

# Windsor, Ont., gets debut fringe festival next July

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[CBC News](#)

Canada will soon have a new addition to its growing roster of fringe festivals.

A group of Windsor artists has joined the Canadian Association of Fringe Festivals and plans to stage its first fringe event next July.

The group in the southwestern Ontario city on the border with Detroit will begin recruiting theatre troupes for the two-week festival in January, said Mona el Baroudi, artistic director of Actors' Theatre of Windsor, one of the groups helping to organize the Windsor Fringe Festival. ([www.actorstheatreofwindsor.com](http://www.actorstheatreofwindsor.com))

"As a spectator, you get a two-week-long smorgasbord of a great range of performing arts," she told CBC Radio on Thursday.

"What the fringe does is provide each artist with a performing space. We've had inquiries from everyone from a barbershop quartet to belly dancing, but primarily this is used for theatrical performances."

The fringe concept is to provide artists with a deadline to be ready and a space and timeslot to perform, but to let the performer decide what will go on stage, with the return going to the artists.

The result is uncensored and innovative performances that often go on to be developed for a wider audience.

With 27 theatre companies in the Windsor-Essex region, el Baroudi expects at least half the participants will be local.

But theatre companies from the Detroit area are likely to be involved and Windsor hopes to recruit performers from across the country who don't make it into the Winnipeg Fringe Festival, running at the same time.

"We have about 35 to 40 slots, then it will actually go to a lottery," el Baroudi said. "That would certainly be an embarrassment of riches in the first year."

The fringe festival concept originated in Edinburgh among theatre groups who couldn't get a slot in its well-regarded theatre festival.

## First festival

The first Canadian festival was held in Edmonton in 1982 and there are events in communities such as Montreal, Ottawa, Hamilton, Saskatoon and Grand Prairie, Alta.

Performance venues are lined up at the Art Gallery of Windsor, The Room, The Boom Boom Room, Plunkett's Bar & Grill with a tentative booking at the The Capitol Theatre, now that the trustee has offered bookings.

The Windsor Fringe Festival is set for the last two weeks of July at the same time as three other local festivals, Chalk and Chocolate, Artscene and Buskerfest to allow these festivals to generate increased attendance overall.

"Our goal is to produce professional theatres here and further the development of the region as an Arts and culture Destination for tourism," el Baroudi said.