



## Theatre and Culture for Early Years

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 29 to May 21, 2018**

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**The International WeeFestival of Theatre and Culture for Early Years returns for its 3rd edition with 10 days of inspiring arts for the very young**

(TORONTO, ON) Toronto's **first contemporary arts festival dedicated to early childhood** returns for its third edition with a not-to-be-missed line-up from May 11 to 21, 2018.

Theatre Direct Canada launched The **WeeFestival** in 2014 connecting Canada with an international network of professional theatres creating for very young audiences, advocating the cultural rights of all children, promoting "Arts from the Start". The biennial festival has since increased in scope and audience attendance. In the most recent edition, productions of **Hup** (Scotland) and **Nest** (Belgium) were recognized with Dora Award nominations.

The Festival brings productions from **across the globe** and **around the corner** that delight, stimulate, and inspire the **youngest of theatregoers** between the ages of 0 to 6 years. Performances in this international festival cross the disciplines of **music, theatre, dance, installation/performance, puppetry, and aerial arts** - all designed with the early developmental stages of childhood in mind and with **events and activities for the whole family** throughout the week!

### **Highlights of the 2018 WeeFestival include:**

- International works: **Knock!** Magnet Theatre (South Africa), **CutOuts** (Italy), **Mokofina** (Pays Basque/France), **Ssst!** (Germany)
- **WeeFestival premiers and commissions:** **Tweet! Tweet!** (Femme de Feu), **Flying Hearts** (Theatre Direct), **Baby Berio** (Xin Wang), and **Biinoojiinyag Gitgaanmiwaa** (Leslie Kachena McCue)
- **Community outreach:** Magnet Theatre's production of **Scoop**, will welcome infants and their caregivers from various social service organizations and initiatives serving young parents. Children from local daycares and kindergartens will attend performances throughout the week.
- **Professional development** for early childhood educators and theatre artists: 25 early childhood educators will participate in workshops and attend performances while theatre artists will have the chance to learn and create for very young audiences with Magnet Theatre.
- A full **delegate programme of conference activity** for producers, presenters, artists, and educators exploring themes of access, inclusion, and reconciliation in arts for early childhood.

**Full schedule/details below or at <http://weefestival.ca/shows>**

The heartbeat of the Festival Hub will be **Biinoojiinyag Gitgaanmiwaa** - translating to "**Children's Garden**" - the first commission of its kind at a children's festival. This **transformative space** for young children and families curated by Leslie Kachena McCue will take place in the Theatre Centre's Incubator. **Biinoojiinyag**

**Gitgaanmiwaa** is a relaxed performative space to explore, engage and to experience Indigenous culture through interactive experiences. Families are encouraged to visit the garden for a brief moment, a full performance, an activity or for the full week!

Early evening special events include: **Baking Time Family Fun Night!** with special musical guests **Sing-Along-Tim and the Pacifiers** on **Saturday May 12**; an all-ages one night only performance of **Millan & Faye present: The Opera! From Twinkle to Stardom** on **Thursday May 17**, sponsored by the **Canadian Opera Company**. The annual **WeeFestival Family Day** wraps the festival on Victoria Day, May 21st, with a celebration of arts and community at The Theatre Centre and Lisgar Park featuring West-African artist **Fana Soro**, a family dance party featuring music from around the world, a chill lullabye concert, and an array of hands-on activities for little hands.

Due to high demand from previous editions, this year's line-up expands the festival week to over 10 days, including performances over **Mother's Day Weekend** and the **Victoria Day Long Weekend**. The WeeFestival will present in seven venues across the city core - **Alumnae Theatre, Theatre francais de Toronto Studio 21, Wychwood Theatre, Factory Studio Theatre, Intergalactic Artist's Collective & Small World Music Centre** inside Artscape Youngplace, **Pia Bouman School of Dance**, and the **Theatre Centre** will act as the Festival Hub in May 2018.

## 2018 FESTIVAL LINEUP (in order of appearance)

### [Tweet Tweet!](#)

Femmes du Feu, Toronto, ON

**May 11th - May 13th, 2018**

Wychwood Theatre, [601 Christie St, Toronto](#)

Aerial Arts/Dance/Circus

for 0 - 3 years

Two little birds asleep in their nests high in a magical tree awake and discover each other and a wondrous world around them. An aerial arts and circus creation for young children performed in an intimate forest-like setting.

### [OGO](#)

Théâtre des petites âmes, Montréal, QC

**May 12th - May 13th, 2018**

Théâtre français de Toronto, Studio 21, [21 College St, Toronto](#)

Puppetry/Theatre

for 2.5 - 5 years

Three complete strangers have each received a special invitation from OGO! But where is OGO? They wait for the guest of honour to arrive, and soon friendship and play starts to blossom.

**French Language Programming Partner - Théâtre français de Toronto**

### [Baking Time](#)

Presentation House Theatre & Oily Cart (U.K), Vancouver, BC

**May 12th – May 16th, 2018**

Alumnae Theatre, [70 Berkeley St, Toronto](#)

Theatre/Puppetry/Music

for 2 years +

Chefs Bun and Bap take children on a "flour-fueled thrill ride" as they try to contain chaos they've created in the kitchen. This acclaimed production from Presentation House and Oily Cart Theatre uses puppetry, song, and the smell of fresh bread baking in the oven to inspire the children and adults alike.

