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## Digital Media Kit

### **Media Release: Do YOU kiss and tell? Meghan and Franny sure do in the award-winning comedy cabaret *XOXO: The Relationship Show!***

We've all heard nice guys finish last, but what about nice girls? ***XOXO: The Relationship Show*** is a comedy cabaret exploring the highs and lows of dating: inspired by conversations between friends and featuring personal experiences and anecdotes, **Two Juliets** combines the honesty of stand up comedy, the theatricality of a Shakespearean tragedy and the bone-chilling horror of an R.L. Stine novel. This queer positive and gender inclusive sketch comedy-theatre hybrid uses original music, pop culture references and real-life stories mixed with fantastical interpretations of what dating in the 21st century can be, including "Oops, You Did It Again" - a parody of a popular Britney Spears song exploring the modern phenomenon of "sexting" - and the new Irish folk song "The Isle of Starbuck" about a coffee shop where no one knows your name but everyone feels at home. As often as we feel rejection, jealousy and embarrassment, we also experience butterflies in our stomachs, first kisses and a sincere hope for true love. Join Meghan and Franny as they navigate the relationship waters from first kiss to first dis, breakups to make-ups and everything in between! Recommended for ages 15 and up.

**Two Juliets** (Meghan Chalmers & Franny McCabe-Bennett) create original shows from a funny, feminist point of view, blurring the boundaries between theatre, improv and sketch comedy with scripted shows that leave room to play with the audience. Winner of the **People's Choice Award** at the 2014 SpringWorks Festival in Stratford, Ontario, sold out houses at the 2014 Hamilton Fringe Festival, a bimonthly show at Yuk Yuk's Comedy Club (Hamilton), and excerpts performed at the Toronto Sketch Comedy Festival, March 2015. Bring a date, bring your friends or fly solo to watch **Two Juliets** run the relationship gauntlet and see who makes it out alive!

### ***Two Juliets and The Winnipeg Fringe Festival present "XOXO: The Relationship Show"***

Written, Directed and Performed by  
**Meghan Chalmers & Franny McCabe-Bennett**

Stage Managed by **Izad Etemadi**

Thurs July 16 - 1:45pm ♥ Thurs July 23 - 3:30pm  
Fri July 17 - 7:00pm ♥ Fri July 24 - 8:45pm  
Mon July 20 - 3:30pm ♥ Sat July 25 - 5:15pm  
Tues July 21 - 10:30pm ♥ Sun July 26 - 1:45pm

Opening JULY 16th, running to JULY 26th, 2015 at  
**Red River College, Roblin Centre** ♥ 160 Princess Street, Winnipeg MB  
LIMITED SEATING ♥ LATECOMERS WILL NOT BE ADMITTED ♥ 60 MINUTES

**TICKETS ONLY \$10 EACH (+ applicable fees)**

Online: [www.winnipegfringe.com](http://www.winnipegfringe.com)

In person: Royal MTC Box Office ♥ 174 Market Avenue

At the door: 160 Princess St ♥ one hour before showtime ♥ cash only

**Media Ticket Requests:** Hayley Brigg, [hbrigg@royalmtc.ca](mailto:hbrigg@royalmtc.ca)  
Publicity & Communications Coordinator, Winnipeg Fringe Festival

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## Show Synopsis

We've all heard nice guys finish last, but what about nice girls? *XOXO: The Relationship Show* is a comedy cabaret exploring the highs and lows of dating in the modern world, from first kiss to first dis, break-ups to make-ups and everything in between. Inspired by conversations between friends and featuring personal experiences and anecdotes, the show combines the honesty of stand up comedy, the theatricality of a Shakespearean tragedy and the bone-chilling horror of an R.L. Stine novel. This queer positive and gender inclusive sketch/theatre hybrid uses original music, pop culture references and real-life stories mixed with fantastical interpretations of what dating in the 21st century can be. As often as we feel rejection, jealousy and embarrassment, we also experience butterflies in our stomachs, first kisses and a sincere hope for true love.

**Two Juliets** (Meghan Chalmers & Franny McCabe-Bennett) proudly present this hour long high-energy, fast paced hybrid of sketch comedy, theatre and music, including scenes, monologues, original songs, and some re-imagined classics. Bring a date, bring your friends, or fly solo to watch Two Juliets run the relationship gauntlet and see who makes it out alive!

## Company History and Artist Bios

**Meghan Chalmers** and **Franny McCabe-Bennett** met in the Theatre Performance program at Humber College. They collaborated in the spring of 2012 to create and perform their first duet work, "Merge". In the winter of 2012, Franny and Meghan became **Two Juliets**. To date, Two Juliets has written and performed *XOXO* (25 min) at the 2013 Hamilton Fringe Festival, The Box Toronto, the 2014 Lab Cab Festival and hosted an official launch party in September 2013. *XOXO: The Relationship Show* (60 min) premiered at SpringWorks in Stratford, May 2014 winning the People's Choice Award and played to sold out audiences at the 2014 Hamilton Fringe Festival. The 60 minute show has also played at the One More Night Festival and in residency with Yuk Yuk's Comedy Club in Hamilton with plans to tour the Toronto Fringe and Winnipeg Fringe Festivals in July 2015. In March 2015, Two Juliets broke into the sketch comedy scene at the Toronto Sketch Comedy Festival, adding individual sketches to their growing repertoire. The original parody song "Help Me Maybe" was featured in Episode 33 of Jake and Amir's advice podcast [If I Were You](#), an episode that has over 90,000 plays, and Meghan and Franny are hard at work on an album of original music and parody songs. [www.TwoJuliets.com](http://www.TwoJuliets.com) ♥ [@TwoJulietsTO](https://twitter.com/TwoJulietsTO)

**Meghan Chalmers** was raised in Oakville, Ontario and began Irish dance at the age of six. She continued for twelve years, winning multiple awards and ultimately reaching championship level, competing across Canada and the United States. In her last year of high school she joined the Toronto Youth Music Theatre Company, where she sang with Jason Robert Brown at the Glenn Gould Studio in Toronto. Meghan is a graduate of the Theatre Performance program at Humber College. At Humber, Meghan played a variety of roles including Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*, Old Shepherd in *The Winter's Tale*, Nastassya Filippovna/Nina Alexandrovna in *The Idiot*, and explored a play analysis of *Uncle Vanya* with Tatiana Jennings. In Fall 2012, she played Louise Mitchell and Madeleine Vaucrain in *Blood and Roses*, and wrote the song "Everything's Pink" which appeared in the show. Meghan is certified in basic stage combat and was the recipient of a Humber Theatre Performance Award. In May 2013 and again in 2015, she was the Assistant Box Office and Front of House Manager for the SOULO Theatre Festival. Meghan recently graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, specializing in Acting at York University.

