

Asia Society

Presents

Hamlet, Prince of Grief

A Free Adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*



Wednesday, October 30 • 8:00 PM

Asia Society

725 Park Avenue at 70th Street

New York City

The performance will last
approximately 38 minutes,
and will be followed by an artist
talk-back



Asia
Society®

CREDITS

Hamlet, Prince of Grief **A Free Adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet***

A Co-Production of Leev Theater Group and First Day Theater Company

Written by Mohammad Charmshir
Directed by Mohammad Aghebati

Starring Afshin Hashemi
(*The guest of Parchin & Khaneh Theatre Group*)

Producer: Mehrnoush Aliaghaei

Music: Selections from "Silence City" by Kayhan Kalhor

Directing team: Elham Gol Jamal, Ehsan Safarzadeh

Graphic Designer: Saleh Tasbihi

Photographers: Reza Ghaziani and Ehsan Matoori

English Translator: Essan Noruzi

Film: Rad Image House

An artist talkback with Mohammad Aghebati, Afshin Hashemi and Rachel Cooper, Director, Global Performing Arts, Asia Society, will follow the performance.

The play will be performed in Persian with English supertitles.

Hamlet, Prince of Grief is an adaptation of Shakespeare's tragedy. In this abridged retelling, a childlike Hamlet (Afshin Hashemi) performs a monologue with a plastic toy menagerie as his supporting cast. He is a college student on his way to a picnic when he receives an unsettling call: His father has died and he must return home. Though the setting and tone diverge, the themes remain the same. Hamlet's fundamental struggles of deceit, mortality, and revenge are imbued with a stroke of whimsy, simultaneously supporting and subverting the original text.

The play was first performed in June 2011 as part of the MonoLeev Festival at the Entezami Hall- Iranian Artists Forum. The MonoLeev Festival is conducted by the Leev Theater Group as a workshop for artists and playwrights to present monologues and monodramas. After its performance at the MonoLeev, **Hamlet** transferred to the City Theater in Tehran in July 2011, and was then presented at the international "Fadjr" festival in February 2012. In January 2013, it had its US and NY premiere at part of the Public Theatre's "Under the Radar" Festival.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Mohammad Aghebati (Director) was born in 1975 in Mashhad, Iran. He studied Theater Directing at the Tehran Arts University, and founded Leev Theater Group with his classmates. He has managed different research projects with Leev, such as the Monologue Project. In this project, Leev staged different plays based on Classical and Modern Dramatic Literature.

In 2003, Aghebati received a medal from President Khatami honoring him as Iran's Successful Young Theater Artist for his direction of the play, *Kiss You and Tears*. This play, based on the life of Václav Havel, continues to be performed internationally.

Aghebati continued to work with Leev Theater Group until he moved to the United States, where he is now an SRF at the Yale School of Drama. He is currently in the process of establishing First Day Theater, his New York-based company. Since his move to the States, he has worked as a freelance artist with his colleagues at Yale, and continued his work with playwright Mohammad Charmshir to focus on new experiences of text and performance.

Aghebati directed *only God has the Right to Wake Me Up* for the opening of Freiburg Theater Festival in Germany in 2005. With the help of Reza Soroor, a young Iranian dramaturg, he also directed a new interpretation of *Oedipus Rex* called *Jocasta; God's dead words*, an international collaboration with the Japan Foundation. His latest staged performances include *The Sky of Snowy Days*, a new narration of *Bonnie and Clyde*, *Skellig and Children of Fly*, and *Hamlet, Prince of Grief*, which has begun its international tour.

Mohammad Charmshir (Writer) a playwright, dramaturg, and university professor, has about fifty-five published plays. His works have been translated into English, German, and French and performed in such diverse countries as Iran, Germany, England, France, Italy, the US, India and Bangladesh.

His plays include *It's not Raining in Egypt*, *Ravaneh and the Yoke*, *I Kiss You and Tears*, *A Sudden Dove*, *Beautiful Life of Kind Tal'at*, *Day of Resurrection*, *The Monastery*, and *Kaligula, Poet of Violence*.

Afshin Hashemi (Performer) is an actor, playwright, musician, and director. He holds a Masters in Directing and Acting from the Tehran Arts University. He has been nominated for many awards in Iran, including Best Actor in a Theatrical Role, Best Actor in a TV Drama, and Best Supporting Actor.

Most recently, he wrote and directed *The Prince of Spring and the Song of the Far Land*, performed with Iranian and Korean actors, and wrote *The Anniversary Present*, which was chosen as one of the ten best published plays of 2011 by the 5th Drama Celebration.

Other recent theatrical credits include *But Now Human*, *Hamed Behdad; My Love*, *A-Seyed-Kazem*, and *Here is Tehran*. Recent film credits include *Laboratory*, *Without Farewell*, *Migraine*, and *Amorous of Tajrish*.

