



## Our Theatre Voice

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### 'Earworm' by Mohammad Yaghoubi

A Nowadays Theatre Production in association with Crows Theatre. Now onstage at Crow's Theatre



Dahlia Katz

*Dave Rabjohn*

"An outstanding world premiere that is pensive and shocking"

Years of Iranian civil strife as a result of violent revolutions in 1979 and 2022 are depicted in Mohammad Yaghoubi's new play 'Earworm.' This outstanding world premiere is both pensive and shocking as it deals with how Iranian discord can echo across the world and specifically in Canada.

From Yaghoubi's notes, facing horrors one thought you had escaped and learning that heroes can be otherwise are prevalent themes in the story.

Homa (Aida Keykhai) is an immigrant from Iran who clearly has a dark past as a victim from her days in Iran. Living with her soft spoken son, Pendar (Amir Maghami), she clearly plays the role of social consciousness as she rails against the clerical regime of Iran. As a blogger in Toronto, she is open about her past and bitterly condemns events in Tehran.

Conflicts arise as her son's fiancé, Fatemeh, fiercely played by Parya Heravi, is perceived as a conservative Muslim with an extremely conservative father. A dinner invitation is fraught with possible conditions – must Homa wear a hijab, tone down her rhetoric, even avoid smoking?

The conditions are not met, but the invitation stands. Fatemeh is less conservative as perceived with bare arms and amorous advances on Pendar – until her father appears played by Amir Zavosh. Homa's Iranian nightmares are ignited as she comes face to face with horror and the story spirals into blackness.

Keykhai's performance is strongly understated – her passions are keen but controlled. Anger at the regime is quietly forceful. Her frustrations with Pendar are open but loving. This subtlety gives strength to her second act where she finally blazes and careens through anger and horror.

As the quietly frustrated son, Maghami also is subtly controlled. At times, though, he is too much arms and fingers as he points at his mother wildly. Heravi brilliantly plays the naïve girl friend. As the crisis mounts, her shock is alarming, but her reaction is more inward than explosive. We can't imagine her horror as she grabs at the hems of her dress reeling and barely standing.

Zavosh as the father is also staggeringly subtle. His arms are often folded with a wry grin. He does indeed become the "smiling damned villain."

Several moments gave way to very quiet dialogue. Perhaps this was part of the understated conflicts that are seething below the surface, but it was frustrating at times for the audience.

Sina Shoaie's sound design was forceful with music underscoring the abhorrent animus. The constant barking of the dog signified the intrusion of one family on another. Projections were artful and, at times, staggering.

The double ending (not double switch) was inventive, frightening and added thoughtful dimension. Yaghoubi's writing achieves his pronounced goals as the horrors of unrepresentative governing are displayed in the broken lives of family and lovers.

A number of listed dates are performed in Persian (Farsi) with English subtitles. These diverse talents add to the exceptionality of this cast made up mostly of Iranian background.

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A Nowadays Theatre Production in association with Crows Theatre  
Performers: Aida Keykhai, Amir Maghami, Parya Heravi, Amir Zavosh  
Director: Mohammad Yaghoubi  
Set design: Amin Shirazi  
Sound design: Sina Shoaie  
Stage manager: Sabrina Weinstein

Production runs through February 25, 2024.  
Tickets: [crowstheatre.com](http://crowstheatre.com)

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