

ted witzel Named Artistic Director of Buddies in Bad Times Theatre

The accomplished Canadian cultural leader, artist and director joins the leadership team of the world's largest and longest-running queer theatre this October.

Toronto, ON (August 22, 2023) – Following a five-month search, the Buddies in Bad Times Theatre's Board of Directors today has announced the appointment of theatre artist, curator, and cultural manager **ted witzel** as the company's sixth artistic director.

"We had the privilege over the past few months of meeting with dynamic, highly qualified, and talented professionals from across Canada," said **Brendan McMurtry-Howlett**, Chair of the Board. "The Board and search committee members are delighted in the appointment of ted witzel, a community-minded artist with a deep personal connection to Buddies. He brings the artistic energy and leadership skills to ensure Buddies continues to thrive as a home to queer voices of all kinds – one that is equitable, vibrant, and brazen in its creativity. We also take this moment to acknowledge, with deep appreciation, the steady leadership of our Managing Director **Daniel Carter**, and the incredible staff of Buddies, for all of their dedicated and transformative work over the past year in particular."

witzel is a queer, Canadian theatre-maker and cultural leader with over 15 years of experience as a director and arts leader, and he steps into this role with an impressive background in arts management, artistic curation, and new work development. He returns to Toronto from Milan, Italy, after completing a Masters in Arts Management at SDA Bocconi. witzel has a long history with Buddies, as an artist and director. Audiences will recognize his work from mainstage productions such as the Dora-nominated *LULU v.7 // aspects of a femme fatale* (2017/18), *The Scavenger's Daughter* (2018/19), and most recently *The Afterparty* as part of *Taylor Mac's Holiday Sauce* presented in partnership with TO Live as part of Buddies' 2020/21 hybrid season.

"Buddies made me the artist I am today, and I think that's true for a lot of queer artists in this city and beyond," said witzel. "Buddies is built on the principles of queer liberation—it's a space for chasing freedom, as communities, and as artists. I love that this theatre's identity has always been a collective product of all the people who gather and create here. This is a place for encountering radical queer creativity and all its transgressive sexy possibilities. Our job is to enable artists exploring the edges of queer art: now and into the future."

Recently witzel was a guest curator for the 2023 SummerWorks Festival, and last year completed a four-year tenure as Artistic Associate and Laboratory Director at the Stratford Festival of Canada, where he oversaw the company's research and development programs. These included a broad portfolio of new works in development, equity-focused systems change, and artist residencies. He is also a member of the Theatre Committee at the Toronto Arts Council. He has been an artistic leadership resident at the National Theatre School (2018), and was a member of the Banff Centre's 2019 cultural leadership cohort. witzel was in the inaugural cohort of the York University/Canadian Stage MFA in directing, and has been an artist-in-residence at Harbourfront Centre, Buddies, and Institut für Alles Mögliche (Berlin). He also runs independent theatre collective the red light district.

witzel joins Buddies in Bad Times Theatre at a pivotal moment in the company's history. Now entering its recently announced [45th anniversary season](#), Buddies has spent the past three years strengthening processes around pay equity, improved work-life balance within production schedules, and new workflow systems designed to improve communications and development practices. The company has also returned to pre-pandemic programming numbers and audience numbers, with over 14,000 folks attending performances in-person and online over the past two seasons.

The artistic director hiring process was designed in collaboration with the Laboratory for Artistic Intelligence and invested community members. Over 40 diverse artists from across Canada, with a notable depth and breadth of expertise, applied for the position. The search committee included: Anu Radha Verma (board member), Brendan McMurtry-Howlett (board member), Bilal Baig (Residency artist), Cara Eastcott (artist and Disability consultant), sue balint (producer and curator), Pat Bradley (consultant, past OAC Theatre Officer), and Donna-Michelle St. Bernard (artistic director of New Harlem Productions).

"We were looking for a candidate with a strong artistic vision, impressive management skills, a deep understanding of Buddies' history and context, and a demonstrated commitment to organisational change and the fostering of community relationships," said Anu Radha Verma, Board Member and search committee member. "ted not only impressed us with meeting these criteria: his capacity to contribute to both artistic programming and strategic business development will be an important part of Buddies' continued life as a transformative space for queer artists and audiences alike."

witzel is currently on-boarding with staff, and will step officially into the role on October 10, 2023.

About Buddies in Bad Times Theatre | buddiesinbadtimes.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. Buddies offers a year-round program that includes a full season of queer theatre, new works festivals, artist residencies, and intergenerational training and education initiatives. In its 45-year history Buddies has welcomed over one million people into its home in the heart of Toronto's queer village and has premiered over 1,000 new works for the stage, making it the largest and longest-running queer theatre company in the world.

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