

PROGRAMME

EARWORM

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY
MOHAMMAD YAGHOUBI

STARRING
AIDA KEYKHAI

PHOTO OF AIDA KEYKHAI BY COLTON CURTIS

NOWADAYS THEATRE

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A NOWADAYS THEATRE PRODUCTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH CROW'S THEATRE

EARWORM

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY
MOHAMMAD YAGHOUBI

FEBRUARY 6-25, 2024
STUDIO THEATRE | WORLD PREMIERE
SELECT PERFORMANCES IN PERSIAN (FARSI)
WITH ENGLISH SURTITLES
FARSI OPENING NIGHT: FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2024
ENGLISH OPENING NIGHT: TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2024

THE COMPANY

AIDA KEYKHAI
AMIR MAGHAMI
AMIR ZAVOSH
PARYA HERAVI

Homa
Pendar
Mohammad
Fatemeh

MOHAMMAD YAGHOUBI
AMIN SHIRAZI
DAVID DEGROW
SINA SHOAI

Playwright and Director
Set Designer
Lighting Designer
Sound Designer

ALI MOSTOLIZADEH
HONEY HOSEINY
ARMAN MOGHADAM
FARSHAD FOZOONI

Photographer and Videographer
Visual Art and Video Mapping
Visual Art and Video Mapping
Musician

ANISA TEJPAR
AAHELI MUKHERJEE
SABRINA WEINSTEIN
AMIR PARSIA

Intimacy Director
Production Manager
Stage Manager
Stage Manager and Assistant Director

KIMIA OLOUB
KIARASH (KIAA) AALIPOUR
HOMA BONDAR, MEHDI AZIZI,
MARZIEH OZGOLI

Assistant Director
Public Relations and Marketing
Volunteers

Crow's Theatre is a proud member of the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT) and the Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts (TAPA). We engage professional artists under the terms of the Canadian Theatre Agreement (CTA) with Canadian Actors' Equity Association (CAEA).

The running time of EARWORM is approximately 2 hours plus intermission.

Audience Advisory: Mature content, adult language, discussions of religion.

EARWORM is supported by the
Crow's Theatre Production Residency Program

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WELCOME FROM CROW'S

Welcome to the premiere of Earworm, a Nowadays Theatre production in association with Crow's Theatre, part of our 2023.24 40th Anniversary season.

Earworm, written and directed by Mohammad Yaghoubi, launches Crows Theatre's Production Residency Program, generously supported by TD Bank, The Youssef-Warren Foundation, and the Meighen Family Foundation. Residency productions offer invaluable benefit for mentorship from the Crow's Theatre creative team who offer meticulous development and refinement of the projects in progress.

The Crow's team also share their specialized expertise, labour, and resources in technical production and marketing. Throughout the rehearsal process, the Nowadays Theatre team was provided with a hands-on nurturing experience and a knowledge-sharing environment that we hope will result in the growth of their company, broader audience engagement, and increased revenues.

We are thrilled to have Nowadays Theatre's Earworm—which will feature performances in English as well as performances in Persian (Farsi) with English surtitles for the first time in Crow's Theatre history—in the inaugural Production Residency Program!

For four decades, Crow's Theatre has been a vessel for stories that challenge, inspire, and connect us. From its early days in Toronto's indie-theatre scene under the leadership of Jim Millan to the thriving institution it is today, Crow's remains first and foremost dedicated to creating iconic, powerful, and unforgettable shared theatrical experiences in our East End home, and beyond.

We are halfway through this milestone season, and it has already proven a huge success, thanks to you, our audience. Thank you for joining us on this remarkable journey; we wouldn't be here without your support. It is a privilege to continue to share these life-changing stories with you.

With immense appreciation,

CHRIS ABRAHAM
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

SHERRIE JOHNSON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

A MESSAGE FROM NOWADAYS THEATRE

Imagine you've left your hometown to take refuge in a country miles away where you encounter the very people whose harassment you sought to escape. What would you do in such a situation?

Imagine someone you regarded as a hero in your life was a villain to others. How would you respond?
These were the two intriguing questions that inspired me to write Earworm.

