

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
April 9, 2024

## Harbourfront Centre Welcomes Families for Playful Discovery at Toronto's International Children's Festival, JUNIOR

*Annual May long weekend festival returns with dynamic lineup of free and affordable multidisciplinary performances and activities for all ages*

**TORONTO, ON** – Harbourfront Centre presents **JUNIOR**, Toronto's international children's festival, over the May long weekend of **May 18–20, 2024**. Showcasing a wide range of local and international performances, from theatre and dance to circus and hands-on workshops, the entire family can enjoy three days of play, imagination and fun at indoor and outdoor venues across Harbourfront Centre's 10-acre waterfront location. A dedicated Enhanced Accessibility Day on May 19 features ASL/DSL interpretation, described audio and introductory notes, touch tours, a relaxed guide and "Zen Den" quiet spaces for select events.

"At JUNIOR, we believe growing up is a journey of self-discovery," says Nathalie Bonjour, Harbourfront Centre's Director of Performing Arts, "and one of the most compelling ways to facilitate this lifelong exploration is through the transformative power of the arts. In our mission of enhanced accessibility and inclusivity, we welcome children of all ages and their families to connect to the world, their community and themselves through multidisciplinary arts and cultural events that encourage children to delve into their imaginations and ask big questions, all while having fun!"

With a mix of ticketed, free and pay-what-you-wish events, highlights of JUNIOR include a touching multimedia theatre performance, **Robot Song**, from Australia's **Arena Theatre Company**; the immersive dance production **Make Me Dance** from Norway's **Panta Rei Danseteater** and a heartfelt story about two best (salmon) friends in **Finding Home: A Salmon Story Upstream** from Theatre Direct Canada and Animacy Theatre Collective. **Yassama and the Beaded Calabash** is a storytelling adventure created especially for young children from Toronto's **Lua Shayenne**.

Additional free programming includes the circus extravaganza **Afrique en Cirque** from Montreal's Cirque Kalabanté; the drop-in radio experience, **Experts Radio Lab**, where kids are interviewed live by Scotland-based artist Alice Mary Cooper; the playful, open-air dance performance **BENCHED** from Denmark's Uppercut Dance Theater and **Transhumance**, in which Canada's CORPUS brings its interactive and surreal installation on the routine behaviours of sheep. Daily storytime with **Fay and Fluffy** returns, as do demonstrations from Indigenous pow wow dancers and many more activities suited for everyone. This year's accessibility enhancements also include accessible pricing on ticketed performances and a nursing lounge.

JUNIOR's indoor ticketed performances start at \$5. Pre-registration is required for some of the festival's free programming. **To learn more about JUNIOR's full festival programming and for tickets**, visit [HarbourfrontCentre.com](https://www.harbourfrontcentre.com).

### **JUNIOR FESTIVAL 2024 LINEUP:**

#### **TICKETED EVENTS**

***Finding Home: A Salmon Story Upstream*** (Ontario)  
Theatre Direct and Animacy Theatre Collective  
May 18–20 at 1pm, Studio Theatre  
All ages

From one of Canada's leading theatres for young audiences, *Finding Home: A Salmon Story Upstream* is a heartfelt story about two best (salmon) friends from Lake Ontario who drift apart when one of them is ready to make the big "change" upstream. Full of child-friendly humour and accompanied by a live band, this inspiring story about the cycle of life is suitable for the whole family.

***Make Me Dance*** (Norway)

Panta Rei Danseteater

May 18-19 at 1:30pm, May 20 at 2:15pm, Harbourfront Centre Theatre

Ages 8+

An immersive dance theatre production that encourages audience participation. With raw energy and enthusiasm, three dancers, backed by a musician, bound across the stage, dancing, tumbling and jumping for a story that inspires the joy of finding freedom in creativity.

***Robot Song*** (Australia)

Arena Theatre Company

May 18-20 at 3:30pm, Fleck Dance Theatre

Ages 8+

Follow the life of 11-year-old Jupiter May as she becomes besties with a singing robot, discovering the special ways she can relate to the world. Full of joy, optimism and humour, *Robot Song* incorporates live animation, video, music and fun animatronics. Inspired by the true story of a parent with a child on the Autism spectrum.

***Yassama And The Beaded Calabash; Yassama et la calebasse aux cauris*** (Ontario)

Lua Shayenne

English performances: May 18 (1:30pm) and May 20 (12:30pm). French performance: May 19 at 1:30pm,

Brigantine Room

Ages 3+

Pay What You Wish

Created especially for young children, *Yassama and the Beaded Calabash* is the story of a young girl who helps save her village from drought and delivers a powerful lesson on respecting Mother Earth. Rooted in African oral tradition, the performance includes rhythmic language, lively song, engaging movement and live drumming.

**ALL AGES FREE EVENTS**

**PARTICIPATORY THEATRE:**

***Experts Radio Lab*** (Scotland)

Alice Mary Cooper

May 18-20 at 12 & 3pm, Lakeside Terrace

Set within a fun 80's-style radio studio, *Experts Radio Lab* is a drop-in, pop-up kids show where children are interviewed on anything they consider themselves an "expert" on (or anything they're just really interested in talking about!). Happening in front of a live audience, children will be interviewed by artists Alice Mary Cooper and Geraldine Heaney.

***Transhumance*** (Ontario)

CORPUS

May 18-19 at 11:30am & 4:45pm, May 20 at 11:30am & 2:30pm; West Lawn

A fun activity for kids outdoors, step into the whimsical and hilarious world of the Canadian dance/theatre company CORPUS as they bring their flock of fuzzy sheep to an interactive paddock. A mix of theatre and live performance, audiences can interact with the playful flock, feeding the sheep and watching them live their best farm life.

## **DANCE:**

### ***BENCHED*** (Denmark)

UpperCut Dance Theater

May 18-20 at 3:15pm, South Lawn

A fusion of street and contemporary dance from Denmark's UpperCut Dance Theater! Five dancers interact with and transform a set of oversized benches in this mesmerizing outdoor performance. ***BENCHED*** is about what happens when life throws you on the bench and out of the game.

### **Bust A Move! Dance Demo** (Australia)

BAMDance

May 19 at 5:15pm, Stage in the Park

An international dance company running classes for kids, teens and adults with disabilities, BAMDance aims to provide a place where people of all abilities can express themselves. This is a fun and inclusive event for people of all abilities; no experience necessary!

### **Bollywood Dance Demo** (Ontario)

Broken Dance Entertainment

May 18 at 5:15pm, Stage in the Park

Specializing in all forms of South Asian dance styles, Broken Dance Entertainment innovates through the fusion of Asian and Western choreography, inviting audiences to participate in this super-charged, super-fun dance party. The Bollywood-style dance company was a finalist on *Canada's Got Talent*.

### **All Nations Juniors + First Fire Dance** (Tkaronto, Ontario)

Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre

May 20 at 4pm, Stage in the Park

Toronto Council Fire's All Nations Juniors is a First Nations Pow Wow-style youth drum group that brings empowerment and identity to youth from many different nations and communities across Turtle Island, including Dakota, Anishinaabe, Chippewa, Cree and Haudenosaunee. The group is joined by First Fire Dance, which remixes four dance styles: contemporary, break dancing, hip hop and traditional hoop dancing.

## **MUSIC:**

### **Rhythms of North India** (Ontario)

Toronto Tabla Youth Ensemble

May 18 at 12:45pm

The Toronto Tabla Youth Ensemble will perform a lively outdoor performance blending contemporary and classical music with North Indian rhythms and tabla beats. As part of the performance, the TTYE will demonstrate how the tabla works, sharing the fascinating story of its cultural roots in India dating back thousands of years.

### **Quand On Chante** (Ontario)

Ariko

May 19 at 12:45pm, Stage in the Park

Homegrown in Lafontaine, Ontario, this family band features the rich vocal harmonies and dynamic fiddle stylings

of the Lefave sisters. Ariko's repertoire, rooted in traditional French-Canadian music, is coloured by zydeco, bluegrass and popular music genres.

**A Musical Journey Around The World!!! (Ontario)**

Moskitto Bar

May 20 at 12pm, Stage in the Park

Moskitto Bar invites audiences into their original global music world that combines Ukrainian, Middle-Eastern and French Celtic music. A circus performer will join them to embody the band's music, in the tradition of high-flying Ukrainian folk dance.

**CIRCUS:**

***Afrique en Cirque*** (Quebec)

Cirque Kalabanté

May 18-19 at 2:15pm, May 20 at 1:30pm, Concert Stage

A circus extravaganza inspired by daily life in Guinea, founded by multidisciplinary artist Yamoussa Bangoura and Cirque Kalabanté. Experience daring stunts, human pyramids, colourful costumes and traditional dance to the sounds of live Afrojazz and West African drumming.

**STORYTELLING:**

**Fay & Fluffy's Storytime** (Ontario)

Fay and Fluffy

May 18-19 at 2:30pm, May 20 at 2pm, Market Tent C

Drag stars Fay Slift and Fluffy Soufflé have been doing drag story times across Toronto and beyond since 2016. Through a supportive and inclusive environment focused on fun, culturally diverse books, songs and lots of laughs, Fay and Fluffy welcome everyone to enjoy storytime together.

**Tipi Showcase: Storytelling** (Tkaronto, Ontario)

Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre

May 18-19 at 11:30am, 2:30pm & 4:30pm, May 20 at 11:30am, 1:30pm & 3:15pm, North Orchard

Listen to a storyteller share teachings about the history, meaning and uses of Tipis. The Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre will be bringing the Native Women Resource Centre Tipi, which features a painting of a strawberry, representative of a healing that comes from Indigenous culture, ceremonies and collective bonds.

**DROP-IN WORKSHOPS**

- Bust A Move!
- Circus! Circus!
- Created By Kids For Kids
- Explorations in Collage
- Jam Zone
- Medicine Wheel and Beading
- Orange Shirt Craft
- Quilted Painting
- Tipi Crafting
- Woven Transformations
- Yoga 4 Kids

**About Harbourfront Centre** ([harbourfrontcentre.com](http://harbourfrontcentre.com))

Harbourfront Centre is a leading international centre for contemporary arts, culture and ideas, and a registered, charitable not-for-profit cultural organization operating a 10-acre campus on Toronto's central waterfront. Harbourfront Centre provides year-round programming 52 weeks a year, seven days a week, supporting a wide range of artists and communities. We inspire audiences and visitors with a breadth of bold, ambitious and engaging experiences. We champion contemporary Canadian artists throughout their careers, presenting them alongside international artists and fostering national and international artistic exchange between disciplines and cultures.

**LISTING INFORMATION**

**Harbourfront Centre presents JUNIOR**

Dates: May 18-20, 2024

Prices: Ticket prices from \$5  
(Pay What You Wish for [Yassama and the Beaded Calabash](#))  
Additional FREE programming

Venues: Various venues at Harbourfront Centre  
235 Queens Quay West  
Toronto, ON

Tickets & Website: [HarbourfrontCentre.com](http://HarbourfrontCentre.com)

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