

BUDDIES IN BAD TIMES CELEBRATES 40 YEARS OF QUEER THEATRE WITH ITS 2018/19 SEASON

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TORONTO: June 8, 2018. Artistic Director **Evalyn Parry** announced an exciting line-up for Buddies in Bad Times Theatre's 2018/19 season today. In celebration of its 40th year, Buddies looks back on its history by revisiting past productions, while also looking forward with new works and a series of community conversation events. Recognizing its continued importance as a leader in queer theatre in Canada, Buddies will mount its sixth national tour in the last decade, and engages with queer communities on a more local level through a series of community-facing projects that will take place throughout the year.

In announcing the season, Parry remarks: "For 40 years, Buddies productions, festivals, and community programming have uncovered unique queer viewpoints and offered theatrical experiences like no other company in this city or this country. Buddies is a space where many intersections of community meet to engage in the challenge and glory that is queer performance, where risk and provocation continue to define our artistic mission. This anniversary season, we reclaim works from the not-so-distant past, and we showcase the new; we tip our hats to our history, to our future, and to the continuous present."

The season opens in September with **Gertrude and Alice**, written and performed by **Anna Chatterton** and **Evalyn Parry** and directed by **Karin Randoja**. An audience favourite from 2016, this Dora-nominated play brings the legendary couple Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas into the present day to check in on their legacy. This season's production features a new design by celebrated visual artist **Sherri Hay**.

Next is the return of **Tawiah Ben M'Carthy's Obaaberima**, which received the 2013 Dora Award for outstanding production and garnered rave reviews in its cross-Canada tour. The first show to come out of the Buddies Residency program, *Obaaberima* chronicles a young African-Canadian's journey across continents, genders, races, and sexualities, with Dora-award-winning live music by **Kobèna Aquaa-Harrison**. Tawiah was most recently seen on Buddies stage as part of the ensemble in *Black Boys* in 2016 and 2018.

In April, Buddies and **Pandemic Theatre** present the latest work to emerge from the Residency Program, **Shove it Down My Throat**. Inspired by the correspondence between playwright **Johnnie Walker** and Luke O'Donovan following the latter's conviction for his involvement in a knife fight, this fierce and free-wheeling piece explores the layers of truth in this less-than-clear-cut case of queer bashing and self-defense. The show features a large ensemble cast of queer performers, led by Walker, **Daniel Carter**, and **Heath V Salazar**.

The 2018-19 season closes with a co-production between **lemonTree creations**, Buddies, and **Why Not Theatre** of **Michel Marc Bouchard's Lilies; or, the Revival of a Romantic Drama**. Director **Cole Alvis** re-contextualizes this queer Canadian masterpiece through the lens of the over-representation of Black and Indigenous people in the prison population, with a cast including **Walter Borden**, **Mark Cassius**, **Bruce Dow**, **Ryan G. Hinds**, **Indrit Kasapi**, **Tsholo Khalema**, **Troy Emery Twigg**, and **Joseph Zita**.

The 40th anniversary season also includes three fan-favourite events that have become staples of Buddies' programming. Beginning in September, The Youth/Elders Project (which began in the 2016-17 Season) extends its reach beyond the theatre's home in the Church-Wellesley Village with ***The Youth / Elders Podcast***, a new project helmed by **Vanessa Dunn**. The project will feature weekly recording sessions and skill-sharing workshops at the Oakwood Village Library and Arts Centre, and is made possible by the Toronto Arts Council's Artists in the Library program. For a third year, Buddies partners with **Native Earth Performing Arts** for ***The 2-Spirit Cabaret*** in November as part of the Weesageechak Begins to Dance Festival. The one-night-only event, curated by **Michaela Washburn**, moves to the theatre's main space this year in response to overwhelming demand. In February, Canada's longest running new works festival, **The Rhubarb Festival**, returns for its 40th year, with Festival Director **Mel Hague** at the helm.

In addition to its own programming, Buddies welcomes five productions from a variety of Toronto indie and established theatre companies. No strangers to Buddies audiences, **Nightwood Theatre** teams up with **Quote Unquote Collective** and **Why Not Theatre** to present the world premiere of **Now You See Her**. **Susanna Fournier's PARADIGM Productions** stages ***The Scavenger's Daughter***, the second installment of her epic trilogy ***The Empire***. **Obsidian Theatre** arrives with a production of **Jocelyn Bioh's *School Girls: Or, the African Mean Girls Play*** (produced in association with **Nightwood Theatre**), **Big Bappis Productions** brings **Greg Campbell's** 2016 Fringe Hit ***OUT*** to the cabaret space, and Buddies founding artistic director **Sky Gilbert** returns to workshop a new opera, ***Shakespeare's Criminal***, composed by **Dustin Peters** with a libretto by Gilbert.

Interspersed throughout the year is ***The 40th Anniversary Series***, a collection of parties, play readings, and community conversations that revisit our history while also imagining the possibilities of a queer future. Programming details for this initiative will be announced at the company's season launch party on September 7.

Meanwhile, Buddies continues its recent tradition of touring its productions across the country when ***Kiinalik: These Sharp Tools*** performs in Iqaluit (**Qaggiavuut**), Vancouver (**PuSh International Performance Festival**, presented with **Touchstone Theatre**), and Montreal (**Espace Libre**), before returning to Toronto for a special presentation at **Luminato**. The critically-acclaimed show is the meeting place of two people – and the North and South of our country – at the confluence of colonial legacies and a changing climate. Nominated for four Dora Awards (Outstanding Production, New Play, Ensemble, and Sound Design/Composition), ***Kiinalik: These Sharp Tools*** is a creation of **Evalyn Parry**, **Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory**, **Erin Brubacher**, and **Elysha Poirier** with **Cris Derksen**.

2018-19 SHOW LISTINGS

A Buddies in Bad Times Theatre production

GERTRUDE AND ALICE

conceived and created by **The Independent Aunties**

directed and dramaturged by **Karin Randoja**

written and performed by **Anna Chatterton + Evalyn Parry**

set design by **Sherri Hay**

September 15 – October 7, 2018

Visiting the audience in the present day, Gertrude and Alice come to find out how history has treated them. The couple recounts stories of their 40-year marriage, of meetings with iconic artists and writers, and of Alice's overwhelming, consuming devotion to Gertrude's genius. Before they leave, they want to find out what has become of their artistic and cultural influence, and how their lives and work are – or are not – remembered.

A Nightwood Theatre, Quote Unquote Collective + Why Not Theatre production

NOW YOU SEE HER

co-directors / creators / performers **Amy Nostbakken + Norah Sadava**

performer / creators **Lisa Karen Cox, Maggie Huculak, Raha Javanfar + Cheyenne Scott**

October 16 – November 4, 2018

They are the invisible, the vanishing and the disappeared. In an insurrectionary outburst of original music, words and movement, six characters in *Now You See Her* explore some of the diverse ways women fade from sight in our culture. They sing, dance and thrust themselves into the elements as they travel through the seasons of their lives. Their voices are defiant. Their question is simple: why and how do we allow our power to disappear without a fight?

Native Earth Performing Arts in partnership with Buddies in Bad Times Theatre presents

THE 2-SPIRIT CABARET

curated by **Michaela Washburn**

November 16, 2018

Back for a third year, the 2-Spirit Cabaret is a celebration of the strength, beauty, and talent of queer and 2-Spirit Indigenous people. Buddies and Native Earth present an evening of performances, music, and spoken word as part of Weesageechak Begins to Dance 31 – Native Earth's annual festival of Indigenous works.

A Buddies in Bad Times Theatre production

OBAABERIMA

written and performed by **Tawiah Ben M'Carthy**

directed by **Evalyn Parry**

live music by **Kobèna Aquaa-Harrison**

November 27 – December 9, 2018

Imprisoned in Canada for committing a violent crime, a young man from Ghana tells his cellmates a story on the eve of his release. Although there is great risk in sharing his tale, he must tell it to be truly free. Through storytelling, dance, and live music, *Obaaberima* chronicles a young African-Canadian's journey across continents, genders, races, and sexualities.

Winner of the 2013 Dora Award for Outstanding Production, *Obaaberima* has played on stages across the country to critical acclaim. Tawiah Ben M'Carthy was most recently seen on the Buddies stage in the hit production *Black Boys* in 2016 and 2018.

PARADIGM productions presents

THE SCAVENGER'S DAUGHTER

by **Susanna Fournier**

directed by **ted witzel**

January 15 – 27, 2019

At the edge of an unknown empire, Jack, Ash, and Sarah have grown up in a war that's been waging for 20 years. Jack's only weeks away from civilian life, his freedom from the army having been bought for him by a mysterious philosopher who taught him to read and write. All he has to do is wait, smash Sarah's heart, and keep in line. But when rations wear thin and the king seizes the opium trails, Jack and Ash must fight their way through the violence of withdrawal, scarcity, militarization, and each other.

The second installment in Susanna Fournier's trilogy of new works *The Empire*, *The Scavenger's Daughter* is Rated R for language, injectable substances, dark comedy, shitty boyfriends, nightmares, famine, sexual content, guns, depictions of neo-liberal warfare in the service of imperial capitalism, and exploding toxic ideas of what it means to be a man, a nation, and a citizen.

Buddies in Bad Times Theatre presents

THE 40TH RHUBARB FESTIVAL

Festival director **Mel Hague**

February 13 – 24, 2019

Canada's longest-running new works festival returns for a 40th year. Rhubarb transforms Buddies into a hotbed of experimentation, with artists exploring new possibilities in theatre, dance, music, and performance art. Rhubarb is the place to see the most adventurous ideas in performance and to catch your favourite artists venturing into uncharted territory.