I extend my sincere gratitude to the Toronto Arts Council for making it possible to bring this vision to life through their generous support. In 2020, I started writing this play in English to immerse myself in a language, which is not my territory, and challenge my thought process. However, from the very beginning, I was acutely aware that writing in English didn't mean abandoning my mother tongue, the language I grew up with, that I still think and dream with and I use to communicate with my wife and family. Despite this, I took writing in English seriously, aspiring to connect with a broader audience. And it took a longer time than I usually spend to write initially in my mother tongue.

Toronto, this vibrant city, captivates me with its diversity, held together by the official languages of this nation. As a playwright and a director, my goal is twofold: to reach a wider audience through my writing while maintaining a connection with my native language audience. Thus, I chose to write the play in both languages—a first for me. Despite being interconnected, the English and Persian texts diverge deliberately in certain places. I opted against direct translations, recognizing the richness in distinction. Even the title of the play differs between the two languages, a deliberate choice to avoid awkwardness in the translation process. I saw no reason to remain rigidly loyal to myself, embracing the opportunity to deviate where artistic sensibility dictated.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Toronto Arts Council and the Ontario Arts Council for their invaluable support in bringing this show to fruition. I am also extremely grateful to Chris Abraham and the Crow's Theatre team, who have provided a valuable platform for our company to showcase this production. Chris's constructive feedback significantly contributed to the development of this text.

I cannot thank my talented actors enough for embracing the challenge of rehearsing and performing in both English and Persian. Their dedication and commitment to the production have made this demanding task a reality. My utmost gratitude also goes out to the committed production team, whose tireless efforts made this show possible.

Finally, I express my deepest appreciation to you, dear audience, for coming out to see our production. Your enjoyment for our show is motivating us to present further bilingual works, filled with hope and ambition.

Sincerely,

MOHAMMAD YAGHOUBI
CO-FOUNDER NOWADAYS THEATRE

PERSIAN (FARSI) GLOSSARY

<i>Areh</i>	Yes
<i>Baabaa (Bābā)</i>	Dad
<i>Boos</i>	Kiss
<i>Hadīth</i>	Also called <i>riwaya</i> (= narration) is a word in Islamic terminology and religious sciences which refers to sayings quoted from the Prophet(s) and Imams(a) and their conduct. Beside the Quran, <i>hadīth</i> also has had a central role in Muslims' understanding of religion during history of Islam.
<i>Jan</i>	Dear
<i>Maamaan</i>	Mom
<i>Molla (or Akhound)</i>	An Islamic religious cleric. Present day, it is a bit derogatory term to mention Shi'ite clerics while in the past these titles didn't have derogatory connotations. Today they prefer to be called <i>Rouhani</i> , <i>Hojjatol'islam</i> or <i>Ayatollah</i> .
<i>Namaaz (namāz)</i>	Islamic worship or prayer
<i>Non-Mahram</i>	In Islam, a <i>mahram</i> is a member of one's family with whom marriage would be considered <i>haram</i> (illegal in Islam); from whom <i>purdah</i> , or concealment of the body with <i>hijab</i> , is not obligatory; and with whom, if he is an adult male, she may be escorted during a journey, although an escort may not be obligatory. 'Non-Mahram', is a person with whom it is lawful for a Muslim woman to marry, the man from whom the veil is obligatory on the woman.
<i>Raka'at (Rak'at)</i>	It is a single iteration of prescribed movements and supplications performed by Muslims as part of the prescribed ritual prayer known as <i>Namaz</i> . Each of the five daily prayers observed by Muslims consist of a number of <i>raka'at</i> .
<i>Ta'arof (Ta'ārof)</i>	It's a common word among Iranians and a common behaviour in their everyday lives which can be translated to courtesy.

THE CAST



PARYA HERAVI

Fatemeh

Parya Heravi is an Iranian Canadian theatre actress and doctor of dental surgery currently based in Toronto. She graduated from Shamayel Institute of Theatre in Iran in 2015. She started her theatre career as an actress and international relations manager at Carbon Theatre Company in 2016. Since then, she has appeared in two short films and more than 18 productions, as well as performing in various national and international theatre festivals. Her last performance in Iran won her the award for best actress

in the Provincial Fajr Festival. She moved to Toronto in 2022 and has since performed the role of Noora in *Rubble*, a co-production of Aluna Theatre and Theatre Passe Muraille, and the role of Zahira in the workshop of *Zahira* by Andrew Moody at Theatre Passe Muraille.



