

# Open Door Theatre Collective

We created this collective with the inaugural collaboration between the Toronto Fringe and our collective of theatre students in mind. Our mandate centers expanding and diversifying the theatre lens and canon, while creating space for emerging artists from all walks of life. We connect music theatre students with like-minded industry professionals who share an interest in decolonizing theatre, collaborative creation, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

For *WE KNEW EACH OTHER ONCE BEFORE*, our cast is a collection of musical theatre students who have been working, creating, and bonding with each other for the past three years. We bring eager music theatre students into the experienced hands of independent arts festivals like the Toronto Fringe to create theatrical pieces from their unique perspectives. This kind of collaboration introduces these theatre students to the wonderful world of Toronto's independent theatre scene, as well as facilitates the creation of radically new theatre pieces that challenge what it means to write a musical and blurs the line between performer and creator.

For this inaugural opportunity, we chose a cast and creative team that can bring together rich perspectives and artistry from all over the country—we have cast members working from various provinces across Turtle Island, and our creative director is working with us from across the Great Lakes in what's generally known as Brooklyn, New York. The opportunity to collaborate remotely that the pandemic inadvertently offered the theatre community helped us to bring together artists who would never otherwise have been able to work together—and our collective highly values unlikely pairings of artists and art styles that challenge theatrical conventions.

We chose to create a piece for the Toronto Fringe that departed from the theatrical standards of a hierarchy of characters, a linear plot arc, and even a separation between writer and performer. We value our collaborators incredibly highly, as our collective was created by and for musical

theatre students, and so we chose to create an opportunity where the creative power was placed in their hands, and they could express themselves as truthfully and originally as they desire, rather than changing themselves to fit into the confines of a traditional script.

Open Door Theatre Collective seeks to connect and uplift young theatrical voices in creating new work that is unique to the performers within the show, and to bring it to independent theatre festivals like the Toronto Fringe so that the emerging artists can meet the local theatre scene while bringing their most authentic selves to the forefront of their creations.