

MEDIA RELEASE

Collider Festival returns with play readings and playwriting workshops this June

May 19, 2026

Edmonton, Alberta – Citadel's Play Development showcase, Collider Festival, is returning June 5 - 7, 2026, featuring exciting opportunities for local artists and theatre enthusiasts.

The 2026 festival will include free readings of five new plays (four originating from the Citadel's Playwrights Lab and one new Citadel commission): *The Great Canadian Maple Syrup Heist: The Great Canadian Musical* by **Mhairi Berg**, featuring music and lyrics from **Mhairi Berg** and **Steven Greenfield**, *Come Hell or High Water* by **Nicole Moeller**, *An Agatha Christie Mystery A Comedy* by **Col Cseke**, solo-performance *Chula* by **Alexandra Lainfiesta**, and adaptation *Darcy & Wickham* by **Belinda Cornish**, based on the novel *Follies Past* by **Melanie Kerr** and co-presented with Script Salon.

Collider also features two artist-led writing workshops: **Nick Green** (playwright of *Casey & Diana*) will lead a deep dive into the art of musical theatre book-writing and **Mariló Núñez** will explore Maria Irene Fornes' ground-breaking playwriting methodology. The workshops are sponsored by Theatre Alberta as part of *Workshops by Request: Hometown Series*.

Associate Artistic Director, **Mieko Ouchi** says "Play Development is at the very heart of what we do at the Citadel, and our own homegrown productions are fast becoming some of the company's most well-known works. Collider is an incredible opportunity for us to test drive some of this brand-new work in front of enthusiastic audiences, which allows the playwrights to learn what is working, and to refine and hone the work as it moves towards potential productions with us or at theatres across the country and beyond."

Play readings are free to attend and donations will be accepted at the door. Spaces in the workshops are limited with tickets on sale now for \$50 + GST. Audience members are welcome to join the free mixers on June 6 and 7 before the readings to meet and mingle with fellow artists and theatre lovers who are passionate about new play development.

To view the full event schedule, play reading information, and workshop registrations visit our website at citadeltheatre.com/artists/play-development/collider-festival/.

Collider Festival and Play Development at The Citadel Theatre is presented by TD Bank Group.

2026 Festival Schedule

FRIDAY, JUNE 5, 2026

The first act of two new plays from the **Playwrights Lab**

Zeidler Hall

June 5, 2026, 7:00 p.m.

Free to attend. Donations accepted at the door.

Play Reading

The Great Canadian Maple Syrup Heist: The Great Canadian Musical

By Mhairi Berg, music and lyrics by Mhairi Berg and Steven Greenfield

It was \$18 million worth of maple syrup. It was the largest heist in Canadian history. And it was, somehow, the most Canadian thing that has ever happened. *The Great Canadian Maple Syrup Heist: The Great Canadian Musical* is a new musical inspired by the true story of a meticulously planned theft from the Federation of Québec Maple Syrup Producers. Part true-crime caper, part love letter to this country's gloriously specific quirks, it follows an unlikely crew of misfits who believed, with considerable justification, that the syrup was theirs to begin with. Fast-paced, funny, and unexpectedly moving, the musical blends Québécois folk, pop, and Broadway-style showstoppers with satire, suspense, and a subtle question at its heart: can you steal something that was already stolen from you? Court is now in session.

Play Reading

Come Hell or High Water

By Nicole Moeller

Seven parents are trapped at a child's birthday party. (More so than usual.) A storm rages, roads close and holy rollers everywhere cry: the end is near. How will they protect the children? Fill more balloons, put up more streamers. Put on a skit, perhaps. Something explaining impending doom... but with a Disney theme. The earth shakes and the eerily happy couple starts to argue. A touch passes between two parents who profess not to know each other, and someone screams: "What have I done with my life?" The living room turns into a dance floor, circa 2003 and the animals flee the forest. Seven-year-old Zoey dances with glee: "Aren't they cute, mommy?!" *Come Hell or High Water* is a wild ride, an apocalyptic comedy about the anxieties of parenting in a world out-of-control. It's about clinging to each other, our children and hope.

SATURDAY, JUNE 6, 2026

Musical Theatre Workshop

And Then They Sing: Musical Theatre Bookwriting

Instructor: Nick Green

Citadel Boardroom

June 6, 2026, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Ticketed event: \$50 + GST

There's a lot more to musicals than jazz hands. Beneath the belting is a finely-tuned machine in which every beat, lyric, and transition must earn its place. This workshop explores the craft of writing the book for a musical: how to structure a story that demands music, how to collaborate with composers and lyricists,

and how to build scenes that explode into song. Through discussions and practical exercises on musical theatre structure, song spotting, and world building, participants will learn how to shape compelling, singable narratives from the ground up.