AIDA KEYKHAI

Homa

Aida Keykhai is a bilingual (Farsi and English) actor, director, producer, and theatre instructor with over a decade's experience in the industry. She holds an M.A. in Theatre Directing and a B.A. in Acting from the University of Tehran. After moving to Canada, Aida co-founded the Toronto-based Nowadays Theatre, and she made her debut Canadian English-language performance in *The Only Possible Way* when Nowadays Theatre was the in residency at Canadian Stage, 2018-19. Aida received amazing feedback

from audiences and critics for performing in the English premiere of *Winter of 88* at the Next Stage Theatre Festival, 2020, and for performing in *Heart of a Dog*, the Next Stage Theatre Festival, 2022. Her recent appearance in film was *Harbour House* and on stage was *Fertility Slippers* in August 2023. Select Theatre and Film Credits: *What We Do In The Shadows* (F.X.), *Coroner* (CBC), *Children of Fire*, *Harbour House*, *Persimmon*, *Heart of a Dog*, *Drought and Lies*, *From The Basement To The Roof*, *Winter of 88*, *The Only Possible Way*, *Swim Team*, *Proof*, *Iceland*, and *We Are All fine*. Select Awards and Honours: The Iran Festival of University Theatre for Outstanding Acting, *Olive*; The International Iran Festival of University Theatre award for Outstanding Directing, *Goodbye*; Honourable Mention from Canadian Stage in Direction and NOW's annual list of the "Best of the Fest" for Outstanding Production, Ensemble, and Direction, *Swim Team*.



AMIR ZAVOSH

Mohammad

Amir Zavosh is an actor, playwright, scriptwriter, and theatre and film director who has been working in the film and theatre industries since 1998. He has acted in more than fifty theatre productions, films, and television series, and has written several plays and scripts. He has directed several shows and three short films. Following his debut English-language performance in *The Only Possible Way* presented by Nowadays Theatre (Canadian Stage, 2019), Amir

relished his second experience performing in English by working again with Nowadays Theatre, featuring in *Winter of 88* at the 2020 Next Stage Theatre Festival.



AMIR MAGHAMI

Pendar

Amir graduated with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from the University of Tehran and a master's degree in civil engineering with a minor in Computer Science from the University of Toronto. While navigating the world of equations and computations, he discovered a passion for theatre. Previously Amir performed in *On the Shoulders of Antonio* by Mohammad Yaghoubi, solidifying his belief that art is not just a pastime but a fundamental essence of life. For Amir, life without art is mere

existence, a conviction that he holds, and which continues to shape his journey at the intersection of his pursuits and expressive arts.

CREATIVE TEAM



MOHAMMAD YAGHOUBI

Playwright and Director

Born and raised in Iran, Mohammad Yaghoubi is an award-winning playwright, director, screenwriter, theatre instructor, and the co-artistic director of Toronto-based Nowadays Theatre company. With over a decade's experience in theatre, Mohammad moved to Canada in 2015 and co-founded Nowadays Theatre company in 2016. His works have been performed around the world, including Adana, Austin, Brussels, Calgary, Chicago, Dallas, Montreal, Muelheim, Prague, San Francisco, Sidney, Stockholm, Strasbourg, Sulaymaniyah, Tehran, Toronto, and Washington. Recent Credits: *Persimmon* (360-degree video project), *Heart of a Dog* (Online at the Next Stage Theatre Festival, 2022), *Winter of 88* (Next Stage Theatre Festival, 2020, Factory Theatre MainSpace). Selected Awards: The Promising Pen Prize from Cahoots Theatre for *Persimmon*, 2021; First place winner of the Iranian Playwrights Society and third place winner of the New Play Contest in Toronto's Fringe Festival - 2016 for *Outstanding Writing - A Moment of Silence*; The National Theatre Critics Society Award for *Outstanding Writing - Geraniums*; The National Theatre Critics Society Award for *Outstanding Direction - Dance of Torn Papers* and The Fajr Theatre Festival Award for *Outstanding Direction and Writing - Winter of 88*.



