

**Toronto Fringe Announces
The 16th Annual Next Stage Theatre Festival
October 18-29, 2023 at Buddies in Bad Times Theatre**

**Black In Canada / Bremen Town / Dead Parents Society
ECHO / Guildwood / Something In The Water**

(September 6, 2023) **Toronto Fringe** is proud to announce the programming for the **16th Annual Next Stage Theatre Festival** taking place October 18-29, 2023, with six unique pieces presenting dance, sketch comedy, a musical, and dramatic theatre, plus a dynamic selection of community programming.

Inspired by the monarch butterfly emerging from its cocoon, heralding the autumn season, **Next Stage** is back in person for the first time since 2020 at a new time of year and at a new venue. Audiences will enjoy six productions in this exceptionally rich and experimental festival at the historic Buddies in Bad Times Theatre. **Next Stage Theatre Festival** brings music, movement, levity, and raw emotion from six talented companies who are poised and ready for their next stage.

"Our last Next Stage in January 2022 had made a last-minute pivot to a fully online festival, so this return to in person programming is a long time coming. We are thrilled to welcome audiences to our new festival home, Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, at a different (and less cold!) time of year," said Executive Director **Lucy Eveleigh**. *"We are so thankful to be back in person for the 16th Next Stage Theatre Festival, and so excited to share these wonderful shows with our new and returning audiences."*

The 2023 Next Stage Theatre Festival Line-Up:

In Alphabetical Order

BLACK IN CANADA

Artists In Motion

Choreographer: Shameka Blake

Cast: Marquisha Sparkes-Whonder, Diane Jean-Louis, Kayla-Renée Wilson, Onija Bennett

Black in Canada is a powerful episodic performance of dance, spoken word, and recorded archives that emphasize the immense and lasting impact Black people have had, and continue to have, on the social and cultural fabric of the land. The work interprets the consequences of systemic racism and educates the audience about not only our history, but the contemporary climate of racial oppression in Canada.

BREMEN TOWN

Bremen Town Collective

Playwright & Director: Gregory Prest

Composer: Tatjana Cornij

Cast: Tatjana Cornij, Oliver Dennis, Simon Gagnon, Farhang Ghajar, Deborah Grover, Veronica Hortiguela, Nancy Palk, William Webster

After forty-five years of hard work and dedication, Frau Esel, the longest serving housekeeper of Völksenhaus, has been fired and sent out to pasture. *Bremen Town* is a rural folk tragedy (with humour) about what happens when we outlive our use.

DEAD PARENTS SOCIETY: A DARK SKETCH COMEDY REVUE

Dead Parents Society

Creator: Shohana Sharmin Sicilia

Director: Kirsten Rasmussen

Cast: Anne McMaster, King Chiu, Shohana Sharmin Sicilia

Good grief. *Dead Parents Society* is a dark sketch comedy revue created by a group of comedians who each lost a parent at a young age. Grief connects us to the most basic truth about humanity - everyone will experience loss in their lifetime. Where is it okay to talk about death? Is it possible to face grief with humour? This is a show with equal parts heart and humour about love and loss.

ECHO

A Front Company

Playwright: Kole Durnford

Director: Robert Morrison

Cast: Jenn Tan, Tom Shoshani

Echo and Narcissus lock eyes in a club, and the world begins to float. Heartbreak, love, sex, psychedelics, and an adorable dog all combine as the two relive their whirlwind relationship. In a modern retelling of the Greek myth, *ECHO* asks what place love has in a world in love with itself.

GUILDWOOD

Garner Theatre Productions & Guildwood Collective

Playwright & Director: Braeden Soltys

Music Director & Orchestrator: Jake Schindler

Choreographers: Meghan Caine, Sierra Holder, Tyler Pearse

Cast: Kryslyne-Mai Ancheta, Donna Garner, Rick Hughes, Tyler Pearse, Meghan Caine, Jake Schindler, Camila Diaz-Varela, Taran Kim, Rita Dottor, W. Joseph Matheson, Yunike Soedarmasto

Before their home is taken over for use for the great war across the sea, the residents of an artist commune gather for one final night of soul-searching and celebrations. Inspired by the “Guild of All Arts” built in Scarborough during the Great Depression, *Guildwood* is a love letter to the artist, the dreamer, and the revolutionary.

SOMETHING IN THE WATER

Scantly Glad Theatre

Author: S.E. Grummett

Director: Deanna Fleysher

Music: The Garrys

In collaboration with: Mind of a Snail Puppet Company, Alyssa Billingsley, Charlie Peters, Kenn McLeod, Holly Brinkman

When Grumms transforms into a horrible squid monster, they must hide their secret identity. With spellbinding video projection, puppetry, and laugh-out-loud physical comedy, *Something in the Water* is an absurd exploration of gender, comic books, and growing up “normal”. This award-winning solo-show is a touching story of acceptance that anyone can relate to.

Next Stage Theatre Festival Community Programming:

On Saturday, October 28, the **Next Stage Theatre Festival** will also feature an ASL-interpreted screening of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* presented in partnership with **The Disability Collective**. For the first time ever in Toronto, the cult classic will feature ASL interpretation by a Deaf cast at this Pay What You Can screening.

Additional community programming at **Next Stage Theatre Festival** includes: **After Stage with TENT**, where TENT Program artist producers have collaborated with each Next Stage company to create and produce programming that expands the experience of each production; and the **Indie Arts Workshop & Social** in partnership with **TAPA** where indie arts workers of all kinds will focus on how to balance the pressures of life, work, and caring for others in the arts community.

Toronto Fringe is a grassroots, charitable organization that runs the Toronto Fringe Festival each July and the annual Next Stage Theatre Festival each October. Toronto Fringe offers various year-round programs that benefit youth, emerging artists, BIPOC artists, artists with disabilities, and the performing arts community at large. Embedded in Fringe’s operations are the values of Access, Accountability, Creativity, Exploration, and Support.

Next Stage Theatre Festival

October 18-29, 2023

Buddies in Bad Times Theatre

12 Alexander Street

Regular Tickets: \$20

Student Tickets: \$15

6 Ticket Pass: \$108

12 Ticket Pass: \$216

All orders placed online or over the phone are subject to a \$3.50 order fee

Tickets and Passes On Sale Now at

<https://fringetoronto.com/next-stage/>

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