

For immediate release: August 24 2023

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Critically-acclaimed *speaking of sneaking* kicks off Buddies in Bad Times Theatre's 45th season

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

"ellis is a joy to watch as he fiercely inhabits the space"

- Mooney on Theatre

Buddies' 45th anniversary season hits the ground running with *speaking of sneaking*, a **groundwork redux** and Buddies co-production in association with **Obsidian Theatre**. Directed by **d'bi.young anitafrika**, theatre artist **daniel jelani ellis** ("Boy" in DM St. Bernard's *The First Stone* in Buddies' 2022-23 season) brings an exhilarating theatrical experience to the Buddies stage: a compelling tale of self-discovery and the pursuit of belonging. Drawing from his Jamaican roots and lived experiences as a Black queer man navigating "Foreign" (Canada), ellis delivers a multidisciplinary performance that combines dance, poetry, and pantomime to create a transformative journey like no other.

"It was in the artistic space of Buddies' Emerging Creators Unit that *speaking of sneaking* was first tenderly brooded over for months," says creator and performer daniel jelani ellis. "With that infant iteration, I was exploring my newly-forming identity as a Canadian — a Black queer Jamaican young man brand-new to Toronto - reconciling new freedoms and transgressions. It is a surreal experience to return to this piece over 10 years later in the very space where those first ideas were incubated."

Originating in Buddies' Emerging Creators Unit (2012) and further developed in Why Not Theatre's RISER project (2018), *speaking of sneaking* has garnered five Dora award nominations, including for outstanding production and outstanding new play.

speaking of sneaking follows the story of Ginnal, who yearns to send a barrel back to his family in Jamaica from his bachelor apartment in Toronto. The play artfully collapses past and present, as Ginnal reminisces about his youth in Yard and his path to Foreign. Guided by the playful and ancient spider Anansi, Ginnal navigates the complexities of Black queer masculinity and wrestles with the fraught potential of leaving one home to find another.

Under the expert direction of d'bi.young anitafrika (*11:11, The Emancipation of Ms Lovely*), whose Anitafrika method has helped grow the piece since its inception, *speaking of sneaking* returns to Buddies for its mainstage debut. This with a fully realized production is supported by choreography by **Fairy J**, set and costume by **Rachel Forbes**, lighting by **Andre Du Toit**, and sound design by **Stephon Smith**.

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MEDIA INFO

INTERVIEWS – Listed artists are available for interviews in English, with select artists available in Jamaica Nation Language. Contact natasha@buddiesinbadtimes.com to arrange.

REVIEWS – Opening night is **Thursday, September 21 at 7:30pm**. Contact Natasha at 416-975-9130 x 22 or natasha@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

ACCESSIBILITY + SPECIAL PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

Black Out Night - Saturday, September 23 at 7:30pm: Black Out Nights are designed to create an affinity space for Black community members to come together and engage with works by Black artists. The performance on **September 23** is an exclusive invitation to Black community members to experience *speaking of sneaking* together, followed by a talkback with **daniel jelani ellis, d’bi.young anitafrika, and Micha Edwards**. Advance tickets can be booked online, with PWYC tickets available at the door.

Relaxed performance - Sunday September 24 at 2:00pm: Relaxed Performances are designed to welcome audience members who will benefit from a more relaxed performance environment, including house lights being left on at a low level, more freedom to come and go from the space, and an alternate space to take a break from the show if needed.

Deaf-interpreted performance - Tuesday, September 26 at 7:30pm: This performance will feature ASL interpretation by Deaf interpreter **Natasha “Courage” Bacchus**.

PLEASE ADD TO YOUR LISTINGS / ANNOUNCEMENTS

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**

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.

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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

Performance information:

Previews: September 19 + 20

Opening Night: September 21

Closing Performance: October 1

Runs: Tues-Sat 7:30pm, Wed, Sat, Sun 2pm

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

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

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About the companies

Groundwork Redux is an ever-evolving gathering of artists and projects – creating original art, performance, and community activations. Afrocentrism. Mentorship. Reciprocity. Joy.
groundworkredux.com

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

Obsidian is the leading culturally-specific theatre company in Canada with a threefold mission to produce plays, to develop playwrights and to train emerging theatre professionals. Obsidian is passionately dedicated to the exploration, development, and production of the Black voice. For over 20 years, Obsidian has produced plays from a world-wide canon focusing primarily, but not exclusively, on the works of highly acclaimed Black playwrights. Obsidian also provides artistic support, promoting the development of work by Black theatre makers and offering training opportunities through mentoring and apprenticeship programs for emerging Black artists.
<https://www.obsidiantheatre.com/>

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