

Hard Times.

Montréal, Québec, Canada.

Montréal, July 25, 2025. — **Hard Times** will be presenting the award-winning two-part theatrical monologue *outside, in the laneway, under the stars*—which has previously been performed at Fringe festivals in the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic, and Canada—in Venue 9 (the Planetarium Auditorium) at the Winnipeg Fringe from July 17 to 27.

outside, in the laneway, under the stars premiered at the Brighton (UK) Fringe in 2023, and went on to the Prague Fringe and On the Edge Fringe (North Bay, Canada), where it won the award for **Outstanding Original Work**. Last year, it was presented at three UK Fringes, and won the award for **Best Spoken Word Show** at the Buxton (UK) Fringe. The official Buxton reviewer said in her review: “**the performer used his descriptive energy to enable us to almost stand at his side reliving these past experiences.**”

John Arthur Sweet, from Montréal, is the writer/performer of this intimate show about a personal queer journey, the role that art might play in the life of a bullied person, and the limitations of escapism—the need to get outside, in the laneway, amongst loving human beings. John has been performing at Canadian Fringe festivals since 1998, including Toronto, Ottawa, Montréal, London, Thunder Bay, Edmonton, and Victoria. Amazingly, though, this will be John’s first time at the Winnipeg Fringe!

outside, in the laneway, under the stars uses a mélange of traditional storytelling, spoken word poetry, and theatrical monologue to tell Sweet’s own story of growing up as a queer kid in a small Ontario town in the 1970s. In the face of relentless bullying, and in the absence of any knowledge of what “those people” (i.e., gay men) were all about, he took refuge in theatre as “the alternative to real life,” and an escape from the horrors of the unfolding AIDS crisis.

The show offers a comic and poignant take on childhood “otherness,” an honest evocation of the ongoing effects of bullying throughout a person’s life, and an intimate portrait of a queer survivor. In a review for *Binge Fringe* at the 2023 Prague Fringe (where Sweet is a three-time **Prague Fringe Award** nominee), Sarah Kher-Bek wrote:

“It is not often we are offered such an intimate glimpse into an artist’s personal journey. Sweet is truly a mosaic of all that he has encountered and he has framed this mosaic for the world to see, offering the opportunity to gain just a little bit more valuable understanding.”

The show is presented in two “parts,” but they are independent of one another and can be enjoyed separately. As Sweet says right at the start, **“This is a show that, despite its length, has no climax.”** Part 1 (which concentrates on Sweet’s 1970s childhood) will be presented on July 17, 19, 22 and 26, while Part 2 (his early adulthood in the 1980s) can be seen July 21, 25 and 27.

John’s website is www.johnarthursweet.online and his Bluesky is [@johnmonologist](https://bsky.app/profile/@johnmonologist). His email address is hard.times@videotron.ca.

For These Times.