ABOUT THE COMPANY

Leev Theater Group is an Iranian non-profit theater company. Leev started its performance activities in 2001, and has staged more than 30 plays in different venues in Iran.

At present, Leev Theater Group is known as one of the most active Iranian theater groups and its activities are not only limited to performing. Leev also seeks new ways of exchanging knowledge and experience and expanding a more enriched understanding of the art of theater in Iran through activities such as holding workshops, conducting research projects such as "Introducing the World's Contemporary Theater Directors," translating theoretic texts into Persian, and publishing special magazines about theater.

The MonoLeev Festival is another research activity of Leev Theater Group, founded in 2008 to present "Leev's research sittings on Monologues." Now entering its fourth year of activity, Mono Leev has created a ground for various artists and playwrights to work with each other in the form of Monologue and Monodrama and exchange experience and creative ideas.

In the past few years, Leev Theater Group has been trying to expand the concept of the Theater Group in Iran. Shadow Leev Theater Group is a company of talented young artists who are experiencing working as a group under the support and guidance of Leev Theater Group.

THE COLLABORATORS ON THEIR WORK

Afshin Hashemi: “It does not really matter to draw a definite line between a free adaptation and a strict loyal adaptation. What matters is the relation of the text and performance with the spectators.”

Mohammad Aghebati: “Our approach to [Shakespeare’s] text is more modern, and has been analyzed regarding loyalty to every single [performance] element. The adaptation is narrated through a childlike character, and the whole text has been reorganized due to this single change.”

**From “A Prince In the Labyrinth of a Story” by Amin Azimi,
a review of the 2011 Tehran production:**

“Hamlet is as old as the human-being itself. He is an archetype that proposes questions about justice, truth, meaning of love, life and death. In Aghebati's performance piece, Hamlet is a cynical, fragile and exhausted figure who fails even before reaching adulthood and the beginning of his fight. He is destined to die young.

Hamlet cannot escape his fate of storytelling. While Scheherazade tells story after story to survive, Hamlet is a narrator who becomes a victim of his own story... In Mohammad Charmshir's version of the story, Hamlet does not even have the opportunity to take the revenge

IRAN MODERN

Asia Society Museum has organized the groundbreaking exhibition, *Iran Modern*, on view from September 6, 2013 to January 5, 2014. The first major international loan exhibition on the subject, *Iran Modern* showcases paintings, sculpture, photography, and works on paper in the three decades leading up to the Revolution in 1979. A full season of programs will accompany the exhibition.

SELECT RELATED PROGRAMS

Film Series:

Iran 1960s-1970s

November 2013

Performance:

Kayhan Kalhor with Ali Bahrami Fard

Saturday, November 16 at 8:00 PM

Performance:

Sound: The Encounter, New Music from Iran and Syria

Co-presented with the Aga Khan Music Initiative

Saturday, December 7 at 8:00 PM

About Performing Arts at Asia Society

Asia Society's Performing Arts Program is an intrinsic component of Asia Society's commitment to sharing vital aspects of Asian culture, by placing creative expression at the center of a more comprehensive understanding of culture. Whether it is experimental artists exploring new territory or traditional artists bringing to life the voices of a great legacy, the Performing Arts Program has created a powerful platform for connecting and engaging with Asian culture within a deeper cultural context. We have presented extraordinary artists from renowned names such as Lang Lang, Tan Dun, Abida Parveen, Shen Wei, David Henry Hwang, Sardono and Malavika Sarukkai, to the latest emerging voices. Beginning in 1957, with New York's first performance by Indian maestro Ravi Shankar, the Performing Arts Program has since presented over a thousand performances, including original commissioned work from Asian and Asian-American artists, as well as American artists influenced by Asia, such as Phillip Glass and Vijay Iyer. From Indonesian hip-hop to electronica from Shanghai; experimental dance to the deeply moving traditions of India's *Kuttiyatam*, Burmese *Zat Pwe* or Chinese *Kunqu* opera, we foster artistic exchange and provide creative opportunities for artists.

For more information, please visit asiasociety.org

Asia Society Staff

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Eric DeArmon, A/V Manager

Audio Visual Staff

Harrison Adams, Audio Technician

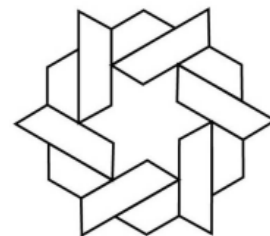
Ed Fasbender, Lighting Technician

Oscar de la fe Colon, Lighting Technician

Oscar Moronta, Videographer

This program is part of the Asia Society's ongoing initiative, *Creative Voices of Modern Asia*, made possible by support from the Doris Duke Foundation For Islamic Art. Additional support for *Iran Modern* programming is provided by the Robert Sterling Clark Foundation and the American Institute of Iranian Studies.

In conjunction with the exhibition, *Iran Modern*, on view September 6, 2013 through January 5, 2014



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