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**Franny McCabe-Bennett**, originally from Oakville, is an actor, singer, storyteller and arts administrator working in Toronto. Outside of her work with Two Juliets, she recently returned from premiering a workshop version of her one woman show *These Aren't My Real Boobs (This Isn't My Real Stomach)* in New York City, played Pheobe in *The Beaver Den*, participated in the inaugural Theatre Relay project, appeared as The Nun in *Hush*, part of the 2013 Gay Play Day Festival at Alumnae Theatre, in *Kitchen Party Nervous Breakdown* (The Cabaret Company) and as Bad Idea Bear/Mrs Thistlewat in Hammer Entertainment's production of *Avenue Q*. As a member of the Monday Funday Creation Group, she has workshopped the roles of Phebe in *As You Like It*, Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* and Baptista in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Favourite credits include: *We Walk Among You* workshop (Artichoke Heart Collective), *Gulliver's Travels* (Humber Theatre, dir. Tatiana Jennings), Catherine in *Proof*\*+ (BurlOak Theatre Group), Jeanie in *Hair*\* (West End Studio Theatre), and Julie in *Perfect Wedding*\*\* (West End Studio Theatre). Franny directed the sold-out run of *Zombie Prom* at the University of Guelph and was the Assistant Director for Sky Gilbert's *The Shakespeare Experiment: As You Like It* and *Reconciliation* (The Cabaret Company/Buddies In Bad Times Theatre). Franny is a multidisciplinary artist and has trained in physical theatre, clown, improv (Second City Toronto), classical text and more. She has been studying singing with acclaimed Broadway and cabaret veteran Judith Lander for over 10 years. Franny also works as a vocal coach and vocal director for musical theatre. Training: University of Guelph graduate, Humber College drop out. More about Franny at [www.frannymcb.com](http://www.frannymcb.com)\*Oakville Drama Series, Best Female Performance: Nominee. +Theatre Ontario, Association of Community Theatres (Central Ontario): Honourable Mention, Acting. \*\*Oakville Drama Series, Best Female Performance: Recipient.

## Past Press and Reviews

### Quotes:

#### [The Mind Reels:](#)

"With sketches (the girlfriend interview is hilarious) to songs (some amazing original material, and send-ups – the pair performing The Isle of Starbuck is just AWESOME!), to stories, this show is entertaining, incredibly funny, and had the audience practically in tears with their performances. And their performances are fantastic. These two are incredibly in synch with one another, the banter, and dialogue coming off as completely natural. ... The pair have great chemistry not only with each other, but with the entire audience, and they have come to play! Which is great news for viewers because they both come across as so damned likable that you want to hang out with them for the hour that the show runs and just have a good time with them."

#### [The Theatre Reader:](#)

"I really enjoyed how these girls poked fun at relationship stereotypes and standards young women hold. Their singing voices were absolutely stellar. Everything about these two was absolutely endearing, from their seductive club dancing to their equally attractive cough fests. ...Sprinkled with sarcasm, bombastic drama, and brash, obnoxious fun, these are crazy chicks you'd actually want to date."

#### [Mooney on Theatre:](#)

"If you enjoy smart, funny women as much as I do, I would certainly recommend this show. Transitions were lightning-fast and...I appreciated the swift pace of the show. ...I laughed out loud at this goofy and endearing performance."

#### [Gay Theatre Toronto:](#)

"Seeing **XOXO: The Relationship Show** was a great way to start off this year's Fringe festival. It was lighthearted, upbeat fun. It's hard not to like Franny McCabe-Bennett and Meghan Chalmers, known collectively as Two Juliets. Both women are extremely engaging and have wonderful chemistry together on stage. One

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imagines they are best of friends off stage as well. One of the downfalls as an audience member is wondering which performer deserves your attention more."

"Consider them the Tina Fey and Amy Poehler of the Hamilton Fringe. That's shorthand for saying Meghan Chalmers and Franny McCabe-Bennett, the writers, directors and stars of *XOXO The Relationship Show*, have the kind of fantastic comic chemistry we rarely get to see between women on the stage." - Anne Bokma, Raise the Hammer, 2014

"The songs...are incredibly witty, thought-provoking, and beautifully sung." - Beverly Horton, VIEW Magazine, 2014

"Had me in stitches... The piece was never shy of high-energy honesty." - Nicole D'Amato, The Theatre Reader, 2014

"Funniest thing I have seen on stage in a long time... Highly recommended." - Scott Summerhayes, urbanicity, 2014

"Chalmers and McCabe-Bennett show versatility, comedic timing and great chemistry... A fun, fresh and recommended hour." - Sue Yarwood, Raise the Hammer, 2014

"Two girls, an open studio, and a lot of heart, *XOXO* is not any run-of-the-mill comedy. [...] I would love to see these two girls in a show again." -Katie Stoneman, Hamilton Fringe Festival Reviewer 2013

"The duo of Two Juliets (Meghan Chalmers and Franny McCabe-Bennett) put on a terrific show in *XOXO*, a must see comedy about relationship struggles. Like Abbott and Costello, Meghan set up the bottles and Franny knocked them down. The chemistry they exhibited in their performance was flawless. [...] This isn't just a show for women. It's a show for everyone who's been in a relationship." -Thomas Allen, Hamilton Fringe Festival Reviewer 2013

"Everyone, even a midlife long-married woman like me, can relate to the humanity and humour in their tales. [...] Despite the vagaries of dating life, one thing's for certain: you'll leave this show with a big smile on your face." -Anne Bokma, Hamilton Fringe Festival Reviewer 2013

"LOVED #XOXOshow at #HamFringe everyone go see it today!" @emilywestover

"XOXO LMAO Best line: It's raining men, girls, so go get wet! #XOXOshow" @cable14

"Headed to #HamFringe today? I HIGHLY recommend #XOXOshow. Last minute surprise that turned into a gem of a show!" @neeners006

### **Full Reviews:**

## ***"XOXO: The Relationship Show" (60 min)***

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## **Fringe Toronto: XOXO – The Relationship Show**

Timothy Rideout for “The Mind Reels”, July 5 2015

Meghan Chalmers and Franny McCabe-Bennett simply OWN the Theatre Passe Muraille Backspace with their presentation of **XOXO: The Relationship Show**.

