BORDERLIGHT FRINGE FESTIVAL 2027 | CALL FOR ARTISTS

# FRINGE APPLICATION HANDBOOK: READ FIRST

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# BORDERLIGHT FRINGE FESTIVAL 2027 | CALL FOR ARTISTS

***Submission Deadline: January 15, 2027***

## WHAT IS THE BORDERLIGHT FESTIVAL?

BorderLight's mission is to present innovative theatre that inspires, builds cross-cultural understanding, and celebrates the diversity of the human experience.

The **BorderLight Theatre Festival** is a hybrid festival model, featuring: a) A dynamic fringe festival programmed through an open call for submissions, featuring all genres of theatrical performance self-produced by local, national, and international artists; and b) A curated selection of acclaimed international touring productions. BorderLight values the Fringe artists who make the Festival possible and splits its box office income 60/40, with **60% of ticket revenue paid to the artists.**

To ensure the long-term sustainability of the festival, BorderLight is working to reduce reliance on donations and grants by developing revenue sources that can support our mission independently. This includes refining our festival model to enhance box office returns, allowing us to build a more resilient foundation for future festivals.

## WHAT IS A "FRINGE" FESTIVAL?

The "fringe" concept first developed in 1948 in Edinburgh, Scotland, when groups of local actors, performers, and musicians—in reaction to the more conventional lineup of the Edinburgh Theatre Festival—launched an alternative program to run concurrently to the main event. Now, 76 years later, the term 'fringe' widely refers to work that resides on the edges of the mainstream—and fringe festivals have served as a critical launch pad for independent artists to self-produce, showcase original work, engage new audiences, and network with fellow indie artists and producers inside of a vibrant festival environment.

There are now hundreds of fringe festivals in North America and across the world... and each has its own structure and personality. The BorderLight Festival is a proud member of the **United States Association of Fringe Festivals (USAFF)** and **World Fringe Network (WFN)**.

## WHO CAN APPLY?

The **BorderLight Festival Fringe** is an open call submission process**.** Each application requires a $30 application fee. The Fringe welcomes work from both established and emerging artists!

***Note:*** *If you are an international artist residing outside the United States, the application fee is waived due to U.S. tax reporting and compliance considerations.*

BorderLights seeks to offer a culturally, racially, and geographically diverse program representing a variety of theatrical approaches, styles, topics, and genres including (but not limited to):

- Physical / Movement / Dance Theatre
- Circus
- Street Theatre
- Burlesque
- Children's Theatre
- Performance Art
- Puppetry
- Immersive / Interactive Experiences
- Music / Cabaret
- Spoken Word (storytelling performance and/or poetry)
- Roaming Performances
- Stand Up Comedy
- Site-Specific Work / "Bring Your Own Venue"
- Promenade

## IMPORTANT 2027 DATES / DEADLINES

- **October 30:** BorderLight Fringe Applications Open
- **TBD:** Join the BorderLight Team for a Virtual Artist Q + A
- **January 15:** BorderLight Fringe Applications Close
- **February 19:** Festival acceptance / waitlist / decline notices sent by this date
- **March 8:** Acceptances due from artists
- **March 17:** Deadline for contracts and production fees
- **March 31:** Deadline for withdrawal with production fee refund
- **April (date TBD):** Zoom "How to Fringe"
- **July 14-17:** 2027 BorderLight Fringe Festival

# THE SELECTION PROCESS

- **Application does not guarantee acceptance.**
- The BorderLight Fringe program is determined through a selection process.
- All proposals are reviewed and discussed by a diverse panel of industry professionals led by BorderLight Festival staff.
- Productions that are not chosen during the initial selection may be placed on a waitlist in the event of a cancellation.

# PRACTICAL INFO FOR APPLICANTS

## ARTIST RESPONSIBILITIES:

- **We are not producing your show, we are presenting it**. You or your producing organization must hire your own cast, crew, stage manager, etc. as well as run the light or sound board if needed during performances. BorderLight can assist out of town artists with locating a board operator, if needed.
- For scripted work, we require that artists provide evidence that they have obtained rights.
- Each production receives a **60/40 box office split,** with 60% of ticket revenue (minus credit card and processing fees) paid out to the artist.
- For free or unticketed shows, street theatre, pop-up performances, or other venue-free events, artists will be compensated with an artist stipend.