An **Obsidian Theatre** production, in association with **Nightwood Theatre**

SCHOOL GIRLS; OR, THE AFRICAN MEAN GIRLS PLAY

by **Jocelyn Bioh**

directed by **Nina Lee Aquino**

March 5 – 24, 2019

Paulina, the reigning Queen Bee at Ghana's most exclusive boarding school, has her sights set on the Miss Universe pageant. But the mid-year arrival of Ericka, a new student with undeniable talent and beauty, captures the attention of the pageant recruiter—and Paulina's hive-minded friends. Jocelyn Bioh's buoyant and biting comedy explores the universal similarities (and glaring differences) facing teenage girls across the globe.

A **Buddies in Bad Times Theatre + Pandemic Theatre** co-production

SHOVE IT DOWN MY THROAT

by **Johnnie Walker**

directed by **Tom Arthur Davis**

starring **Johnnie Walker, Daniel Carter, Heath V Salazar**

March 30 – April 21, 2019

In 2013, Luke O'Donovan is arrested after a knife fight at a New Year's party. The media portrays him as a maniac who went on a stabbing spree. Luke says he's the victim of a queer-bashing, punished for fighting back. In 2014, theatre artist Johnnie Walker begins writing letters to Luke in prison and working on a new play. A fierce and freewheeling exploration of a powerful true story, *Shove It Down My Throat* puts queerness, identity, and complicity through a theatrical kaleidoscope as Johnnie sifts through the different versions of Luke's story — and the different versions of Luke — in search of the ever-elusive truth.

A **Big Bappis** production

OUT

written + performed by **Greg Campbell**

directed by **Clinton Walker**

April 24 – May 5, 2019

In a tour de force performance, Greg Campbell brings a cast of 22 characters to life to tell a hilarious and heartwarming story about coming out of the closet in 1970's Montreal. We follow 17-year-old Glen on a journey of celebration and discovery that takes him to discos, youth groups, several bedrooms, and all the way to the Gay Pride March in New York City.

A Workshop Presentation from **Orpheus Productions**

SHAKESPEARE'S CRIMINAL

libretto by **SKY GILBERT**, composer **DUSTIN PETERS**

directed by **SKY GILBERT**

starring **MARION NEWMAN**

April 27 – 28, 2019

Shakespeare is an old, conservative farmer/poet who claims to be heterosexual. A young, HIV-positive gay man appears at his farm and tries to seduce him. Will Shakespeare succumb? The surprise entrance of a female academic, who has the gift of transformative magic, suddenly changes the fortunes of the two men. And in the end, someone is turned into a tree.

A **lemonTree creations + Buddies in Bad Times Theatre + Why Not Theatre** co-production

LILIES; OR, THE REVIVAL OF A ROMANTIC DRAMA

by **MICHEL MARC BOUCHARD**

directed by **COLE ALVIS**

starring **WALTER BORDEN, BRUCE DOW, MARK CASSIUS, RYAN G. HINDS, INDRIT KASAPI, TSHOLO KHALEMA, TROY EMERY TWIGG + JOSEPH ZITA**

May 4 – 26, 2019

In 1912, two schoolboys fall in love performing a play about Saint Sebastian. Their passion is interrupted when one is unjustly sent to prison. Decades later, several inmates agree to stage this story of young love in search of their own redemption.

Prolific indie company lemonTree creations revives Michel Marc Bouchard's masterpiece with Walter Borden (African/Mi'qmaq/Choctaw) leading a cast of Indigenous, Black, and culturally diverse artists to make visible the high incarceration rates of these communities. Centring Indigeneity and diverse worldviews, the creative team bring this romantic drama into the 21st century, unearthing love, lies, and colonialism.

A **Buddies in Bad Times Theatre** production

KIINALIK: THESE SHARP TOOLS

created by **EVALYN PARRY, LAACKULUK WILLIAMSON BATHORY, ERIN BRUBACHER, + ELYSHA POIRIER, with CRIS DERKSEN**

A concert and a conversation, *Kiinalik: These Sharp Tools* is the meeting place of two people, and the North and South of our country. Inuk artist Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory and queer theatre-maker Evalyn Parry met on an Arctic expedition from Iqaluit to Greenland. Now sharing a stage, these two powerful storytellers map new territory together in a work that gives voice and body to the histories, culture, and climate we've inherited, and asks how we reckon with these sharp tools.

Qaggiavuut (Iqaluit, NU) – *December 2018*

PuSh International Performing Arts Festival, presented with Touchstone Theatre (Vancouver, BC) – *January 2018*

Espace Libre (Montréal, QC) – *March 2019*

Luminato (Toronto, ON) – *June 2019*



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ONLINE RESOURCE – For press releases, high-resolution images, b-roll, and other pertinent information visit www.buddiesinbadtimes.com/media

Established in 1979, Buddies in Bad Times Theatre is a professional Canadian theatre company dedicated to the development and presentation of queer theatre. The largest and longest running queer theatre in the world, Buddies has made an unparalleled contribution to the recognition and acceptance of queer lives in Canada and is Toronto's leading destination for artistically rigorous alternative theatre.