

~ Created, performed and directed by Alexis Fletcher and Arash Khakpour ~



همه هستی من آیه تاریکیست | *All my being is a dark verse* is a full-length duet created and performed by Alexis Fletcher (Canadian) and Arash Khakpour (Canadian/Iranian), who are both Vancouver-based dance artists, creators and directors. This 60-minute piece premiered at Chutzpah Festival in Vancouver, Canada, November 9-10th, 2022.



Photo | Peter Smida

For us, the heart and rigour in this project lies in the concept of translation, because the foundational inspiration for this co-creation is the extraordinary work of poet Forugh Farrokhzad (1934-1967). Forugh is one of the most beloved Persian poets, and a powerful female voice which speaks across cultures and generations. Her legacy lives on in Iran, her native country, and in her widely translated work around the world. Her writing, although being specific, is also timeless, transcends across cultures, and is full of humanity and love that goes beyond borders and ideologies. This project marries the artistic disciplines of literature, visual art, and dance by reaching across dance styles, languages, and cultures in the practice of duet.

To shape a world onstage that evokes the time period Forugh lived in, set designer Sylvain Senez places a surrealist “bouquet” of hanging mid-century lamps onstage, as well as a hanging standing lamp and hanging books, described as “dreamlike and gorgeous” by Stir Magazine. Featured lighting instruments (lighting design by Victoria Bell) are also sourced from this time period. Earthy, sepia tones in Elika Mojtabaei’s costume design reflect the colour tone of the stage design and harken to the colours and textures of vintage photographs as well as the desert regions of Iran - the birthplace of both Forugh and co-creator/performer, Arash Khakpour. Alex Mah’s original composition weaves in haunting snippets of some of the only recordings of Forugh’s voice (through interviews and poetry recitations) that are existing today.

This work was premiered amidst the current calls for freedom in Iran. The timely, deeply relevant nature of this work and experience touched both us and our audiences deeply and we hope to continue being voices in support of Women, Life and Freedom in Iran and everywhere in the world. Simultaneously, we have been inspired by the universal nature of Forugh’s writing and have created a response which aims to reflect this universality and the emotions evoked in us by her poems. Our team is a mix of both Persian and non-Persian artists, and we travel with artists fluent in English, Farsi and French. This work also appeals to a broad audience due to its multidisciplinary nature. Every heart is touched in different ways by different things, and this work weaves together visual art, poetry, our unique movement language, and theatrical stage design.

Created in multiple working periods through 2021 - 2022, we have woven together our movement histories in contact improvisation, contemporary dance, modern dance and ballet to create our own uniquely virtuosic and explosive, yet also intimate and textured, movement language. Described as “exciting and ambitious” by Stir Magazine, this duet partnership offers the opportunity to see the world through another’s eyes due to the close working proximity and physical intimacy that naturally occurs in a shared work with just one other person; it allows the us to work as mirrors—reflecting ourselves through the eyes and body of our partner.

Our team and our project are ready for touring and new presentation opportunities. To support and consult on the cross-cultural, cross-lingual, and cross-disciplinary nature of the project, visual artist Nargess Jalali Delia, and costume designer Elika Mojtabaei are our advisors on translations, cultural context, and add their vital voices as female Persian artists.

In tandem with the duet creation, Nargess created her new visual art collection inspired by Forugh’s poetry. This collection was exhibited in the theatre lobby during our premiere performances and is available to accompany the live performance if requested.





همه هستی من آیه تاریکیست | *All my being is a dark verse*

Created, performed and directed by:

Alexis Fletcher (<https://www.alexisfletcher.ca>)

Arash Khakpour (<http://www.bitingschool.com>)

Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/775240149/8a26bcf78b>

[Link to Photographs](#)

[Links to all Press](#)

Facebook: [Arash Khakpour](#) | **Instagram:** [Alexis Fletcher](#)

Discipline and genre:

Contemporary Dance

Length:

60 minutes with no intermission ~ Can be paired with another work, or stand alone as full evening. At our premiere, the piece was paired with an original poem, also a response to Forugh's poetry, written and performed by acclaimed Persian artist Panthea Vatandoost. More information available upon request.

