

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**December 6th, TORONTO, ON** – The English premiere of 'Heart of a Dog' is a comical adaptation by award-winning playwright and director Mohammad Yaghoubi, based on a novel by the classic Russian writer Mikhail Bulgakov.

The story is about a stray dog saved by a successful surgeon who runs an operation on the dog by trepanning his skull and giving him human pituitary glands. Later on, the dog gets hired by the Soviet State and starts working for them. Arguably, this timeless story – uniquely – portrays the exploitation of people in any society in which individuals are used and even abused due to particular political intentions of the government.

**ABOUT THE PRODUCTION** – Mohammad Yaghoubi staged the Farsi premiere of 'Heart of a Dog' in Iran in 1999. He later remounted this play in Iran in 2014, in which he had a different approach, and asked all the men in the show to wear headscarves. This was in response to the image of women that the Islamic state has disseminated in recent decades. In Iran, the state dictates Islamic sartorial codes for women to this day. Yaghoubi used this approach to criticize the compulsory hijab and censorial regulations. The narrative of this story inspired Yaghoubi to expose the similarities of the totalitarian states of two different countries of different times with contradicting ideologies wherein one communism ruled over people's lives (Russia) and in the other religion (Iran). That project showed how ridiculously similar these countries are regarding the lack of freedom of speech and freedom of opinion. Now in Canada, Yaghoubi has the opportunity to embrace the freedom to experiment with his creativity without the constraints he previously experienced in Iran. In this third approach, the most crucial change is that the main character (the dog) will be performed by a woman who would not be allowed to do so in Iran, where a woman's body is political.

**Heart of a Dog** makes its World English Premiere at the 2022 Next Stage Festival.

**SHOW DATES:**

Friday, January 21st - 6:00 PM

Sunday, January 23rd - 1:30 PM \*

Wednesday, January 26th - 8:45 PM

Saturday, January 29th - 4:00 PM \*

Sunday, January 30th - 6:00 PM

\*These shows include an informal conversation at the end of the performance.

**ABOUT NOWADAYS THEATRE** – NOWADAYS THEATRE is a Toronto-based not-for-profit company founded by Aida Keykhaii and Mohammad Yaghoubi in 2016. NOWADAYS THEATRE prioritizes creative works that address socially-relevant topics and introduces socially relevant works that provoke public discourse and promote community engagement. In the interest of inspiring cross-cultural dialogue and supporting cultural diversity in Canada, NOWADAYS THEATRE translates Canadian plays into Farsi and Iranian plays into English. Our works have been performed in Sweden, France, The Czech Republic, Germany, Belgium, Australia, the USA, and Turkey.

The company was the 2018-19 RBC Emerging Company in Residence at Canadian Stage, where they developed and presented an established Iranian play, "The Only Possible Way" written and directed by Mohammad Yaghoubi. **For more information, visit <https://www.nowadaystheatre.org/>**

**CREATIVE TEAM** – Director/Playwright: Mohammad Yaghoubi; Translated by: Mahsa Ershadifar and Mohammad Yaghoubi; Featuring (in order of appearance): Melanie Grace, Siavash Shabanpour, Neta J. Rose, Aida Keykhaii, Aylin Oyan Salahshour, Yury Ruzhyev, Ali Ghorbanian; Stage Manager: Laura Lakatos; Assistant Director: Mahsa Ershadifar; Lighting Design: David DeGrow; Make-up Artist: Roksana Razavi; Composer: Farshad Fozooni; Poster: Saman Farzaneh; Photographer: Bahare Ahmadi;

Produced by NOWADAYS THEATRE COMPANY

Opens January 21 – 30, 2022

Online at <https://fringetoronto.com/next-stage/show/heart-dog>

**SOCIAL MEDIA:**

@TheatreNowadays

#HeartOfADogTO

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#nstf2022

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