This workshop is sponsored by Theatre Alberta as part of *Workshops by Request: Hometown Series*.

Playwrights Mixer

Zeidler Hall Lobby

June 6, 2026, 6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Free to attend.

Join us to meet and mingle with fellow playwrights, artists and theatre lovers who are passionate about new play development.

Play Reading

An Agatha Christie Mystery A Comedy

By Col Cseke

Zeidler Hall

June 6, 2026, 7:00 p.m.

Free to attend. Donations accepted at the door.

Did you know Agatha Christie mysteriously disappeared for 11 days in 1926?

That's a true story. This play however... With the famed author missing hapless Constable Fitzwilliams is stationed at her home with strict orders to direct any potential witnesses to the real detectives, but Agatha's ever-capable secretary Charlotte is not content to sit idle. Her attempt to interview a witness herself unleashes a parade of Christie caricatures: nosey neighbours, faux sleuths, and false confessors all clamouring to be a part of this great mystery come to life. When Arthur Conan Doyle offers to "help" by leading a seance it becomes clear the only person who can shed any light on the disappearance may just be Agatha herself. This new Canadian farce is a loving and deeply unserious tribute to the Queen of Mystery.

SUNDAY, JUNE 7, 2026

Playwrighting Workshop

The Fornes Workshop

Instructor: Mariló Núñez

David D. Bentley Salon

June 7, 2026, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Ticketed event: \$50 + GST

The Fornes Workshop, led by Mariló Núñez, is a decentralized playwriting workshop that employs Maria Irene Fornes' anti-Aristotelian approach to dramatic writing. In this method, a writer comes to the workshop with a blank slate; there are no preconceptions about what the play will be, as the process is intuitive and improvisational. Through centering movement, visualization, drawing, found objects/words, sense memory, and collective writing, participants will explore unique ways of developing characters and stories for the stage. Wear comfortable clothes you can move in, indoor runners, and bring 1-2 of your favorite plays in hard copy, as well as paper, notebooks and writing utensils.

Maria Irene Fornes (1930-2018) was a Cuban-American playwright, director, and teacher. She wrote over 40 plays and won nine Obie Awards. She taught her playwriting method at INTAR, where she founded the Hispanic Playwrights Lab in New York City.

This workshop is sponsored by Theatre Alberta as part of *Workshops by Request: Hometown Series*.

Play Reading

Chula

By Alexandra Lainfiesta

Zeidler Hall

June 7, 2026, 2:00 p.m.

Free to attend. Donations accepted at the door.

Chula is a bold, music-infused solo performance that begins in a striking black-and-white backstage world in 2008, where Aria prepares to premiere the first mariachi opera in Canada. As the haunting strains of “Cucurrucú Paloma” begin – a song that has followed her like a ghost since childhood – we are swept back to the neon and fluorescent world of 1980s Guatemala and mid 90s Edmonton, tracing a life shaped by migration, survival, and the pressure to assimilate. Performed by a single actor in both English and Spanish, *Chula* brings to life a chorus of characters – some who understand each other, and many who don’t – capturing the humour, tension, and heartbreak of living between languages. Blending music, storytelling, and theatrical transformation, the piece asks: what is your voice when you no longer know which language is the one truest to who you are?

Playwrights Mixer

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Play Reading

Darcy & Wickham

By Belinda Cornish, based on the novel *Follies Past* by Melanie Kerr

Zeidler Hall

June 7, 2026, 7:00 p.m.

Free to attend. Donations accepted at the door.

For shy, demure Georgiana Darcy, the prospect of her first London season is intimidating beyond words. That is, until her childhood friend, George Wickham, reappears in her life, igniting a spark of passion which promises to bloom into the match made in heaven of which she has always dreamed. Ah, but the path of love never did run smooth... Based on the backstory so tantalizingly hinted at in *Pride and Prejudice*, *Darcy & Wickham* explores the true source of the enmity between one of literature’s most renowned romantic heroes, Mr. Darcy, and his nemesis, the dashing Mr. Wickham. From these seeds flourishes a sweeping new romantic comedy, featuring many familiar characters beloved of Austen fans, as well as a host of hilarious fresh faces. *Darcy & Wickham* is a fleet-footed carriage ride, from gracious gatherings in Grosvenor Square to a deathbed vigil in a country inn, from the first flush of blushing love to the brink of a perilous elopement. Passion rails against propriety, and duplicity disrupts decorum, in a tempest of intrigues and affairs barely contained by the corsetry of Regency England.

This reading is co-presented with Script Salon.

For more information or to arrange interviews, contact:

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SPONSORS:

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