AMIN SHIRAZI

Set Designer

Amin Shirazi's artistic journey began in 1997 with the founding of Namava, a university theatrical group that evolved into a co-founded company. In five years, they produced four plays, including the renowned *Siphon*, premiering at the 2003 Iran International University Theatre Festival. Amin served as the set designer for *Siphon* and most Namava shows, marking a pivotal period that led to his master's degree in dramatic literature in 2009. Since his 2001 debut as a set designer, Amin seamlessly blended his directorial and playwriting skills with visual storytelling. His commitment to set design became a distinctive feature of his theatrical talents, enriching each performance. Post-migration to Canada, Amin co-founded Goussan Theatre Company in 2016, contributing to seven performances and play readings, notably hosting Iranian theatre artists. Beyond his roles as a playwright and director, Amin played a crucial role in the set design process for two Goussan Theatre Company shows. Winner of the 2018 démART-Mtl program, Amin penned his first English play, *9428*, during a six-month Geordie Theatre Company residency. The play, awarded first place in the 2019 Toronto Fringe Festival New Play Contest, showcased Amin's excellence as an author, art director, and set designer at the Toronto Fringe Festival in July 2022.



DAVID DEGROW

Lighting Designer

David is a designer, production manager, and occasional thinker of great thoughts working in Toronto. He has been part of some 400 productions in Toronto and across Canada, and his designs have been nominated for three Dora awards. He is also in the final year of his PhD candidacy at the University of Toronto, where his research focuses on the complex relationships between theatre architecture, artistic mandate, audiences, and the city.



SINA SHOAI

Sound Designer

Sina is a composer and sound designer born and raised in Iran, based in Toronto, who explores the intricate relationship between sound and human behavior. With a background in Design from KNYTD (in Kyiv) and a Doctor of Business Administration from Tehran University, he balances being a composer and a music entrepreneur. His works have been featured in notable exhibitions at Tehran Museum of Contemporary Arts (TMoCA) in Iran, STUK art centre in Belgium and National Museum of Fine Art Quebec (MNBAQ) in Canada. He has collaborated with esteemed artists, showcasing his work in sound design for theatre, motion pictures, installations, and audio-visual performances. Sina has released four concept albums and performed at renowned festivals, including Tehran Contemporary Music Festival and Inter-Access Toronto in 2023.



ALI MOSTOLIZADEH

Photographer and Videographer

Ali Mostolizadeh is a PhD student in Sociology at the University of Waterloo. Ali's interest in film has directed him to include documentary films into his research. Ali's first film *7 Menaras* got accepted in Kerman's International Tourism Film Festival in Iran when he was 18. Since then, as a filmmaker, he has been involved in making the films representing findings of his academic works through reinforcing stories of non-dominant subjects. Ali's films have been screened and acclaimed in the academic conferences of his field. As an actor, Ali appeared in *Angels in Iran* directed by Mohammad Yaghoubi in Toronto, George Ignatieff Theatre in 2018.



HONEY HOSEINY

Visual Art and Video Mapping

Honey Hoseiny is an Iranian artist, currently based in Toronto. With a background in TV, theatre, and multidisciplinary art, he's excited to meet other artists and contribute to the city's thriving creative environment. Honey has a background in acting, puppetry, and multimedia directing, as well as a BA in Puppet Theatre and an MA in Dramatic Literature. His cutting-edge interactive works investigate the intersection between visual arts and technology. He is also the co-founder and Executive Director of Simiya Group, which is the pioneer of immersive and interactive new media art at the junction of performance, installation, gaming, and technology.