List of project collaborators:

Neil Griffith - Stage Manager

Sylvain Senez - Set/Production Management

Victoria Bell - Lighting

Alex Mah - Composer

Elika Mojtabaei – Costumes

Nargess Jalali Delia – Visual Artist/Body Art Calligraphy

Cast and company:

2 dancers

1 lighting designer

1 set designer/production manager

1 stage manager

Visual artist collaborator, Nargess, can also accompany us on request of the presenters.

Contact: Alexis Fletcher: alexisstarfletcher@gmail.com

Sylvain Senez: ssenez@gmail.com

Creator/Performer Biographies

Originally from Tehran and based in Vancouver, **Arash Khakpour** is privileged to be a dance artist on the unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations. He is a graduate of Out Innerspace's Modus Operandi training program, has completed the Cultch's Youth Mentorship program, and is a recipient of the contact improvisation scholarship at EDAM under the direction of Peter Bingham. Arash has had the privilege of working with Wen Wei Dance, Out Innerspace Dance Theatre, Kinesis Dance Somatheatro, Company 605, Constance Cooke, and David McIntosh (Battery Opera) among many others.

Arash's choreography has been presented at Dancing on the Edge, Art for Impact, Dance Days Festival (Victoria BC), Dance In Vancouver, rEvolver Festival and Vines Art Festival. Arash's desire is to see whether the theatre can be a place to interrogate the body and to investigate the alternate ways of being. He is interested in dance as a language to research human conditions through historical, social, political and existential interpretations. Arash is the cofounder of Vancouver's guerrilla performance group Pressed Paradise, cofounder of the dance-theatre company The Biting School (alongside his brother Aryo Khakpour), and the founder and co-host of *How About A Time Machine*, a podcast on the history of Canadian performance.

A dance artist, creator, and producer, **Alexis Fletcher** has danced with Ballet BC for 14 years, subsequently becoming a guest artist and Artist in Residence. Now independent, she holds the position of Artist in Residence at Vancouver's Chutzpah! Festival, Dance Victoria, and Shadbolt Centre for the Arts. Alexis is part of the Creative Hub at Presentation House Theatre. Her creations have been supported by Dancing on the Edge, InFrinGing Festival, New Works, Vernon Performing Arts Centre, The Gordon Smith Foundation, BC Arts Council, Canada Council for the Arts and Dance Victoria. Independently Alexis has worked with creators Sidra Bell, James Gnam, Simone Orlando, Rob Kitsos, Wen Wei Wang, Vanessa Goodman and Ne. Sans Opera and Dance. She is happy to be joining zoeljuniper this season as a performer/collaborator. As a producer, Alexis has co-created a multidisciplinary performance space and series with her husband, Sylvain Senez, at their home in Vancouver. On their outdoor stage they curate and present annual performance events, entitled *The Dance Deck*. This series has been running since 2015.

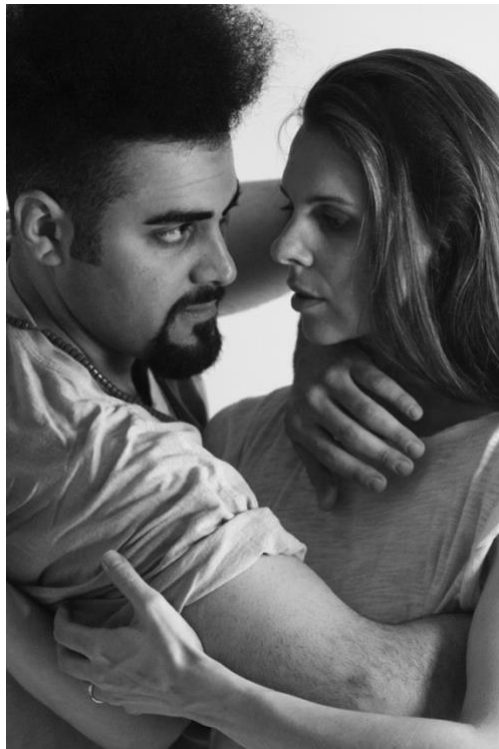


Photo | Peter Smida