Combining hilarious songs, wonderful commentary on dating and relationships, and looking like they are having a damned fine time doing it, Chalmers and McCabe-Bennett take us through their love lives as two Juliets.

With sketches (the girlfriend interview is hilarious) to songs (some amazing original material, and send-ups – the pair performing The Isle of Starbuck is just AWESOME!), to stories, this show is entertaining, incredibly funny, and had the audience practically in tears with their performances.

And their performances are fantastic. These two are incredibly in synch with one another, the banter, and dialogue coming off as completely natural, and of course, they’d break out into song together... that’s what friends do!

From their first kisses to dealing with dating apps (profiles, pictures, likes and unwanted dick pics) to dating to break-up and back again, we join this duo, laughing at similar or shared experiences and truths, and their insightful commentary on the nature of relationships.

The pair have great chemistry not only with each other, but with the entire audience, and they have come to play! Which is great news for viewers because they both come across as so damned likable that you want to hang out with them for the hour that the show runs and just have a good time with them. This is bound to entertain you, and, honestly, it feels like a great date show...

But don’t take my word for it, check out XOXO on Tuesday the 7th, Wednesday the 8th, Thursday the 9th or Saturday 11th. Buy your tickets [here](#).

And if you aren’t here in Toronto, don’t worry, they are doing their best to get to other Fringe events as well. If they end up anywhere near you, go get a laugh, these gals are ones to watch!

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## **Fringing It Up: Inventors, Relationships and Inventors of Relationships**

Milica Marković for “The Theatre Reader”, July 4 2015

I was quite the theatre hopper at the 2015 Toronto Fringe Festival, witnessing two shows back-to-back that may be polar opposites in delivery, but are equally packed with innovative punch lines.

[...]

I then paid a visit to dating gurus Meghan Chalmers and Franny McCabe-Bennett at the Theatre Passe Muraille backspace for *XOXO: The Relationship Show*. Written, directed and performed by these two lovely Juliets, this is

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an hour-long comedy cabaret that satirizes the difficulties of love and relationships in the modern era from a young female perspective.

I really enjoyed how these girls poked fun at relationship stereotypes and standards young women hold. The pair was successful at challenging societal norms surrounding sex and gender.

Their singing voices were absolutely stellar; they incorporated many popular songs that were creatively reimagined with new lyrics to fit their skits. I will say however, that there were times when the background music was perhaps a little too loud, drowning out their voices and distracting from their play. Nevertheless, everything about these two was absolutely endearing, from their seductive club dancing to their equally attractive cough fests.

Although the piece does target an obviously specific demographic, others might find something relatable in it – they’ll almost certainly be reminded of girls in their lives who behave this way.

Sprinkled with sarcasm, bombastic drama, and brash, obnoxious fun, these are crazy chicks you’d actually want to date.

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## **XOXO: THE RELATIONSHIP SHOW (TWO JULIETS) 2015 TORONTO FRINGE REVIEW**

Maggie Clapperton for “Mooney on Theatre”, July 4 2015

Tonight I attended the comedic [XOXO: The Relationship Show\(Two Juliets\)](#) at the 2015 [Toronto Fringe Festival](#). Described as a “comedy cabaret,” this show is a whirlwind of laughs bound together by the sometimes exhilarating, oft exasperating trials of dating in the modern world.

I’m sure this show isn’t for everyone, but, as a twenty-something year old female, I can safely assume that I am Meghan Chalmers and Franny McCabe-Bennett’s target demographic: Online dating, accidental “likes”, decoding texts... my familiarity with the subject matter is almost cringeworthy. If you enjoy smart, funny women as much as I do, I would certainly recommend this show.

Like any sketch show, I found that certain bits worked better than others. My personal favourites were McCabe-Bennett’s “First Kiss” in which she recounts her first night out as a bisexual woman, and the closing number “Where Did You Go?” about the modern phenomena of exes simply dropping off the face of the planet, AKA social media.

Transitions were lightning-fast and while some may find this confusing, I appreciated the swift pace of the show. In my opinion, a sketch show doesn’t always need to be coherent, simply funny.

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McCabe-Bennett particularly stood out as a natural comic, but both performers seem like someone I'd like to grab a beer with. While not every joke hit the mark, more often than not I laughed out loud at this goofy and endearing performance.

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## Toronto Fringe Review - XOXO: The Relationship Show

Darren Stewart-Jones for "Gay Theatre Toronto", July 1 2015

Seeing *XOXO: The Relationship Show* was a great way to start off this year's Fringe festival. It was lighthearted, upbeat fun. It's hard not to like Franny McCabe-Bennett and Meghan Chalmers, known collectively as Two Juliets. Both women are extremely engaging and have wonderful chemistry together on stage. One imagines they are best of friends off stage as well. One of the downfalls as an audience member is wondering which performer deserves your attention more.

Sketch comedy is harder than it looks but both women drew laughs from the sold-out opening night crowd with their sarcastic yet honest portrayal of today's dating scene. Expect lots of jokes about Facebook, Tinder and Snapchat.

Some of the sketches fell flat for me but I feel the same way when watching any episode of *Saturday Night Live*. Every skit doesn't appeal to every person's funny bone. Amy Poehler and Tina Fey don't make me laugh all of the time either.

The stand out moments of this show were the singing scenes, especially their ode to the "Isle of Starbuck". Check out this show, ladies and gents. Franny and Meghan might just charm the pants (or indeed, skirt) right off you. Unfortunately, I couldn't stay for the opening night free hot dogs after the performance.

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## Fringe Review: XOXO The Relationship Show

By [Anne Bokma](#)  
Published July 20, 2014

Consider them the Tina Fey and Amy Poehler of the Hamilton Fringe. That's shorthand for saying Meghan Chalmers and Franny McCabe-Bennett, the writers, directors and stars of *XOXO The Relationship Show*, have the kind of fantastic comic chemistry we rarely get to see between women on the stage.

After catching them in their short 20-minute workshop version of *XOXO* as part of the Fringe's inaugural Gallery Mini-Series last year, I left wanting more. This newly expanded 60-minute comedy cabaret delivers plenty more of their original smart and sassy commentary on the pleasures and pitfalls (mostly the latter) of dating in the age of social media.

Using a blend of sketch comedy, theatre and music, Chalmers and McCabe-Bennett are entirely likeable, goofy and given to occasional pratfalls in their quest to illuminate the complexity of dating in the modern age.

