

# Review: THE REMAINDERS at Toronto Fringe

The heartwarming character study runs at Soulpepper Theatre, as part of the Toronto Fringe Festival, from July 2-12.

By: Elizabeth Armstrong Jul. 05, 2026



The Reminders is a touching theatrical love letter to public libraries and to any patron who has ever found a sense of belonging through public libraries. The story, by playwright Rebecca Becket Grace, revolves around a diverse

group of characters who unexpectedly find themselves united by events and conversations that unfold in a Toronto Public Library branch.

*"What's a 7-letter word for starting over?"*

Local, self-published author, Renee (Nicole Fairbairn), has written her own autobiography and is determined to have it featured and read by library patrons, much to the horror of young librarian, Natalie (Aurora McClennan), whose performance review is threatened by this new, unauthorized literary addition. Meanwhile, an equally-determined new immigrant (Jason Pilgrim, whose character is only referred to as "the Newcomer" in the show brochure) is at the library to improve his Canadian history/cutural knowledge in preparation for citizenship, and to pass time as he awaits an important phone call.

Rounding out the group of characters are unhoused teen, JJ, (Samuel Barnes) who uses the library as a safe place to sleep, Natalie's strict librarian aunt, "Head Librarian" (Emer Kelly), Renee's estranged daughter, Brie (Jeya Nkrumah), and the enigmatic crossword-lover, Charles (Jamie Johnson).

Over the course of the play, which is set in a single day, the characters form unlikely friendships and find their lives changed for the better.

For a one-act, 55-minute play, the characters are surprisingly full-fledged and three-dimensional. We root for their successes and understand their conflicts. Surely every audience member will relate to at least one of the characters in one way or another.

There are running gags -- like the fact that everything seems to be located by the library's "plumbing section" -- and comedic elements sprinkled throughout the serious topics this play tackles (homelessness, strained mother-daughter relationships, immigration, career pressure, fear of regret), so this play would be considered a "dramedy."

The performances are all strong -- there is no weak link in the cast. The standouts are perhaps Aurora McClennan and Jason Pilgrim who brought

many layers to characters that could have otherwise been reduced to stereotypes. The pacing was excellent and the Toronto Public Library setting was well established, especially with the presence of a widely-recognizable TPL tote bag. *The Reminders* marks the theatre directing debut of Christine Cortes, who, if her work on *The Reminders* is any indication, will be a director to watch.

*The Reminders* was my most-anticipated Toronto Fringe show this year, and it did not disappoint. In fact, this was one of the better plays I have seen (anywhere) in quite a while.

*The Reminders is playing at Soulpepper Theatre's Kevin and Roger Garland Cabaret, as part of the 2026 Toronto Fringe Festival, from July 2-12. A portion of ticket sales will support the Toronto Public Library Foundation—helping sustain the spaces where connection, reflection, and community stories continue to thrive.*