

Izad Etemadi receives the 2017 Buddies Queer Emerging Artist Award

Toronto: September 22, 2017

Buddies in Bad Times Theatre is thrilled to announce Toronto performer and creator **Izad Etemadi** as the winner of the fourth annual Buddies Queer Emerging Artist Award. The award was presented last night at the company's season launch party.

"The jury was impressed with the courageous, transgressive qualities of Izad's work, both on stage and in the community, recognizing him as a queer artist pushing boundaries and breaking new ground," says Buddies Artistic Director Evalyn Parry.

Best known for his portrayal of the charming, flamboyant, and bearded Persian woman, Leila, Izad's work engages with questions of gender, sexuality, and migration. His solo show *Love with Leila* has toured across the country to packed houses and rave reviews. Offstage, Izad uses the character to host storytelling workshops for women in the community at venues like the Immigrant Women's Centre and the Street Haven Women's Shelter, showcasing their work at *Leila's Girlfriends* exhibits. Leila appears next in a new cabaret, *Leila Live!*, at the 2018 Next Stage Festival.

Izad's latest solo show, *Kooni*, a multimedia show exploring life as a gay man in Iran, premiered at the Rhubarb Festival in 2017 and went on to Halifax's Queer Acts festival. *We Are Not the Others*, a community-research-informed commissioned by McMaster University's School of Social Work, debuted at the Hamilton Fringe this summer, followed by an Ontario tour.

The Buddies Queer Emerging Artist Award seeks to recognize and encourage the achievements of queer artists who are founding careers in the arts while engaging with the community. Izad was selected by a panel of adjudicators comprised of the current and former Artistic Directors of the company: Evalyn Parry, Brendan Healy, David Oiyee, Sarah Garton Stanley, and Sky Gilbert. The award includes a \$1,000 cash prize, made possible by a gift from the Estate of John Alan Lee.

Established in 1979, Buddies in Bad Times Theatre is Toronto's leading destination for artistically rigorous, alternative theatre and a world leader in developing queer voices and stories for the stage. Over the course of its history, it has evolved into the largest facility-based queer theatre company in the world and has made an unparalleled contribution to the recognition and acceptance of queer lives in Canada.