**RUN TIME:** The standard length of a Fringe show is **45-60 minutes** long. Shorter performances are accepted. Limited slots are available for shows over 60 minutes. We accept all lengths of performance. Once offers are made, the Run Time cannot be adjusted. Please note that intermissions are not possible.

## MASKED PERFORMANCES:

BorderLight understands that artists and audiences have varying health needs and concerns. Artists may choose to require audiences at one or more of their performances be masked, and BorderLight will support artists in communicating those requirements to audiences.

## TECH + VENUES:

- All venues and stages will be shared by several productions.
- Only some of our stages are outfitted with basic lighting and sound.
- Productions with lighting/sound are required to provide their own board operator.
- Productions are permitted to bring in additional tech, but all equipment must be discussed and approved by the Festival in advance.
- While you are striking your show, another show will be setting up.
- We allot 15 minutes for the changeover between shows.
- There will be minimal or no storage facilities at our outdoor venues.
- With few exceptions, productions will be scheduled into a single venue for the duration of the Festival.
- Performance times will vary each day to ensure that all shows are scheduled across a range of time slots.
- Productions are provided a single technical rehearsal (typically 2 hours) in their venue prior to the first performance.
- Venue allocation is at the discretion of the Festival, based on availability and information provided in the application.
- Site-specific performance proposals are welcome. Because downtown permitting requires advance coordination, please include as much detail as possible in your application.

## COMMUNICATIONS + MARKETING:

- Artists are welcome to apply with more than one show, but a separate proposal must be completed for each show. Note that only one show per Company/Lead Artist will be accepted into the Festival.
- Upon acceptance into the Festival, each production will be asked to submit photos and other promotional material for use in BorderLight marketing.
- Artists are responsible for publicizing their own show. Examples include: press releases, outreach, mailers, social media posting, busking and/or postcards.
- BorderLight will provide logo files, marketing best practices, regional press contacts, and a pre-festival marketing workshop.
- Each production must have at least one representative attend one of the virtual sessions.
- **Promote! Promote! Promote!** Establish a plan for marketing your show—the more tickets sold for your show, the more revenue comes back to you.

- **Merch Sales.** All artists who intend to sell merchandise will need to file for a Vendor's License through the state of Ohio.
- Participating companies will be invited to hang a poster on our poster wall, which will be located on Playhouse Square Plaza, next to our outdoor stage.

### HOUSING + TRAVEL:

- BorderLight cannot guarantee free housing for out-of-area fringe artists, but limited travel assistance may be available.
- Artists are responsible for arranging all necessary visas or work permits—BorderLight is not able to support visas for international fringe artists.
- Consider seeking support or travel grants from funding agencies. If your participation isn't confirmed, BorderLight can provide a letter of intent to assist with your application.

## BOX OFFICE + TICKETING

BorderLight Fringe functions as the presenter for independent artist-producers. BorderLight will handle all aspects of ticketing and box office via the Eventotron ticketing platform.

BorderLight's goal is to support the artists who make the Festival possible. We cannot do it without you! The Festival offers a **60/40 box office split** with 60% of ticket revenue (minus credit card and processing fees) paid out to the artist.

Checks will be mailed to the Company/Lead Artist by August 31, 2027. W9s will be required upon acceptance into the festival.

BorderLight provides special discounts for multi-ticket bundles and passholders.
Ticket prices for 2027 will be announced in February.

## PRODUCTION FEES

Accepted applicants will pay a standard production fee in exchange for the following support provided by the Festival:

- Venue Rental
- Venue / House Manager
- Limited technical support (basic lights, sound, power)
- Front of House Management
- Box Office + Ticketing Management (web and in-person)
- (1) tech rehearsal (2 hours) on your stage prior to the first performance
- Dedicated show page on the BorderLight Festival website
- Show listing in the BorderLight Festival Guide (10K+ copies distributed locally and via digital download)
- Other Festival marketing and publicity (PR, media release event, etc.)
- Marketing webinars, social media strategy tutorials and branded templates
- Artist pass privileges and special discounts to other BorderLight Festival events

**Production fees vary from $100 to up to $400 depending on type of show, technical needs, number of shows, and size of venue.** These fees directly fund Festival venue costs, tech, & box office support, and help make the Festival sustainable. Venue and Stage details will be noted in your contract. Special support or fee waivers may be available for free/un-ticketed performances, site-specific work, buskers, and street performance.

