

## Ace Galaksi brings Aurora artists, performers to Toronto Fringe



Ace Galaksi has precious little time to locate the Giant Book of Destiny before destiny itself is rewritten.

Will he do it? Well, to discover what destiny has in store for the special agent, you can find out beginning this week as *The Destiny of Special Agent Ace Galaksi* hits the 2021 Digital Toronto Fringe Festival.

*The Destiny of Special Agent Ace Galaksi* is the creation of Aurora's Maissa Bessada and is about to launch its fourth season as a popular satirical sci-fi podcast.

A special episode, however, has been retooled for Fringe, playing out in the style of a recording session of a 1930s radio show.

"This originally started as a novel, yet to be published," says Ms. Bessada, describing the work as very similar to *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, "and I thought it could be a really cool radio show."

She pitched it to the CBC and was told that while it was a cool idea, they weren't looking for radio dramas, she and her team, including several local performers and writers, took matters into their own hands.

"We were all in by then," she says. "We rehearsed, hired an ex-CBC audio producer, went to his studio and produced it."

The podcast quickly found an audience, as did different formats for the story.

A staged reading has featured in the Newmarket Festival of One Act Plays, which featured live foley (audio effects) and that only served to strengthen their drive to get this before audiences.

"We just couldn't get enough of each other, so we just kept going," says Ms. Bessada. "We collaborate, we talk together about what the next season might be, where we might want to take it. We get a rough outline for story ideas and make a collaborative effort. Then I will go back, write it, and we'll come together and rehearse the script."

Shortly after capping their third season and beginning production on season four, the crew got the call their work had been accepted by Fringe.

Then, they say, "the whole world stopped."

"The beautiful thing about Fringe is it is such an open space for creativity and it brings a lot of shows and ideas [together] and it is a great way for people to find an audience," says Liisa Kallasmaa who performs in the show as well as taking on the role of sound designer. "It's also a great way for audiences to find new shows that they didn't realize they would be interested in. Something like our show is great for sci-fi audiences, as well as those who like Dr. Who, Star Trek and anything like that, but sometimes it can be hard to find those audiences.

"For a group like us, it is great that everybody can not only see the work that we do, but it gives us a chance to be creative " not just with the storylines because Ace has the potential for all these wonderful, crazy stories" it is just because it is such an open world and so imaginative that we can try different mediums, too."

While the pandemic has been an "awful situation" for everybody, Kallasmaa says for artists like the Ace Galaksi crew, having an outlet where they can collaborate together but apart has made their individual situations just a little bit easier.

"We're doing our own recordings when we do the seasons, but at least it gives us the chance to still flex our creative chops, be artists, and the beautiful thing about entertainment " not only for those who are in the entertainment world and have it as a creative outlet " is it gives a lot of other people escape. Our hope is to get people to laugh, escape for a while and enjoy something while all this is happening."

Adds Bessada: "I hope this transcends genres. It's kind of like X-Files meets Get Smart. We want to show there is a vibrant arts community up north. Not everything cool happens in Toronto. There are tons of cool things happening up here, too."

The Destiny of Special Agent Ace Galaksi launched Wednesday, July 21, at the Digital Toronto Fringe Festival and runs through July 31. Tickets are \$13. For more information, visit [fringetoronto.com](http://fringetoronto.com).

**By Brock Weir** Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter