

**For immediate release: August 1, 2023**

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## **Buddies in Bad Times Theatre announces its 45th anniversary season**

**Tickets & info:** <https://buddiesinbadtimes.com/season/2023-24/>

The world's longest-running queer theatre marks a milestone 45th anniversary with a dynamic slate of productions and programming. The 2023/24 season features an epic from the queer canon, stages two new works developed at Buddies, and welcomes two productions from the Prairies. The mainstage season is accompanied by festivals, guest company productions, and a special 45th anniversary presentation series, alongside opportunities for artistic development, celebration, and creative community exchange. As the neighbourhood surrounding the theatre continues to change, Buddies also remains a critical space for events hosted by local queer communities, and is making building improvements to better fulfill that role.

Managing Director **Daniel Carter**, who has programmed the season, remarks, "Welcome to our 45th season. Our 2023/24 programming offers moments of reflection, celebration, and in some instances destruction as we look back to honour our queer histories and look ahead to forge new paths for our queer future. Familiar and new partnerships animate our season, showcasing not only the wealth of queer talent in Toronto but also highlighting enthralling stories and performance from across Canada."

### **SHOWCASING QUEER CULTURE**

Kicking off the season is a **groundwork redux** and Buddies co-production in association with **Obsidian Theatre: daniel jelani ellis' *speaking of sneaking***, originally created in the Buddies Emerging Creators Unit and further developed through Why Not Theatre's RISER project. A mash-up of dance, poetry, and pantomime that tracks the journey of young Ginnal to a place called "Foreign," from Jamaica, the play is directed by **d'bi young anitafrika**, and was nominated for multiple Dora awards for its previous incarnation. Later in the fall, Buddies presents Albertan artist **Tiffany Thomas' *The Rocky Mountain Special***, a guitar-driven, one woman highway opera taking the audience on a journey of self-discovery. The show will be paired with a different local band for each night of the run. In December, **That Theatre Company** stages Tony Kushner's epic two-parter, ***Angels in America***. Directed by **Craig Pike**, this timeless piece of theatre tackles the AIDS crisis head on as New Yorkers grapple with life and death, love and sex, heaven and hell.

In the new year, Buddies welcomes back irreverent Winnipeg-based duo **Dasha Plett and Gislina Patterson** with an anthology of works from their collective **We Quit Theatre: *i am your spaniel, or A Midsummer Night's Dream by William Shakespeare by Gislina Patterson; 805-4821*** (presented as a Google doc performance in 2021's *Queer, Far, Wherever You Are* series); and **Passion Play. The Rhubarb Festival** returns for a 45th edition in February, fostering both artistic experimentation and international exchange. A production coming out of

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the residency program has its world premiere in March—**Raf Antonio's** ***WHITE MUSCLE DADDY***. A co-production with **Pencil Kit Productions**, supported by **Charles Street Video**, this fantasy-horror thriller uses projection art alongside performance to tell a chilling story of a vampiric predator, exploring the destructive impact of the white supremacist construct on queer desire.

While the building's doors are always thrown open for the **Queer Pride Festival** in June, this year the festival atmosphere starts early with an eclectic **45th Anniversary Series**, headlined by **Vag Halen**. Stay tuned for an assortment of one-off performances, readings, concerts, and parties in May, celebrating our histories and imagining the possible futures of this theatre and the communities who make it what it is.

Buddies also hosts, for the first time, The Toronto Fringe's **Next Stage Theatre Festival**, with six shows ranging from sketch comedy to musical theatre landing in October. In the new year, the theatre welcomes back longtime guest company **Theatre Rusticle**, following 2020's acclaimed adaptation of *Midsummer Night's Dream*. **Allyson McMackon** directs an adaptation of *The Tempest* in a physical piece that collides head-on with Shakespearean myth, magic, harsh history and all the ways we make theatre.

## **NURTURING CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT + CULTIVATING ARTISTIC CURIOSITY**

Alongside its mainstage programming, Buddies continues its commitment to developing queer voices with programs like the **Emerging Creators Unit**; an emerging artist platform in **QueerCab**, curated by **Julie Phan** 潘家雯; and the return of **The Disability Collective** as Buddies' **Emerging Company-in-Residence**. Residency artists **Bilal Baig** (*Kainchee Lagaa, Jhooti*), **Celia Green** (*SOWWY*), **Julie Phan** 潘家雯 (*Never Walk Alone*), and **Heath V. Salazar** (*MARIPOSA*) continue to develop their works with space and support from Buddies, and the legendary **Bruce Dow** joins the Seeding Work micro-residency to develop a new solo piece, *A Funny Proposition*, in collaboration with director **Rob Kempson**.

## **CONNECTING COMMUNITIES + MAKING SPACE FOR CELEBRATION**

As part of Buddies' commitment to intergenerational programming, this year sees the launch of **The Rainbow Seniors Project**. This year-long program will be co-designed with **leZlie lee kam** and is dedicated to the artistic engagement of queer seniors, culminating in a Cabaret showcase to be presented as part of the annual Queer Pride Festival.

"The programming has had a huge impact on me because, as a rainbow senior, I feel that I am seen: my existence is acknowledged very specifically," says previous Youth/Elders programming participant and co-facilitator lee kam. "It's crucial that we continue doing this kind of work. We keep hearing that Rainbow Seniors have paved the way for queer and trans youth. We have, but we need to continue working together from an intergenerational and intersectional perspective."

Lead Corporate Sponsor **BMO Bank of Montreal**

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Over the summer, with renovations to the neighbouring Alexander Street Parkette blocking public access to the building, physical improvements are being made to the frontage and interior pathways of the building. These changes will increase access to Buddies' physical space, and complement the complete renovation of the ante-chamber space and other accessibility improvements implemented over the last three years, including providing ramp access to both stages, acquiring hearing assist devices, installing more push-button-operated doors, and providing basic ASL training for front-facing staff.

Throughout the 2023-24 season, Buddies will continue to welcome parties, fundraisers, musicals, and more in Tallulah's Cabaret.

## 2023-24 SHOW LISTINGS

a groundwork redux and Buddies in Bad Times Theatre production in association with Obsidian Theatre

### **speaking of sneaking**

by **daniel jelani ellis**

directed by **d'bi young anitafrika**

*September 19 - October 1, 2023*

Ginnal is sure like never before: he must make it to Foreign. When he meets a Spider who sets him on the journey, Ginnal faces the cost of freedom.

Inspired by experiences of growing up queer in Jamaica and finding home in Canada, *speaking of sneaking* is a multidisciplinary mash-up of dance, poetry, and pantomime, where the archetypal Jamaican Ginnal and the mythical African Anansi meet.

First created in Buddies' Emerging Creators Unit, and further developed with the Anitafrika Method for Why Not Theatre's RISER (where it garnered five Dora nominations, including for outstanding production and outstanding new play), *speaking of sneaking* returns to the Buddies stage for a full production this fall.

**daniel jelani ellis** // creator, performer + producer

**d'bi.young anitafrika** // dramaturg + director

**Fairy J** // choreographer

**Lexi Sproule** // stage manager

**Rachel Forbes** // set + costume designer

**Andre du Toit** // lighting designer

**Stephon Smith** // sound designer

<https://buddiesinbadtimes.com/show/speaking-of-sneaking/>

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## **The Next Stage Theatre Festival**

Presented by Toronto Fringe

*October 18-29, 2023*

Experience the best in performing arts with the 16th Annual Next Stage Theatre Festival from October 18 to 29, 2023. The Toronto Fringe is delighted to be partnering with Buddies in this new chapter of Next Stage with six unique pieces by a dynamic set of artists covering dance, sketch comedy, music, and drama - all ready for their next stage.

Dance: Black in Canada (Shameka Blake and Artists in Motion)

Theatre: Bremen Town (Gregory Prest)

Sketch: Dead Parents Society – a dark sketch comedy revue (Shohana Sharmin)

Theatre: ECHO (Kole Durnford)

Musical Theatre: Guildwood (Braeden Soltys)

Theatre: Something in the Water (S.E. Grummett)

<https://buddiesinbadtimes.com/show/the-next-stage-festival/>

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Buddies in Bad Times Theatre presents

## **The Rocky Mountain Special**

by **Tiffany Thomas**

*November 14-19, 2023*

An elderly trans woman is haunted by her cringe-worthy younger self aboard the Rocky Mountain Special, a luxury coach from Calgary to Vancouver that she's been riding for the last forty years.

A guitar-driven, one woman musical tour-de-force about the quintessential Canadian urge to run from your past, *The Rocky Mountain Special* is a prayer for healing, a love letter to the lost kids of fragmented diasporas, and a playlist for the road-trip home.

**Tiffany Thomas** // Writer/Composer/Performer

**Anna Dagleish** // Production Designer

<https://buddiesinbadtimes.com/show/the-rocky-mountain-special/>

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## **Angels in America: a Gay Fantasia on National Themes**

a That Theatre Company production in association with Buddies in Bad Times Theatre

by **Tony Kushner**

directed by **Craig Pike**

*November 23 - December 17, 2023*

In a Reagan-era New York City beset by the AIDS crisis, a recently-diagnosed Prior struggles to make sense of his mystical visions and visitations, along the way colliding with friends, lovers, and a Mormon couple whose marriage is on the brink of falling apart.

At once sprawling and intimate, *Angels in America* weaves together religion, revolution, and queer (be)longing into an epic, two-part modern masterpiece that speaks to the indomitable human need for change.

That Theatre Company's Craig Pike helms a new production of Tony Kushner's seminal plays, *Millennium Approaches* and *Perestroika*, revisiting a pivotal moment in our queer histories through a contemporary lens.

**Jim Mezon** // Roy Cohn

**Soo Garay** // The Angel

**Christine Horne** // Harper

**Brenda Bazinet** // Hannah

**Allie Macdonald** // Prior

**Ben Sanders** // Louis

**Kaleb Alexander** // Belize

**Wade Bogert O'Brien** // Joe

**Craig Pike** // director

**Michael Hart** // stage manager

**Bonnie Beecher** // lighting designer

**Sean Mulcahy** // set designer

**Michelle Bohn** // costume designer

**John Gzowski** // sound designer

**Sam Hale** // assistant stage manager

**Emma Jo Conin** // apprentice stage management

**Jeff Pybus** // associate lighting designer

<https://buddiesinbadtimes.com/show/angels-in-america/>

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Buddies in Bad Times Theatre presents

## **A We Quit Theatre Anthology**

***i am your spaniel, or A Midsummer Night's Dream by William Shakespeare  
by Gislina Patterson / 805-4821 / Passion Play***

by **Dasha Plett and Gislina Patterson**

*January 16-21, 2024*

A week of performances by We Quit Theatre and friends. Rituals for the discontented, diversions for the disenchanting, and a carnival for quitters! A conversation between trans best friends and lovers, and a sharing of the things they created, together and apart, in their basement apartments.

Last seen in a google doc performing an iteration of *805-4821* as part of Buddies' Queer, Far, Wherever You Are series, Winnipeg-based duo We Quit Theatre takes over the Cabaret space with a collection of three works, including a trans coming out story made out of other stories; an errant lecture on Shakespearean text analysis; and a series of improvised erotic revisions of bible stories, immortalized to cassette tape live on stage.

This farewell performance of *805-4821* will be accompanied by a sharing of **Sadie Berlin's** *Enchantment Island: This Alien Nation*, a loose political exposé and response to We Quit Theatre's piece.

<https://buddiesinbadtimes.com/show/we-quit-theatre/>

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A Theatre Rusticle production

## **The Tempest**

by **William Shakespeare** adapted by the Company

directed by **Allyson McMackon**

*January 18-28, 2024*

Shakespeare meets Theatre Rusticle's physical poetry once again in *The Tempest*. Their inimitable style cracks open the bard's final play unearthing a story about freedom, love and paths to truth. Told by five performers traversing 15 plus characters, Theatre Rusticle collides head-on with Shakespearean myth, magic, harsh history and all the ways we make theatre.

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The Company // **Lindsay Anne Black, Brefny Caribou, Jill Goranson, Kelsi James, Brandon Kleiman, Beck Lloyd, Trinity Lloyd, Jessica Lutness, Allyson McMackon, Sarah O'Brien, Michelle Ramsay, Annie Tuma**

<https://buddiesinbadtimes.com/show/the-tempest/>

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Buddies in Bad Times Theatre presents

## **The Rhubarb Festival**

*February 2024*

Back for its 45th year, Rhubarb transforms Buddies into a hotbed of experimentation, with artists challenging our notions of what art-making and art-watching can be. As Canada's longest-running new works festival, Rhubarb is the place to encounter the most adventurous ideas in performance and to catch familiar and unfamiliar artists venturing into uncharted territory.

Buddies continues to strengthen international ties with Rhubarb's curatorial performance network, fostering exchanges of artists and works between performance festivals around the globe.

<https://buddiesinbadtimes.com/rhubarb>

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A Pencil Kit Productions and Buddies in Bad Times Theatre production, with the support of Charles Street Video

## **WHITE MUSCLE DADDY**

by **Raf Antonio**

co-directed by **Raf Antonio** and **Tricia Hagoiriles**

*March 20-31, 2024*

Soon after Jeremy Río clocks in for his first graveyard shift at an exclusive LA gym, he meets Eugene, a fitness influencer who seems to have the life of Jeremy's dreams—one that's double stuffed with money, muscles, and parties galore. What begins as an envious crush quickly morphs into an insatiable hunger that threatens to tear Jeremy's life apart.

A cinematic theatre piece, *WHITE MUSCLE DADDY* uses projection art, live camera feed and shadow play to spin a chilling yarn about the politics of queer desire.

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**Raf Antonio** // playwright

**Raf Antonio + Tricia Hagariles** // co-directors

**Khanh Tudo** // director of cinematography

**Claren Grosz** // producer

**Nicole Eun-Ju Bell** // projection design

**Keshia Palm** // dramaturgy

<https://buddiesinbadtimes.com/show/white-muscle-daddy/>

## **MEDIA INFORMATION**

**INTERVIEWS** - Listed artists are available for interviews in English. Contact Aidan Morishita-Miki at [aidan@buddiesinbadtimes.com](mailto:aidan@buddiesinbadtimes.com) to arrange.

**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)