

For immediate release: September 8, 2022

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## **AN EPIC NEW PLAY BY DONNA-MICHELLE ST. BERNARD, *THE FIRST STONE* HAS ITS WORLD PREMIERE AT BUDDIES, OCTOBER 6-16**

**Buddies in Bad Times Theatre** presents a **New Harlem Productions** and **Great Canadian Theatre Company** production

# **THE FIRST STONE**

by Donna-Michelle St. Bernard

### **[TICKETS + INFO](#)**

Opening its 44th season, Buddies is thrilled to present an epic production of a new play by **Donna Michelle St. Bernard**, *The First Stone*. Featuring a 15-person ensemble, this **New Harlem Productions** and **Great Canadian Theatre Company** production has its world premiere in downtown Toronto at Buddies, before an April presentation in Ottawa. This ambitious new project has been supported through the **NAC's National Creation Fund**.

The themes of justice, interdependence, and reconciliation of this new play reverberate with both a Canadian and global context, while focusing in on one family's struggle to reunite after the children are captured into an army. *The First Stone* draws on interviews with Acholi families torn apart by child abductions and the decades-long civil conflict in Uganda and marries text, movement, and song to tell a universal story that tackles ideas of generational violence, forgiveness, and what it really means to come home. Since its first draft as part of **Obsidian Theatre's** Playwrights Unit, and a first presentation in 2018, the piece has continued to evolve. Throughout its development, a connection between the art and the artists' communities has been at the heart of the process, with different approaches to violence, harm, and justice being explored through a series of [Community Justice Forums](#) engaging speakers, panelists, and participants from arts communities and beyond. These ideas feed back into the work onstage as well as the conversations built around it.

*"This is a village-built play, held together by care and solidarity, crafted in community with invested allies."* says playwright Donna-Michelle St. Bernard, *"The question of who gets to go home is one that impacts us all—echoing from the ranks of minor combatants to the bunks of residential schools, the broken foster care system and contemporary youth incarceration facilities. This play aims to hear from the children."*

*The First Stone* is written by Dora-award winning and Governor General Literary Award-nominated playwright **Donna-Michelle St. Bernard** (*Cake*, *Sound of the Beast*), and makes up part of her 54ology series of performance works responding to historical and current contexts of different African countries. Led by director **Yvette Nolan** (*The Unplugging*, *Reasonable Doubt*), the creative team for the production includes choreographers **Indrit Kasapi** and **Pulga Muchochoma** and a design team featuring **Maddie Bautista**, **Michelle Ramsay**, **Jackie Chau**, **Jeff Chief**, and **Cameron Davis**. The ensemble cast features performers both new and familiar to Buddies audiences, including **Tsholo Khalema**, **daniel jelani ellis**,

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**Makambe S. Simamba, Courage Bacchus, Uche Ama, and Michael Lamont-Lytle** alongside a chorus of performers who embody various community members in this expansive story.

## MEDIA INFO

**INTERVIEWS** – Listed artists are available for interviews in English. Select artists are available for interviews in French. Contact [aidan@buddiesinbadtimes.com](mailto:aidan@buddiesinbadtimes.com) to arrange.

**REVIEWS** – Opening night is **Thursday, October 6 at 7:30pm**. Contact Aidan Morishita-Miki at 416-975-9130 x40 or [aidan@buddiesinbadtimes.com](mailto:aidan@buddiesinbadtimes.com) for accreditation, or to inquire about attending another performance.

**ON-LINE RESOURCE** – The Buddies website includes a Media Centre that houses press releases, images and other pertinent information for easy download. [www.buddiesinbadtimes.com/media](http://www.buddiesinbadtimes.com/media)

## ACCESSIBILITY + SPECIAL PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

**Black Out Night - Wednesday, October 12, 7:30PM:** Black Out Nights are designed to create a safer space for Black community members to come together and engage with works by Black artists. The performance on October 12 is exclusively for Black audiences. Advance tickets can be booked online, with PWYC tickets available at the door.

**Reduced Capacity Performances - October 4 + 13:** The capacity of the house will be reduced to 50% of its usual total for the performances on Tuesday, October 4, and Thursday, October 13. This smaller-capacity performance is scheduled with immuno-compromised audience members in mind, as well as those who do not yet feel comfortable in a full theatre. Masking and COVID screening continues to be mandatory for audience members at all performances.

More details on accessibility at performances of *The First Stone* will be added to the website soon.

## PLEASE ADD TO YOUR LISTINGS / ANNOUNCEMENTS

Buddies in Bad Times Theatre presents a New Harlem Productions and Great Canadian Theatre Company production

### **The First Stone**

An epic exploration of history, war, and forgiveness, *The First Stone* delves into the exploitation of child abductees, the communities from which these children are stolen, the determination to bring them home, and the hard road to reconciliation that follows. Through poetry and song, this world-premiere production follows one family's effort to reunite, measuring the cost of holding on, and of letting go.

written by **Donna-Michelle St. Bernard**

directed by **Yvette Nolan**

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Choreography by **Indrit Kasapi + Pulga Muchochoma**  
lighting design by **Michelle Ramsay**  
sound design by **Maddie Bautista**  
set design by **Jackie Chau**  
projection design by **Cameron Davis**  
costume design by **Jeff Chief**

featuring **Uche Ama, Dorothy Atabong, Courage Bacchus Taija Shonée Chung, Tavaree Daniel-Simms, daniel jelani ellis, Tsholo Khalema, Michael-Lamont Lytle, Megan Legesse, Gloria Mampuya, Willow Martin, Kendelle Parks, Makambe K Simamba, Nawa Nicole Simon, and Paul Smith.**

**Performance information:**

Previews: Oct 2, 4 + 5

Opening Night: Oct 6

Closing Performance: Oct 16

Runs: Weds-Sat 7:30pm, Sun 2pm

Tickets: Sliding scale (\$10 / \$25 / \$40 / \$70)

<https://buddiesinbadtimes.com/show/the-first-stone/>

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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.

[buddiesinbadtimes.com](http://buddiesinbadtimes.com)

**New Harlem Productions** is a project-based arts organization that prioritizes marginalized narratives. It is concerned with its impact on people, places and things; projects are undertaken with consideration for sustainability, solidarity, professional development, equitable resource distribution, social implications and front-line experiences.

<https://www.newharlemproductions.com/>

**Great Canadian Theatre Company** is Ottawa's largest professional, independent theatre with the mandate to foster, produce and promote excellent theatre that provokes examination of Canadian life and our place in the world. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Sarah Kitz and Managing Director Hugh Neilson, GCTC offers a wide range of artistic programming: 6 main stage plays every year; a variety of theatre-for-young-audiences; artist workshops; and even the occasional pop-up restaurant with nationally renowned chefs.

<https://www.gctc.ca/>

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