ARMAN MOGHADAM

Visual Art and Video Mapping

Arman Moghadam, an architect and creative coder, possesses a personality characterized by introversion, intuition, thinking, judging, and assertiveness. He excels in merging art and technology, specializing in interactive media, video mapping, animation, and installation. His impressive work includes contributions to the Creative Code Festival 2020 in Manhattan as a visual artist and creative coder, and engagements from the Azadi Tower in Tehran to international puppet festivals. In the professional realm, Arman's expertise shines through his role as a creative coder and media maker at SIMIYAGROUP, demonstrating his commitment to R&D and interactive media creation. He has also left his mark as a front-end developer and interactive designer at ARYANMEHR, showcasing his web-based animation skills. Arman's educational background in computer programming is complemented by a skill set covering various programming languages and tools. Besides his professional achievements, Arman enjoys gaming, violin playing, and painting, making him a well-rounded individual with a profound passion for life and creativity.



FARSHAD FOZOONI

Musician

Farshad Fozooni is an established musician and composer in the Iranian theatre and film industries. He is known for his unique composition style, utilizing various instruments to enhance play experiences. His exceptional success includes prestigious awards, such as Best Sound Designer at the The Fajr Theatre Festival 2019 and Best Sound 2017 and 2010. Farshad's remarkable talent earned him the Composing Commendation Plaque in 2013 and an honorary diploma from the National Theatre Critics and Award of Iran in 2007. He composed for Nowadays Theatre's *Heart of a Dog* in Iran (2014) and Canada (Next Stage Theatre Festival, 2022). he is excited about his second collaboration with Nowadays Theatre.



ANISA TEJPAR

Intimacy Director

Anisa Tejpar is a dancer, choreographer, and creative contributor with 20 years of experience in performance. From stage, film and television to video games and commercials, Anisa has created and supported all scales of media as an Intimacy Professional. Anisa has a certificate from Principal Intimacy Professionals in Vancouver and currently teaches Consent + Boundaries for Dancers at Toronto Metropolitan University. As a graduate of Canada's National Ballet School, her training has directly translated to how she assists the creation of dance works and feeds her vision in the field of intimacy. She has collaborated with prestigious institutions such as The National Ballet of Canada, Ballet BC, Côté Danse, and various film and television productions. Furthermore, Anisa serves on the Board of Directors for Canada's National Ballet School and is a member of the Performance Program Advisory Committee for St. Lawrence College. She has also made significant contributions to Dancing with Parkinson's, where she has served as a choreographer and director for their Intergenerational Dance Project, which aims to connect youth and seniors through dance. Anisa is also the host of Inside the Arts on Sauga 960AM.



AAHELI MUKHERJEE

Production Manager

Aaheli Mukherjee (she/her) is a production manager with a professional background in education and healthcare. While currently based in Toronto, her South-Asian heritage as well as being born and raised in the Middle East (Saudi Arabia and Oman) informs her identity and appreciation for diverse expressions of art. She started her career in Toronto theatre in the Leigha Lee Browne Theatre at the University of Toronto, Scarborough, as a student working on projects such as *The Circle*, *The Shell*, and *We Are Proud to Present*. In addition to her work on *Earworm*, she has been the Production Manager for Shakespeare in Action's *Oti'hêw* (2023), and the Production Manager for the Paprika Theatre Festival since 2022.



SABRINA WEINSTEIN

Stage Manager

Sabrina Weinstein is a stage manager, producer and recent graduate of the Centre for Drama Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of Toronto. Sabrina is thrilled to be back in the studio theatre, most recently having apprentice stage manager Crow's Theatre's production of *Bad Roads*. Recent credits include assistant stage manager for *Maanoomaa*; *My Brother* (Canadian Stage / Bluebird Theatre Collective), stage manager for *The Gray: A Wilde Musical In Concert* (Hart House Theatre), and stage manager for *Jackets* and *Jills* (Toronto Fringe). Upcoming, she will be stage managing Sunbeam Theatre's *Grief and Grace Festival*. Outside of stage management, you may recognize Sabrina as one of Crow's Theatre's Front of House supervisors. She hopes you enjoy the show.

ABOUT NOWADAYS THEATRE COMPANY

In our dynamic seven-year journey since putting down roots in Canada, The Nowadays Theatre Company has attained remarkable milestones: sold-out productions, stellar reviews, and an outpouring of enthusiasm from our audiences. Yet, our proudest achievement lies in the vibrant community we've nurtured and the valuable employment opportunities we've provided.