They ruminate on the pressures facing women in search of love, whether it's the plight of picking the right user name for a dating site, whether - and where - to shave for a first date ("sometimes a preemptive non-shave can

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be a lady's best friend") and bemoaning the wasted energy they pour into men ("I had to explain what a feeling is!").

This charming and talented duo hit all the right notes, particularly when they break into song. Their clever lyrics capture the singular despair of those who attempt to find comfort in a crowd in the Irish folk song, "The Isle of Starbuck," and their parody of Britney Spears in "Oops, You Did it Again," hilariously detonates the confounding compulsion of men who send "dick pics" via snapchat.

The two brilliantly round out the show by throwing in a little Shakespeare into the mix to remind us that there is absolutely nothing new under the sun when it comes to romantic entanglements. "How wayward is this foolish love," wrote the Bard.

Chalmers and McCabe-Bennett showcase their talents to mock how silly and stupid mating rituals can be-and they point to the universal truth that in the search for love, we never tire of trying.

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## Fringe Review: XOXO: The Relationship Show

By [Sue Yarwood](#)

Published July 28, 2014

One excellent benefit of attending Fringe plays is the chance to discover nooks and crannies of this city which you had previously not noticed.

The beautiful space at 95 King Street East, Mills Hardware, has been a theatre venue for exactly 9 days. Its gorgeous exposed brick and vaulted ceiling reminded me of how many architectural treasures lie behind our Core's sometimes disheveled façade.

Fittingly, then, *XOXO: The Relationship Show* deals with old themes viewed in a new light.

The eternal search for love is given a cabaret treatment by the talented duo of Meghan Chalmers and Franny McCabe-Bennett as they focus on dating in an era of IM and Snapchat.

The one-hour performance moves briskly between songs and skits. Chalmers and McCabe-Bennett show versatility, comedic timing and great chemistry in their energized song 'Oops, You Did It Again,' which addresses some men's penchants for sending anatomical selfies.

The pair employ their lovely and complementary voices, as well as dance skills, to reassure the lonely that there will always be a place of comfort to welcome us (hint: it involves a mermaid).

Some skits humorously examine the growing disparity between our everyday lives and our online presence, while other sketches take a magnifying glass to the potential for miscommunication in a world of media saturation. To LIKE or not to LIKE, *that* is the question.

Finally, just to remind us that the reading of signals and the expressing of love has been a complicated art throughout time, the pair perform a clever series of intertwined soliloquies.

This is a fun, fresh and recommended hour.

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## Two Polar Opposite Shows, One Night at the Fringe

*Nicole D'Amato*  
*The Theatre Reader, Staff Writer*

My double-header night at the 2014 Hamilton Fringe Festival exposed me to two very different, but nonetheless intriguing shows.

My first stop was at the newly renovated Mills Hardware (95 King Street East), to witness the comedy cabaret, *XOXO: The Relationship Show*. Based on the 2013 mini-series hit, *XOXO*, and winner of the People's Choice Award at SpringWorks Festival 2014 (Stratford, Ontario), this hour-long piece is written, directed, and performed by **Meghan Chalmers** and **Franny McCabe-Bennett**, better known as the Two Juliets. The space was intimate, with a raised stage, blank set, and, of course, Beyoncé playing in the background.

*XOXO: The Relationship Show* explores the complicated and sometimes baffling politics of dating and relationships in the twenty-first century from a young female point of view. Beginning with an homage to 'Spin the Bottle' and the teenage game 'Seven Minutes in Heaven', the audience is given a glimpse into the

psyche of young women who face these seemingly trivial, yet pressing incidents in their everyday lives. The perpetually asked (yelled) club question "IS HE CUTE?", the struggles of the accidental Tinder left swipe, or the 'Like' of the ex-boyfriend's current girlfriend's Insta Collage are all incredibly relatable and had me in stitches in the front row –laughing not only at the content, but also at myself for having been in those same silly situations. I was most impressed with the Two Juliets' willingness to play. The piece was never shy of high-energy honesty, and my favourite of their sketch-comedy bits had to be the Macbeth witches throwback, discussing the curse and impact of the attention-grabbing new display picture.

I would say that this piece, instead of truly having something for *everyone*, speaks to a very specific audience of young females. I would love to see the show workshopped and improved once again, with the outcome of a more polished and tight performance. Nonetheless, *XOXO: The Relationship Show* is an entertaining and fun piece, which challenges modern day relationship and gender norms.

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### **"XOXO Had Me Laughing and Slapping My Knee!"**

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I was laughing and slapping my knee the entire show, not because I found it comical (don't get me wrong, it was comical), but because I recognized so many of the situations as ones I have been in myself. The complaints they had about things men do—I've done those things! The mistakes they or the people they have been with have made in the past—I've made those mistakes! And the awkward situations with your significant other's friends and family that you clearly were not prepared for—I've put girls through those situations (I'm prepared for anything)!

I think XOXO was clearly written for a Generation Y audience—but will likely be enjoyed by everyone because there's a chance if you didn't grow up with smartphones, you can probably still relate to the theme—casual dating sucks sometimes.

The hilarity and goofiness that is "XOXO" is playing at Mills Hardware on King Street East. I would highly recommend it.

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## Two Juliets – “XOXO” (25 min) Reviews:

“XOXO” First Review– Hamilton Fringe Festival Community Reviews, July 28, 2013

### XOXO

Posted on [July 28, 2013](#)



Playwright: Meghan Chalmers & Franny McCabe-Bennett  
Director: Franny McCabe-Bennett & Meghan Chalmers  
Cast: Meghan Chalmers & Franny McCabe-Bennett

Performed at Gallery #3: James North Studio

Review by: Katie Stoneman

Two girls, an open studio, and a lot of heart, XOXO is not any run-of-the-mill comedy.

Meghan Chalmers and Franny McCabe-Bennett take you through the ups and downs of dating in the modern world. From online profiles, to what is an appropriate drink for a boyfriend to have, when out with other girls, that aren't you.

Their comedy isn't just for the girls, though, there were plenty of men there, and they were laughing along with us. Their humour is a little reminiscent of the humour in Lena Dunham's *Girls*.

The way that the women put together the scenes is more than just two girls talking about “boy problems”, the colloquially termed “girl talk”. Instead, sarcastic take on meeting a potential boyfriend's family (scripted as a hilarious interview) was the highlight of the show for me. They wrote, produced, acted, danced, sang. They did it all, and they did it very well.

