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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Each year, hundreds of gay Iranian men choose to change their gender through sexual reassignment surgery.

If they don't, it's legal to execute them.

This is their story.

# **DEATH OF THE PERSIAN PRINCE**

A Moving Portrait of the Power of the Human Spirit

**Written and Directed By Dewey Moss**

*A World Premiere Production in the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual  
Midtown International Theater Festival*

NEW YORK, NY, June 16, 2015 – DMoss Productions, in association with The Midtown International Theater Festival, will present the world premiere of **DEATH OF THE PERSIAN PRINCE**, a new play that dramatizes the real-life story of thousands of gay Iranians who have changed genders to avoid execution by the Iranian government.

Written and directed by **Dewey Moss** (*The Crusade of Connor Stephens, A Normal Life*), **DEATH OF THE PERSIAN PRINCE** is a haunting tale about the power of the human spirit.

Samantha is an Iranian woman living in New York. James is a veteran of the Iraq war. Late one night, in the middle of a heated argument, James leaves and Samantha finds herself alone. Suddenly, there's a knock at the door. Someone from Samantha's homeland has arrived unexpectedly. Fueled by a barrage of threats that unearth shattering confessions of unimaginable terror, the story of James, Samantha and the stranger takes an unexpected turn, leading to a stunning ending that proves nothing is as it seems.

“Sexual reassignment surgery is legal in Iran; however, homosexuality is forbidden and in most cases for males, punishable by death,” according to a 2014 report by the BBC. “There is no reliable information on the number of gender reassignment operations carried out in Iran. But one doctor from an Iranian hospital told the BBC that he alone carries out more than 200 such operations every year.”

The cast of **DEATH OF THE PERSIAN PRINCE** will feature Iranian-American actress **Pooya Mohseni** as Samantha. Mohseni has previously been seen in “Madam Secretary” (CBS), “Brutal Colors” (Amazon Studios), *A Touch of Forever* (FringeNYC), *Copse* (Winter Madness Festival) and *Shooting Starr* (Manhattan Repertory Theatre). The cast will also feature **George Faya** (“Sesame Street”, “Mysteries of the Museum”) and **Gopal Divan** (*Around the World in 80 Days*, *Guys Reading Poems*).

**DEATH OF THE PERSIAN PRINCE** will be presented in a limited engagement at The Davenport Theater. Performances will be held on Thursday, July 23rd at 8pm; Saturday, July 25th at 5:30pm; and Sunday, July 26th at 1pm.

Tickets (\$20) are available by visiting <http://www.midtownfestival.org> or <https://web.ovationtix.com/trs/pr/947701>. Group rates are also available.

The Davenport Theater's Black Box Theater is located at 354 West 45th Street.

### **The Story That Inspired The Play**

Sexual reassignment surgery is legal in Iran; however, homosexuality is forbidden and in most cases for males, punishable by death. A growing trend is for gay men to have sex changes in order to avoid legal execution.

It's not official government policy to force gay men or women to undergo gender reassignment but the pressure can be intense. In the 1980's the founder of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Khomeini, issued a fatwa allowing gender reassignment surgery - apparently after being moved by a meeting with a woman who said she was trapped in a man's body.

A psychologist at a state-run clinic in Iran says some gay people now end up being pushed towards surgery. Doctors are told to tell gay men and women that they are "sick" and need treatment, she says. They usually refer them to clerics who tell them to strengthen their faith by saying their daily prayers properly.

Supporters of the government's policy argue that transgender Iranians are given help to lead fulfilling lives, and have more freedom than in many other countries. But the concern is that gender reassignment surgery is being offered to people who are not transgender, but homosexual, and may lack the information to know the difference.

There is no reliable information on the number of gender reassignment operations carried out in Iran. Khabaronline, a pro-government news agency, reports the numbers rising from 170 in 2006 to 370 in 2010. But one doctor from an Iranian hospital told the BBC that he alone carries out more than 200 such operations every year. Furthermore, additional studies claim that 45% of people receiving the surgery were not transgender, but rather gay or lesbian told to have the surgery to avoid legal persecution.

*Adapted from "The Gay People Pushed to Change Their Gender", BBC; November 5, 2014;  
<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-29832690>*

### **About Dewey Moss**

Dewey Moss is an award-winning director, writer, and actor whose performance career has spanned Broadway shows, concert appearances, film/TV work, and opera. As a writer and director, his debut feature film *A Normal Life* won critical acclaim in film festivals worldwide and is currently in distribution. His screenplay *All the Way from Arp, Texas* is currently in pre-production. His play *The Crusade of Connor Stephens* that shows a gay family dealing with a school shooting and the consequences of radicalized religion is currently in pre-production for an Off-Broadway run.

Moss recently made his Carnegie Hall debut as both singer and director when he performed the opera *Puppet* by Christian McLeer (a solo piece written specifically for Moss) and directed the world premiere of William Bolcom's *Barnyard Boogaloo*. Other directorial credits include *The Normal Heart*, *Guys n' Dolls*, *Holy Ghosts*, *Angels in America*, *Love! Valour! Compassion!*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Something's Afoot*, *The Crusade of Connor Stephens*, *Judevine*, *The Old Maid and the Thief* and *Surviving Laughter*, a finalist in the Kennedy Center's American College Theater Festival.

As a Creative Director for advertising firms, Dewey has written and produced/directed numerous commercials, industrials, and webisodes, many of which have been award-winning.

Originally from Fort Worth, Texas, Moss teaches acting and voice through his private New York City studio, DMoss Studios, and is the author of the acting handbook *Learning the Art of Imperfection*.

### **About the Midtown International Theater Festival**

The mission of the Midtown International Theatre Festival is to nurture theatre in New York City and beyond. Every summer (starting in 2000) in midtown Manhattan, the Midtown International Theatre Festival (MITF) celebrates the diversity of theatre.

We emphasize imaginative, low-tech staging. But putting on a play in a festival burgeoning with many other shows -- in only a handful of theatres -- means tight organization, both in the Festival and among the participants. We have sufficient caring, paid staff to keep the trains running on time. We are truly the Festival That Cares.

The Festival is the brainchild of John Chatterton, creator of OOB ("the off-off-broadway review"), which for many years was the only publication exclusively devoted to covering the Off-Off-Broadway scene. Mr. Chatterton started the MITF as a way to present the finest Off-Off-Broadway talent in convenience, comfort, and safety. He also produces the Short Play Lab and the Midwinter Madness Short Play Festival.



[www.DeathofthePersianPrince.com](http://www.DeathofthePersianPrince.com)

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