## Fee Waivers

### Application Fees

Artists who are **otherwise unable to apply** due to the $30 application fee may request a financial hardship waiver. To do so, complete the application and email a brief explanation of your circumstances to info@borderlightcle.org. If approved, the fee will be waived and your application will be submitted automatically. Foreign-based artists are exempt from the application fee (see FAQ, p. 9).

### Production Fees

A limited number of production fee waivers are available for low income artists who would otherwise be unable to participate. Please indicate your need for assistance in your application. Requests will be considered after applications are reviewed, and artists may be asked to provide additional information. Waivers are not guaranteed.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

**When will applicants know if they have been selected to the 2027 BorderLight Fringe Festival?**
All selected applicants will be notified by February 19, 2027.

**What is the Production Fee and what is it used for?**
Production fees vary from $100 to up to $400 depending on type of show, technical needs, number of shows, and size of venue. These fees directly fund Festival venue costs, tech, & box office support, and help make the Festival sustainable.

**Why does the Production Fee vary?**
Production fees are based on the Company's production needs, venue cost, venue size, and the amount of support needed from the BorderLight staff. For smaller shows, like short, pop-up productions, the production fee will be smaller than for a performance that requires more technical support!

**Are the Application Fee and the Production Fee the same?**
No, they are different.

- There is a nonrefundable application fee of $30 to apply to the Fringe Festival. This fee supports the staff and resources needed to run a fair, transparent review process and give every application thoughtful consideration.
- Production Fees will be established *after* participants are selected for the Festival, and will range from $100-$400, as explained above.

**Why a 60/40 Box Office Split?**
BorderLight offers unique benefits that set it apart from other fringe festivals:

1. Free Venues & Tech Support: Artists perform in our venues with basic technical support provided.
2. Prime Location: BorderLight takes place in venues throughout the Playhouse Square district, offering artists the chance to perform in Cleveland's vibrant theater hub, surrounded by the energy and prestige of one of the nation's most renowned performing arts destinations.
3. Festival Sustainability: The 60/40 split supports BorderLight's ability to maintain and grow this platform, ensuring its long-term impact on artists and audiences alike.

**What are you looking for?**
BorderLight is seeking creative artists from a diverse range of cultural and artistic backgrounds! While rooted in theatre, our fringe festival celebrates all kinds of performance—circus, improv, music, visual art, immersive experiences, multimedia, and more. Select up to five genres to describe your vision. This is your stage—if it's imaginative, we're interested!

Keep it short and dynamic: We have limited slots for work longer than an hour. Keep it under 60 minutes, with pieces as brief as 5 minutes welcomed.

Regional Representation: BorderLight aims for half of the festival's slots to be for artists from Northeast Ohio.

**Can I email the application?**

No. We ask that you please fill out our application on the Eventotron site. This helps us keep your information organized and better serve the many performances we support.

**Can international artists apply to the Fringe Festival?**
BorderLight is happy to consider international applicants who wish to present a showcase of their work at the Fringe festival. A foreign company may appear in a showcase, but cannot be paid for work, nor perform for fees in accordance with US law. Therefore, international companies/artists must be prepared to pay their own expenses, including airfare, ground transport, etc. In addition, 100% of the box office proceeds earned by ticketed international fringe shows will be retained by the festival. No fees will be paid for un-ticketed (free) international work that is accepted into the festival. International artists must secure their own tourist (B1/B2) visas to enter the U.S. To help offset the cost of participating in BorderLight, the festival will provide lodging and reimburse for travel expenses up to a pre-agreed limit under $1,000. Please reach out to info@borderlightcle.org for more information.

***Note:*** *If you are an international artist residing outside the United States, the application fee is waived due to U.S. tax reporting and compliance considerations.*

**Will masks be required for performers or audience members?**
BorderLight understands that artists have varying health needs and may want to make their shows accessible to those who are immuno-compromised. Artists may choose to require audiences at one or more of their performances to be masked.

**Are there important dates/deadlines I should consider?**

- **October 30:** BorderLight Fringe Applications Open
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- **April (date TBD):** Zoom “How to Fringe”
- **July 14-17:** 2027 BorderLight Fringe Festival
- **August 31:** All payouts will be sent by this date.