Both women bring something to the table when it comes to acting. Franny is hilarious, flat out. She delivers lines with impeccable timing, and a facial expression that, alone, would have you busting a gut. Her sarcastic lines delivered bluntly, will send you reeling.

Meghan offers a cuter kind of comedy, but nonetheless hilarious. Her emotive performance is outrageous, and zany, and awesome.

I didn't know what to expect, going into this show, but I am really glad I caught it. And I would love to see these two girls in a show again.

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*Two Juliets*

"XOXO" Second Review– Hamilton Fringe Festival Community Reviews, July 28, 2013

## **XOXO (second review)**

Posted on [July 28, 2013](#)



Playwright: Meghan Chalmers & Franny McCabe-Bennett  
Director: Franny McCabe-Bennett & Meghan Chalmers  
Cast: Meghan Chalmers & Franny McCabe-Bennett

Show Type: Comedy  
Audience: General

Performed at Gallery #3: James North Studio

Review by: Thomas Allen

The duo of Two Juliets (Meghan Chalmers and Franny McCabe-Bennett) put on a terrific show in "XOXO", a must see comedy about relationship struggles.

From spinning the bottle, to creating a fluffy on-line dating profile, and even an awkward interview turned coughing lesson, the show was filled with clever humour.

A memorable moment is their lesson about what alcoholic beverage boyfriends aren't allowed to have if they're out with other girls. The answer: beer. Catch the show to find out why, though.

It was not only well acted, well-timed, and dramatic. They also sang and danced to some old classics and some new original songs. The dancing accompanying the singing was far from poetic, it was jerky, awkward, and perfect.

Performed at James Street North Studio, the show was very intimate. Both actresses interacted with the crowd in a way that was well scripted and hilarious. It was too hard not to chuckle when this sassy duo looked at you.

Like Abbot and Costello, Meghan set up the bottles and Franny knocked them down. The chemistry they exhibited in their performance was flawless.

This isn't just a show for women. It's a show for everyone who's been in a relationship. And it was totally worth eight dollars.

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"XOXO" Third Review- Hamilton Fringe Festival Community Reviews, July 28, 2013

## **XOXO (third review)**

Posted on [August 7, 2013](#)



Playwright: Meghan Chalmers & Franny McCabe-Bennett  
Director: Franny McCabe-Bennett & Meghan Chalmers  
Cast: Meghan Chalmers & Franny McCabe-Bennett

Show Type: Comedy  
Audience: General

Performed at Gallery #3: James North Studio

Review by: Anne Bokma

My only complaint about XOXO is that at a spare 25 minutes, it's far too short. I left the show wanting more. Lots more. More of Meghan Chalmers and Franny McCabe-Bennett's zany charm, boundless energy and hilarious insights into the rollercoaster ride of love and relationships. Whether it was a scene about a pre-teen game of spin the bottle or about the pressure to create the perfect online profile, this duo illuminates how much the search for love is a shot in the dark. Sometimes you get lucky and hit the bull's eye and other times you miss the target < over and over again. Not surprisingly, the stories in XOXO fall into the later category but their woeful dating tales make for juicy material.

Chalmers and McCabe-Bennett, who met a few years ago in the theatre program at Humber College, wrote, directed and star in the show and admit that the stories are culled from their own true-life dating experiences. That's probably why they have such a ring of authenticity about them. Everyone even a midlife long married woman like me can relate to the humanity and humour in their tales. You don't have to be twentysomething to love this show. Nor do you have to be a woman. There were plenty of guys in the audience the night I saw the show and they were enjoying themselves thoroughly.

When I approached Chalmers and McCabe-Bennett after the show to tell them how much I enjoyed a particularly hilarious bit about a woman being interviewed by a potential boyfriend's family, they mentioned offhandedly that they had improvised the scene the day before and threw it into the show that night. I was impressed. You will be too when you catch this talented pair in action. Despite the vagaries of dating life, one thing's for certain, you'll leave this show with a big smile on your face.

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## Two Juliets - In the Press & On the Net:

"XOXO: The Relationship Show" Wins the **People's Choice Award**, May 2014, Stratford ON



Franny McCabe Bennet & Meghan Chalmers performing excerpts from their show *XOXO: The Relationship Show*. Christina Gordon & Jessica Seguin announcing the 2014 People's Choice Award:

*XOXO: The Relationship Show*

Written & Performed By Franny McCabe-Bennet & Meghan Chalmers

We were delighted they were at the Cabaret to receive the honour! Congratulations Franny and Meghan!

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"Oakville's Two Juliets Expands XOXO show" – Oakville Beaver, December 4, 2014

## Oakville's Two Juliets expands XOXO show



### Oakville's Two Juliets expands XOXO show

Oakville Beaver file photo

*Meghan Chalmers, left, and Franny McCabe-Bennett, co-founders of Oakville's Two Juliets theatre company, have expanded their inaugural show XOXO to Hamilton, Toronto and Stratford, Ont. The next performance is set for Thursday (Dec. 4) at 9 p.m. at Hamilton's Yuk Yuk's Comedy Club.*

#### Oakville Beaver

Oakville theatre company Two Juliets has expanded its inaugural show *XOXO* to Hamilton, Toronto and Stratford, Ont., collecting awards and rave reviews along the way, says co-founder Franny McCabe-Bennett.

The next performance is set for tonight (Thursday) at 9 at the Yuk Yuk's Comedy Club in Hamilton, 120 King St. W., unit 540.

"We performed at the Hamilton Fringe Festival (earlier this year)... and from that, Yuk Yuk's in Hamilton invited us to bring our show there and make that our home base for performances," said McCabe-Bennett, who co-founded Two Juliets with Meghan Chalmers.

The pair met in the theatre performance program and Humber College in 2010 and has been working together since.

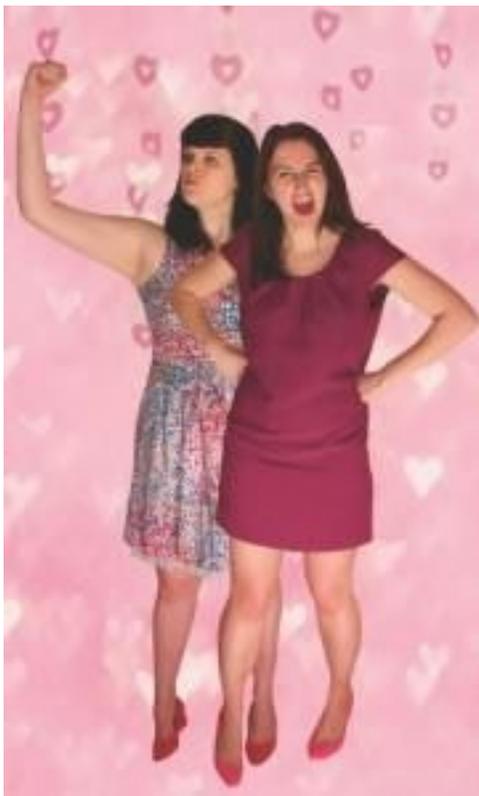
*XOXO: The Relationship Show* is a comedy-cabaret that focuses on dating, relationships and break-ups, Chalmers told the *Oakville Beaver* in a previous interview last year.