### [Sisters, the Warm Embrace | Les choses berçantes](#)

Théâtre des Confettis, Quebec

**May 14th - May 17th, 2018**

Wychwood Theatre, [601 Christie St, Toronto](#)

Performed in English May 14 & 15, Performed in French May 16 & 17

for 18 months - 5 years

A creation that warms the heart and soul of the young and not so young. From the leading Quebec based theatre director Veronique Coté, whose production of *Waves, all that Glows Sees* was a hit at the 2014 WeeFestival.

**French Language Programming Partner - Théâtre français de Toronto**

### Cut Outs

Teatro dei Piccoli Principi, Italy

**May 15th - May 17th, 2018**

The Theatre Centre Mainstage, [1115 Queen St W, Toronto](#)

Visual Arts/Music

for 2 years +

A wondrous and mesmerizing experience where visual arts meets storytelling. Inspired by the paper cut outs of Matisse, Picasso, and Hans Christian Andersen, an artist weaves the story of the Steadfast Tin Soldier and other fantastical tales using paper images, projections, and music.

***Presented by The Theatre Centre with generous support from The Istituto Italiano di Cultura***

### Scoop

Magnet Theatre, South Africa

**May 15th - May 17th, 2018**

Intergalactic Arts Studio, [180 Shaw St, Studio 103, Toronto](#)

Interactive Performance

for 6 weeks - 12 months

Performed in a cozy tent using South African polyphonic singing, sounds and rhythms, babies are taken on an enchanting journey of stimulating sounds, and lights and textures created to soothe surprise, and delight.

### Mots de Jeux

Vox Théâtre, Ottawa, ON

**May 15th - May 17th, 2018**

Factory Studio Theatre, [125 Bathurst St, Toronto](#)

All performances in French

for 18 months - 2 years

Three performers celebrate the musicality and poetry of language through movement, music, and spoken word. This rhyme filled romp is a delicious French-language treat for young children!

***French Language Programming Partner - Théâtre français de Toronto***

### Ssst!

florschütz & döhnert, Germany

**May 18th - May 20th, 2018**

Factory Studio Theatre, [125 Bathurst St, Toronto](#)

Puppetry/Music/Clown

for 2 - 5 years

Out of one of the performers' many pockets comes all sorts of strange things including a raggedy white rabbit with a love of adventure and magic. This "poetic circus" is filled with delightful objects, live music, and lots of giggles.

***Co-presented with the Goethe-Institut Toronto***

### Mokofina

LagunArte, Pays Basque, France

**May 18th - May 20th, 2018**

Small World Music, [180 Shaw St, Studio 101, Toronto](#)

Music/Performance

for 9 months - 5 years

Mokofina is a transformative musical and cultural experience. Basque performer Kristof Hiriart is a vocal artist, percussionist, multi-instrumentalist, composer, and singer that blends traditional and contemporary sounds to create an enchanting musical journey for very young children.

***French Language Programming Partner - Théâtre français de Toronto***

### Flying Hearts

Theatre Direct, Toronto, ON

**May 18th - May 20th, 2018**

Wychwood Theatre, [601 Christie St, Toronto](#)

Relaxed Performance Format

for 2 years +

Join four friends as they set off on an imagination adventure through the sights, sounds, and textures of earth, water, air, and light! This multi-sensory and interactive dance/theatre creation performed to live music promises a rich and stimulating arts experience for young audiences.

## **[Knock!](#)**

Magnet Theatre, South Africa

**May 19th - May 20th, 2018**

The Theatre Centre Mainstage, [1115 Queen St W, Toronto](#)

Music/Theatre

for 2 - 5 years

Coming to Toronto direct from the Brooklyn Academy of Music, this production stimulates the imagination with four performers creating strange and magical animals and images with wonderfully shaped pieces of forest wood. With songs especially created for the production, they include the children in singing and creating sounds with their own bodies.

***Presented in association with the Brooklyn Academy of Music***

## **2018 WeeFestival**

**Theatre and Culture for Early Years**

**May 11-21, 2018**

Presented by **Theatre Direct**

**Venues:** Alumnae Theatre, Théâtre français de Toronto Studio 21, Wychwood Theatre, Factory Studio Theatre, Intergalactic Artist's Collective Studio & Small World Music Centre inside Artscape Youngplace, and the Theatre Centre

**Tickets:** \$12 to \$25

**Online:** <http://weefestival.ca/tickets/>

**Information:** 416.537.4191

[www.weefestival.ca](http://www.weefestival.ca)

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For Interviews please contact Josée Duranleau of Duranleau Communications.

PHOTOS AVAILABLE [HERE](#) | PASSWORD: Dora1Dora2

**The WeeFestival** is grateful for the generous support of **The Department of Canadian Heritage** through the Arts Presentation Canada Program, **The Canada Council for the Arts**, the **Ontario Arts Council** and the **Toronto Arts Council**. We are also proud to work with our **numerous partners** to make the WeeFestival possible: The Theatre Centre, Istituto Italiano di Cultura Toronto, Goethe-Institut Toronto, CUPE Ontario, and The Toronto Education Workers, Harbourfront Centre, Canadian Opera Company, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Solar Stage, Alumnae Theatre, Factory Theatre, Pia Bouman School, Prologue to the Performing Arts, and The Little Paper. The WeeFestival's French Language Programme partner is Theatre Francaise de Toronto.

## **About Theatre Direct**

Now in its 41st season, Theatre Direct is producer of the WeeFestival and is a leading innovator of professional theatre created especially for young audiences. Its award-winning productions have toured schools, theatres, and festivals across the Country. Milestone productions include **Old Man and the River**, **Beneath the Banyan Tree**, **Binti's Journey**, **Sanctuary Song**, and **And by the way, Miss...** Visit [www.theatredirect.ca](http://www.theatredirect.ca) for more information.