Originating in 2016 as newcomers to Canada with a rich decade-long history in Iran, we are dedicated to amplifying the Iranian voice on Canadian soil. Guided by our mission, we tirelessly strive to create original and thought-provoking works. Our primary goal is to produce impactful theatre experiences that captivate and stimulate critical reflection on the world around us. Committed to fostering diversity, we actively engage in collaborations with multicultural theatre artists. The journey hasn't been easy—no fancy productions on Netflix, no availability on Amazon, no entrance fees or waitlists—just a genuine desire for connection.

Now, more than ever, we sense a collective yearning for community and connection. Throughout history, theatre has provided an opportunity for people with diverse political views, backgrounds, and life experiences to share space and connect through the humanity presented on stage. Studies even show that watching theatre can synchronize your heartbeat with audience members you've never met.

As we look to the future, our commitment to creating meaningful and diverse theatrical experiences remains unwavering. We believe in the transformative power of storytelling, and we are dedicated to providing a platform for voices that deserve to be heard. Together, let's continue building bridges of understanding and unity through the art that connects us all.

For more information, please visit nowadaystheatre.org.

SPECIAL THANKS

The company of **EARWORM** would like to thank Chris Abraham and Crow's Theatre team members, Mehrdad Ariannejad and Tirgan team members, Soheil Parsa, Tony Nardi, Matt Jones, Kayhan Mortazavi, Sasan Asvandi, Mostafa Kherghepoosh, Moein Motalebi, Mostafa Azizi, Mohammad Tajdolari, Shahram Gohardehi, Bahram Farhadi, Farzad Nazaringhadam.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Nowadays Theatre Company, founded by first-generation Iranian immigrants in 2016, has always been committed to fostering cross-cultural dialogue and supporting cultural diversity in Canada. Its mission is: to engage, inspire, entertain, and challenge audiences through innovative and entertaining productions. Additionally, we are dedicated to training and supporting the next generation of theatre artists by providing arts education programs to a diverse community.

The Nowadays Theatre Company's mandates center around serving diversity and upholding a commitment to various groups through collaboration with diverse, multicultural theatre artists. We aim to explore the art form of theatre by developing and presenting new works, producing and presenting plays that reinterpret classics, and delving into current social issues. Our goal is to create original, innovative, and relevant theatre experiences that stimulate and inspire individuals to think critically about the world around them. We encourage constructive and creative self-expression in our endeavors.

We recognize the importance of preserving our uniqueness, rooted in our respective cultures. Despite being far from our country of origin, our new home embraces our creative pursuits without imposing changes upon us.

We actively oppose colonial forces that undermine, distort, or erase the vital role of Indigenous peoples in our world. Land acknowledgments serve as a stepping stone towards honoring broken treaty relationships, and we wholeheartedly embrace the theatrical practice of making this small but significant gesture.

We acknowledge that we are gathered on the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat peoples, now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people.

We express our gratitude for the opportunity to create and perform on this land.

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WRITTEN BY **LUCAS HNATH**

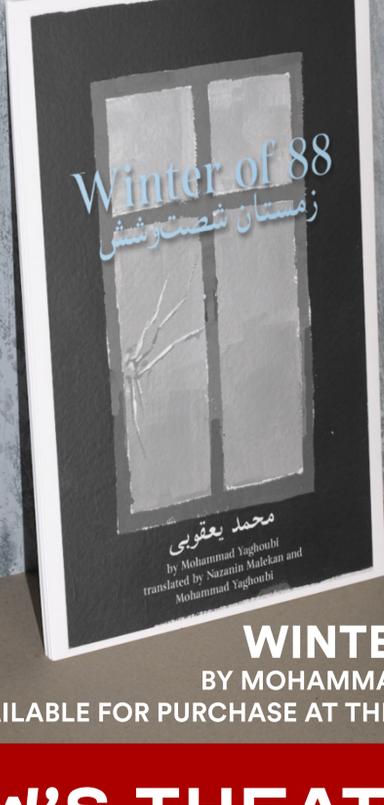
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CROW'S

CROW'S MERCH



WINTER OF 88

BY **MOHAMMAD YAGHOUBI**

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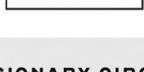
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