"Even though *XOXO* is a comedy, there's a lot of sadness in it," she said. "There's sadness in relationships. It would be weird if (relationships) were happy all the time, especially if you were breaking up with someone."

"XOXO: The Relationship Show is Coming Back to the Hammer" – MonkeyBiz, October 30, 2014

## XOXO The Relationship Show Is Coming Back to The Hammer

Posted By [Katie Stoneman](#) On Thursday, October 30, 2014 12:32 AM. Under [Entertainment](#), [Featured News](#)



Humour is one of the cheapest and best forms of medicine for your mind and body. No, not actual prescribed medicine, but when the ability to jest at one's unfortunate circumstances is lost, what else is left really? A sidesplitting show is coming back to Hamilton to remind us to always laugh.

**Two Juliets** (Meghan Chalmers and Franny McCabe-Bennett) will perform their show, *XOXO: The Relationship* show at Yuk Yuk's on December 4<sup>th</sup>. The show is what they've described as a comedy cabaret, including spoof songs, real-life story monologues, and an understanding of physical comedy that adds that extra something to the laughs.

A feminist comedy, the show doesn't aim to marginalize or promote stereotypes to pilfer cheap laughs.

"So many guys, too, have to deal with the things we put in the show, it doesn't matter what gender you are," said Chalmers.

They want the audience to laugh, but they also want the audience to know what the real absurdity it is that they're laughing at.

"The nice thing about this show is that we can break character. At one point, when they clapped, I wanted them to understand what they were clapping for, so I said to them, 'Thank you so much for supporting a feminist song about consent' and then

they kind of laughed, and clearly had a sort of a-ha moment," said McCabe-Bennett

McCabe-Bennett and Chalmers first performed a shorter 25-minute version of the *XOXO* show at the 2013 Hamilton Fringe Festival. Their telling of real human stories with flair and great comedic timing had their audiences raving with good reviews.



"At times we're playing very heightened versions of ourselves, or sometimes it's totally fake people, but it's usually us, the story telling is real, true stories we share," said McCabe-Bennett.

They expanded the show, first for an hour-long performance at last year's Spring Works Festival in Stratford ON, again at the 2014 Hamilton Fringe Festival, and now they're bringing the laughs back to Hamilton, where they're performing the show for a second time at Yuk Yuk's.

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“Yuk Yuk’s is our first real bridging of theatre and comedy, which is our goal because we both have theatre backgrounds,” said McCabe-Bennett.

The two have never really delved into stand-up comedy performances much, but recognize how their show uses a lot of the same methods to produce.

“I feel like a lot of elements [of stand-up] are similar to the way we work and we create,” said Chalmers.

Chalmers and McCabe Bennett met while enrolled in the Theatre Performance program at Humber College. They discovered a special creative chemistry when they were paired up to work together on a second-year performance project.



“We found that a lot of things that were of interest to us were similar. It was fun because it was coming from a lot of different perspectives and backgrounds,” said McCabe-Bennett.

The two embraced their natural creative chemistry and have harnessed their strong working relationship to produce a high quality, hysterical and unique show.

“When we were writing [*XOXO*], we did want to make a point that it’s not a show that’s like, ‘Want to hear the worst things about dudes?’ Because that’s boring and lazy, and people have heard those stories before,” said McCabe-Bennett

Like countless creative minds before them, the two share the struggle of trying to create and perform in an economy where artistic support is diminishing. The

*XOXO: Relationship Show* comedy cabaret started out as a couple of young women with a spot in a theatre festival, working and writing out of Chalmers’ backyard.

“Something I’ve learned along the way, is that even if it does feel small, you’re still working out of your house, it doesn’t mean it’s any less valid,” said Chalmers, followed by a whole-hearted, “Yep,” From McCabe-Bennett.

Their work is sweet, honest and light-hearted comedy. See it for yourself on December 4<sup>th</sup> at Yuk Yuk’s in Hamilton. See their amazing trailer below. And for more from these talented ladies, check out their [YouTube](#) channel.

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*Two Juliets*

"Local Theatre Company Debuted Play Last Weekend" – Oakville Beaver, Sept. 11, 2013

## Artscene

# Local theatre company debuted first play last weekend

by **Nathan Howes**  
Special to *Oakville Beaver*

The founders of Oakville's newest theatre company promised audiences a comedy that would tug at their heart last weekend.

They delivered *XOXO*, the introductory offering of *Two Juliets* theatre company, founded by Meghan Chalmers, 21, and Franny McCabe-Bennett, 27, when it was performed at The Box in Toronto.

The pair met in the theatre performance program at Humber College in 2010 and have been working together ever since.

"We created a performance piece in theatre school that was so well-received we decided to continue writing together once we finished school. We premiered *XOXO* at the Hamilton Fringe Festival this summer," said McCabe-Bennett, who was in Toronto Saturday with Chalmers for the one-show performance and the official launch of *Two Juliets*.

*XOXO* is a 25-minute comedy-cabaret that focuses on dating, relationships and break-ups, Chalmers said.

"Even though *XOXO* is a comedy, there's a lot of sadness in it. There's sadness in relationships. It would be weird if (relationships) were happy all the time, especially if you were breaking up with someone," she said.

When people ask about *XOXO*, McCabe-Bennett said they have a hard time putting it into words.

"It's a series of little short scenes and/or monologues and songs and different types of qualities. It's not like a narrative play," said McCabe-



Two Oakville friends have launched a new theatre company, *Two Juliets*. Meghan Chalmers, left, and Franny McCabe-Bennett, debuted their first play, *XOXO* last weekend at The Box in Toronto. | photo by Graham Paine - *Oakville Beaver* (@halton\_photog)

Bennett.

Chalmers was in her final year at Humber when McCabe-Bennett approached her about creating a show for the Hamilton Fringe Festival.

