgeault, Morgan Roy, Chrisevina Tsoura, Emmet Logue, Aaron Ford and Jack Mosney are a delightful bunch to watch as they navigate uncharted theatrical territory outside of the arbitrary roles assigned to them by a cruel god... playwright.

Some of the best moments come from the mayhem of confusion and stress. As the ensemble, our heroes are regulated to expositions, set dressings and taking their orders and stage cues from the Stage Managers and leads. But when a rebellion sidelines all the major players, what are the remaining players to do? Self-reflection? Yikes that's scary. Try to keep the show going? I mean, they do try with hilarious result and one of the funniest montages I have seen on stage. Escape from the cruel, pre-determined set of circumstances hell bent on keeping them in their station? Pffft, that's just capitalism. The self awareness that comes from them no longer knowing what to do lends itself to a cast of characters that are absolute disasters. However, they are disasters that also share a tremendous amount of camaraderie and chemistry... when they are not hilariously bickering with each other. It is a cathartic journey to watch these characters and actors endure and struggle for their voice and celebrate their small successes.

The writing is at its strongest when it takes the time to deconstruct theatrical tropes of both narration and production, such as the one-voice multi-person group, the obligatory monologue (especially ones that, let's be honest, really go nowhere- looking at your Shakespeare), the fact that ensemble costumes come from the Temu pile while the leads get actual measurements. This calling out of tropes makes this play a rallying cry. A cry that says, there are no small parts, and every performer deserves respect regardless of their character. A meta theatrical turn about fate and playwriting does provide some eerie stakes from our ensemble but it runs the risk at times of pulling the narrative in too many different directions.

The Ensemble is a funny and cathartic story that owes its success to the endurance and chemistry of its cast. This is a story for those consistently cast as character number 3, and it is a story that makes you root for them!

GOD SAVE THE SODOMITES Preview Profile by Young W

<https://www.youngw.ca/toronto-fringe-festival-2026/>

Are you a good person? Do you live in Sodom? Do you wear gloves? When God sends His two most talkative angels to Sodom (And Gomorrah) for some Sunday smiting, they must decide whether or not the town is worth saving. From the award-winning Old Soles Theatre Collective (formerly Perchance Productions), the screwball comedy ***God Saves the Sodomites*** follows the angels as they try to figure out what truly makes a good person and how far one would go to return a lost glove. Originally written by emerging playwrights **Aliyah Bourgeault** and **Emmet Logue** for this year's Toronto Fringe 24 Hour Playwriting Contest, the show features the playwrights themselves alongside actor **Kaleb Piper**. Directed by **Jack Davidson** and produced by **Morgan Roy**. Running in **Native Earth's Giizis Studio (inside Minogitooon Workspace)** See the show page for dates and show times.

Q&A with producer Morgan Roy

- **What was the most challenging aspect of preparing this performance?** This play includes so much audience interaction and improv that it's difficult to fully imagine how it's going to exist. It's also the kind of show that might make people a little (intentionally) uncomfortable, so we have to make sure it's equally fun and laughter-inducing as it is thought-provoking. It's hard to know exactly how an audience is going to react to this show which is what makes it so exciting for us to put out into the world.
- **What do you hope audiences will take away?** We always hope that an audience leaves our shows thinking about how much fun they had, but we also want it to be something that sticks with them and makes them think a little. All of our plays are a little (a lot) absurd, so the biggest compliment we can get is people talking about it, whether that be in a good or bad way, for days after they've seen it. More than

anything we want people to walk out going: “What did I just watch... I think I liked it!” Oh, and a glove. One person gets a glove.

- **What’s next for Old Soles Theatre Collective? Anything you want to shout out?** We have a few things coming up in the next year that we’re really excited about! Right after the Fringe Festival ends, a few of our Collective members are headed to Port Perry to be resident artists at Theatre on the Ridge. They’ll be workshopping a new play called *Or The Whale* by Aliyah Bourgeault and Emmet Logue, the same playwrights who wrote *God Save the Sodomites* and *The Ensemble*. That same show will have a run in Toronto in 2027! We’re also planning a staged reading/small workshop of another new short play called *The Most Curious and Mysterious Findings of One Gregory C. Graveman: Volume One* by Morgan Roy, which placed third in this year’s 24 Hour Playwriting Contest.