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– Shan Fernando  
The Extra Mile blog



Nostos

Rating: A

*Nostos* is a lot to take in, but I mean that in the best way possible.

Set in Toronto and shaped by displacement, political upheaval, diaspora, and the search for belonging, the play follows two sisters, two talking dogs, an humanoid android servant, and a makeshift dog-sitting business. That may sound like a lot of ingredients thrown into one pot, but somehow, *Nostos* finds a way to use fantasy, political commentary, and dark humour to explore something deeply human.

At the centre of the story is Beeta, an Iranian refugee living in Canada, who runs a dog-sitting business while also keeping her passion for dance alive by teaching online classes to women in Iran. When her sister Atousa comes to Toronto for what is supposed to be a short visit, the world around them shifts. A national uprising in Iran, political violence, digital blackouts, war, and divided opinions within the diaspora all begin to shape what was meant to be a simple visit between sisters.

What makes *Nostos* so powerful is how current and real it feels. The play is talking about issues that are actively dividing people, families, and communities. Even within the world of the play, the characters are divided about how they feel, what they believe, and what the right path forward should be. It explores faith in your culture, the need to stand up for what you believe in, and the cost of fighting for your rights when the stakes are impossibly high.

The performances are incredible across the board. A huge shout-out has to go to Mahsa Ershadifar and Aida Keikhaei, who play the dogs with full commitment. It could have easily felt silly or gimmicky, but they completely sell it. Their physicality, timing, and dedication to the roles bring so much life and humour to the production.

Tina Bararian’s spotlight dances were also beautiful. Those moments felt like pure emotion and expression, giving the show space to breathe and allowing us to feel what words could not always fully capture.

The set was beautifully elaborate, with shoes placed around the perimeter of the stage, creating a visual reminder of movement, migration, memory, and all the lives that have crossed borders and histories. The costume design was also outstanding, especially for the two dogs, helping bring the more fantastical elements of the show to life without taking away from the seriousness of the story.

The play also explored political divides, becoming even more intense in the play after Donald Trump and his administration bombed Iran, forcing the characters to confront where they stand and what they believe. Some see the bombing as a necessary intervention, while others see it as another devastating act of violence against people already fighting for freedom and survival. For those in the diaspora, the question becomes even more complicated. How do you support a revolution from afar? How do you fight for your people without supporting the destruction of your home? *Nostos* sits in that uncomfortable tension.

That said, there were moments where I wished the play had a little more nuance in how it delivered its ideas. There is a lot of information being shared, and to the production’s credit, it mostly stays on the right side of not becoming overwhelming. But every now and then, it did start to feel a bit like we were being lectured. Those were the moments where the dogs became especially important. They brought comedy, helped carry exposition, and broke the tension just enough to let the heavier ideas breathe.

*Nostos* is ambitious, political, strange, funny, emotional, and deeply human. It asks big questions about revolution, family, and what it means to live through history from far away. It is not just a play about political conflict. It is a play about the people caught inside it, the people watching from a distance, and the impossible choices that come with loving a place, a culture, and a family that are all in pain.