Chalmers noted the idea for *XOXO* came about in December 2012, but the writing of the show didn't start until June of this year.

"We just didn't know where we would do it or where it would happen. We just wanted to get our ideas together, even if it didn't happen. Let's

just get together anyway," she said. "It sort of all came together the last two weeks before the festival."

The premiere of the show in Hamilton received great reviews, Chalmers said. The feeling of putting on the show for the first time was "really exciting."

McCabe-Bennett said starting the business with her friend was a natural progression. The 27-year-old was eager to start creating her own work.

"I left Humber after two years. It's

a three-year program and I felt like I didn't want to stay there anymore. I was ready to go off on my own and Meghan stayed and completed her third year," said McCabe-Bennett.

It also helps that working together comes easy for the pair — they have similar interests and "the same kind of things make us laugh," McCabe-Bennett said.

"We write comedy pieces, but at the same time we have such different perspectives. I know what will

make Meghan laugh, but what she says is always a surprise to me. There is something really exciting about that relationship," she said. "Meghan just turned 21 and I'm turning 28 in December....(it's) great about having those two points of view."

While there are no plans currently to perform *XOXO* in Oakville, McCabe-Bennett said there is a possibility of a future local show if there are enough requests for it.

"Oakville has a lot of really interesting performance spaces so it would be cool to see if we could find something in Oakville that we could do a show here," she said.

As for their next production, McCabe-Bennett noted they have some ideas right now but nothing is concrete yet.

"It's safe to say they're based on everyday life things. I would love for us to do a show that talks about food and eating and bodies," said McCabe-Bennett.

According to its founders, *Two Juliets'* productions promise shows full of "fun and stories they can relate to," Chalmers said. The best part about creating shows is that "you create other ideas for other shows."

"Franny and I are very passionate people and we're very excited (about our shows). People get excited too because they know that we have such a high energy and we balance each other well," said Chalmers.

"When we do something together, it's fun for everybody because they all get to experience the joy we have together."

The *Two Juliets* do not have a website as of yet. To contact Chalmers and McCabe-Bennett email [itaughy-ourboyfriend@gmail.com](mailto:itaughy-ourboyfriend@gmail.com).

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## **I Heart Hamilton: An Interview with Two Juliets**

### **I Heart Hamilton: Can you give a quick recap of how you two met and formed Two Juliets?**

Two Juliets: We met in the Theatre Performance program at Humber College, and worked together on a 15-minute partner performance based on the subject word “Merge.” We discovered we had a really great working relationship and found we shared similar senses of humour and were interested in similar topics and themes. After working together at school, we decided we wanted to work together in the future, and in the winter of 2012 formed Two Juliets.

### **You call “XOXO: The Relationship Show” a comedy cabaret – it’s part sketch comedy, theatre, music. I love the format; it’s so unique. What was the process like when putting it together? Do you improvise together or do you ever work on ideas on your own and bring it to the table?**

TJ: We did both! It’s a really fun, creative process. For “XOXO: The Relationship Show,” we started by brainstorming all the different aspects of dating and relationships that we could try to tackle, like first dates, breaking up, generalized things like that. From there, we got more specific and started looking at actual things that have happened to us personally that we wanted to be in the show or thought an audience might be interested in, then wrote monologues about those topics. After writing on our own, we would have meetings where we would come together, read each other what we’d written and get the other person’s reaction and opinion. For ideas that we want in the show, but that may be too close to us or too uncomfortable to write about, we would give the idea to the other person and they would write what their interpretation of that subject is.

Once we had some material created that way, we also started using improvisation as a creation method and now a lot of our work is 100% co-written through pure improvisation. We have similar creative minds, and if we get on a topic that we really connect with, like dating and relationships, and come up with a fun idea, like the Shakespearean curse for example, it’s easy for us to bounce ideas off of each other and see what works best. Our writing sessions jump around a lot, similar to the structure of the show.

We work best when we let ourselves riff and improvise about something and then when we get tired of that idea, we move onto something else for a while, then if we get a new spark for that previous idea we will go back and work on it again. A good example of that is with some of the music in the show. Franny wanted to write something that sounded like an Irish folk song, so we started working on that idea, just throwing out melodies and possible lyrics, writing down the ones that made us laugh and while we were working on that, an idea for an American folk/country song came up, so we switched gears and started working on that song, and we’d bounce back and forth as the mood and ideas would strike us. We basically wrote those two songs (“Isle of Starbuck” and “Where Did You Go”) literally at the same time, put them away for a few days to settle then looked at them again as separate entities to fine tune them and figure out where they could go in the show. We like to laugh A LOT and many of our writing meetings are also inspiration meetings to find more things that we think are funny that we want to draw inspiration from or write about. We have quite a few ideas for future shows, and when a funny idea comes up that doesn’t fit into “XOXO: The Relationship Show,” we file it away to be used for something else in the future.

### **When you created the initial half-hour version of “XOXO,” did you see the potential to develop it further into a longer show or did that idea come later?**

Meghan: We knew when we started creating “XOXO” that we were going to want to expand the show. It’s such a relevant and fun topic that is modern and relatable, and virtually everyone has their own exciting, funny, crazy dating stories. Even between just the two of us, there were things we hadn’t had enough time to cover in the half-hour version that we were able to cover in the full version. We also were able to add a lot more music to the hour-long show which gave us freedom in how we wanted to present certain topics, deciding what would best work in song and what would work best through a monologue or scene. There are so many things to talk about, or sing about, when it comes to dating and relationships, and we are continually discovering new topics that we want to incorporate into the hour-long show.

Franny: To be honest, when we decided to write the shorter show, I had no idea where it would lead! Once we started performing it and got such great feedback from the audience, that they wanted more and it was a topic many people were connecting to, it was very obvious right away that it should be expanded and we were very happy to do so! As Meghan said, we had (and still have!) tons of stories and ideas to keep the show going.

### **I get more out of the show each time I see it, so it’s fun to see it more than once! With each time you perform “XOXO: The Relationship Show,” do you feel like you’re perfecting it more or do you learn more with each performance?**

M: I think the show grows with each performance. Although “XOXO: The Relationship Show” is scripted, we have room for improvisation between ourselves and the audience, as well as room to improvise during scenes between the two of us. It

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depends on how we are feeling that show day as well. For instance, we could start whipping out one liners that we haven't rehearsed, but seem to work and make people laugh that we will end up keeping. Sometimes this can work to our disadvantage, however, if the scene goes on for too long. We like having the script, but creating new ideas during performance keeps us on our toes, and is great for developing new material.

F: Yes, I totally agree. It's always changing and it will always have that informal "we're all in this together" vibe with the audience, but there are definitely moments and specific lines that we have really honed and each time we perform, I feel like we're getting to know the show better and better and are continuing to figure out the best way to present the ideas that we want to share. As an actor, that freedom is so exciting because our goal is always to give our audience the best experience possible – we want everyone to have as much fun as we are having – and this lets us do that, by continually working the material. The fact that many of our audience members do come back multiple times (one of our fans has seen the show 8 times in 3 different cities!) shows that people do get something new each time they come and they like to see their favourite parts again and again.

**The show isn't just for women – anyone can get a lot out of it and relate to it. But I love the empowering and positive message for women, in particular. What do you hope to express with the art you create with Two Juliets?**

M: Personally, I have been made, in previous relationships, to feel that I was too jealous, or not acting how I "should." I hope that in a fun, feminist way our show can let everyone know that they don't need to respond or react to things if they are uncomfortable, and that the feelings that they get in relationships are justified. Don't let anyone tell you you shouldn't feel a certain way.

F: I have always been a passionate and political person, I attribute a lot of that to a very progressive family and many of the people I met while I was at the University of Guelph. I always knew that if I was creating my own work, I would want it to both enlighten and entertain and that is my goal with Two Juliets. We happily identify ourselves as a feminist theatre company that writes comedy shows, and I am so happy to keep on that path. I want people to feel great about spending a night with us in the theatre, that they are empowered, supported and respected while they are laughing as hard as they can. If someone can go home and remember a line from the show during a nasty break up or remember our song about getting unsolicited naked pictures when they are shocked by an aggressive guy online and laugh a bit, then our work is done.

**It's such an incredible time for women in comedy right now. Who are some of your influences and inspirations?**

TJ: We have been compared to so many amazingly talented comedic ladies, such as Tina Fey, Amy Poehler and Lena Dunham. We are constantly inspired by all three of these women. We also love Mindy Kaling. One of our most prominent influences has also been Jake Hurwitz and Amir Blumenfeld from CollegeHumor. We find them so hilarious, and are inspired by their comedic style.

**It's great to know you have this connection to Hamilton and that the city has been part of the "XOXO" journey. Did you know much about Hamilton's theatre scene when you first took part in the Hamilton Fringe Festival in 2013? What was your impression of the theatre community here?**

M: I didn't know much about the theatre scene in Hamilton before we participated in the 2013 Hamilton Fringe Festival. I had heard about Hamilton's theatre scene growing, and had also heard of a lot of fellow Toronto theatre performers I knew talking about performing in Hamilton. Once we were in the festival, it became such a community – going to The Baltimore House in the evening, making friends and finding out that people we'd met in Toronto were in the festival as well. The 2014 Hamilton Fringe Festival was that on a much bigger scale for us, because we were there for a longer stay. This year also there was comfort in knowing some people already, and having an idea of what to expect, as well as discovering many Humber and York friends that I've met at school that were participating in the festival, which was great.

F: I had been hearing rumblings about the Hamilton theatre scene for years and it was an exciting idea to get involved in a community that is growing and figuring out its identity. We had such a great time in 2013, we knew we wanted to come back for 2014 and were so worried when we ended up on the wait list! We got lucky and were able to join the festival when a few other shows had to leave for various reasons – we were more than happy to jump in! Our new relationship with Yuk Yuk's is also very special and unique, we are essentially producing partners with them and it's so lovely to feel that we have an artistic home in Hamilton.

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You also have a great relationship with fellow performer

Izad Etemadi. You both performed at Hamilton Fringe 2013 and 2014, and we saw his character Leila join you when you brought “XOXO: The Relationship Show” to Yuk Yuks Hamilton in October. You’ll join him for “A Very Leila Christmas” at The Staircase on December 19th [The show runs Dec. 17-19]. **What makes you guys a good pairing?**

TJ: Yes! We are so excited to be a part of “A Very Leila Christmas”! What makes us such a good pairing is that we like to make each other laugh. The three of us can sit in a room for hours improvising jokes that have us cry-laughing in a good way. At the opening Fringe Festival event this year, Izad came up to us at The Baltimore House – we had never met before – and suggested we cross-promote because he thought our shows had similar themes. We agreed, although we had no idea what we were getting into at the time, we just knew we loved the little snippet we saw earlier that night and had heard good things about Izad’s show the year before.

When we saw Leila, either the first or second performance at the Fringe, we were shocked at how complementary the shows actually were, and Izad felt the same way after he saw ours. We are so glad Izad followed his gut and took that risk talking to us that night! “Love with Leila” is an incredible show, and throughout the course of the festival the three of us became friends very quickly. We all get along very well and that chemistry shows up on stage, which is another reason why we’re a good match. It’s so lovely to find people you click with artistically and personally, we are happy to have Leila as an honorary third Juliet and as Leila says about us, we’re her best white friends! Plus December 19th is also Franny’s birthday, if you needed an extra reason to come check out the show that day.

### **RENDEZVOUS RAPID-FIRE!**

#### **Favourite place to eat in Hamilton:**

TJ: The food trucks (Specifically the schnitzel truck)

#### **Favourite breakfast food:**

M: Hashbrowns

F: Cereal

#### **If you were a drink, what would you be?**

M: Shirley Temple

F: Chocolate milk

#### **Your go-to karaoke song:**

M: Any Eminem song

F: “Total Eclipse Of The Heart” by Bonnie Tyler

#### **If you could speak flawlessly with any other accent, what would it be?**

M: Irish

F: Irish would be helpful for our show! But I would choose American South, Mississippi style.

#### **Favourite word:**

M: Oireachtas

F: Probably a swear word, but I’ve worked hard to cut that from our show! Real life is much trickier. Second favourite: chocolate.

#### **Favourite concert/live performance you’ve seen:**

M: Kristin Chenoweth performing with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra

F: Hawksley Workman’s original staging of “The God That Comes” in SummerWorks 2012

#### **What is on your playlist right now:**

M: Taylor Swift’s *1989*.

F: Basia Bulat – “Tall Tall Shadow”

#### **If you could take a detour to anywhere in the world right now, where would you go?**

M: New York City.

F: Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia

#### **Favourite mode of transportation:**

TJ: Car

#### **What’s one thing on your bucket list:**

M: To travel around the world

F: Perform in every province and territory in Canada.