

BLAKE ZIDELL & ASSOCIATES

For Immediate Release
December 7, 2017

**SUSSAN DEYHIM TO PERFORM *THE HOUSE IS BLACK MEDIA PROJECT*
AT THE WALLIS ANNENBERG CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
IN LOS ANGELES (FEBRUARY 1-3, 2018) AND
THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART IN NEW YORK (MARCH 10, 2018)**

**Interdisciplinary Stage Work Evokes the World of Groundbreaking Iranian Modernist Poet
Forough Farrokhzad**

“Sussan Deyhim is one of Iran's most potent voices in exile.”—*The Los Angeles Times*



“My whole being is a dark chant.”—Forough Farrokhzad

Exhibit, *Dawn of the Cold Season*, on View at The Wallis January 15-February 4, 2018

Acclaimed multidisciplinary Iranian-American vocalist and artist **Sussan Deyhim** will perform *The House Is Black Media Project*, a years-in-the-making work that marshals various facets of her dauntless career—opera, cinema, poetry, theater, video and performance art—to manifest the world of Iranian modernist **Forough Farrokhzad**'s poetry and film, February 1-3, 2018, at Los Angeles' **Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts**, and March 10, 2018, at New York's **Metropolitan Museum of Art**. Surrounding The Wallis performances will be an exhibit, *Dawn of the Cold Season*, on view from January 15-February 4, 2018.

The House is Black turns the works of Farrokhzad, which comprise its libretto, into a series of non-linear poetic tableaux, with Deyhim interpreting various characters from her poems as she takes audiences “on an evocative journey to Iran of the 1950's and back into the present—where we need to embrace the universality and humanity of her message more than ever.” An original score composed by Deyhim and Golden Globe-winning

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composer **Richard Horowitz** creates a cinematic musical landscape, including influences rooted in Persian and Western contemporary classical, jazz, and electronic music, with an elaborate vocal soundscape and intricate sound design component. Archival images and scenes from Farrokhzad's documentary *The House is Black* and Bernardo Bertolucci's 1965 interview with the poet, along with Deyhim's original film and visual projections, create the backdrop and provide a window into the life of this polarizing feminist poet and filmmaker. Through this work, co-directed by Deyhim and **Robert Egan** (producer of *Angels in America*), the audience takes a visual, sonic and theatrical journey into the heart of Farrokhzad's prophetic vision.

"Forough spoke with awe-inspiring rawness and maturity," says Deyhim. "She was an existentialist, feminist provocateur...Iran's Simone de Beauvoir, Frida Kahlo, Maya Deren and Patti Smith all rolled into one. Her work has given me the inspiration to continue my own artistic journey during my 30 years in exile from Iran." Born in 1934, Farrokhzad was a trailblazer of modernism in Iran, both through literature and through the potent and unshakeable documentary *The House Is Black*, filmed in a Leper colony in Northern Iran. Because of her gender, her unmitigated poetic ownership of her sexuality and desires, her assertion that poetry was her God, and her disregard for linguistic traditions, she was highly controversial and was banned for over a decade after Iran's Islamic Revolution. Willing to verbally probe her own desires, her poetry turned female-voiced erotic introspection outwards onto the page and towards the public, into an uncommon, and thereby-perceived-as-impious, display.

"I sinned a sin full of pleasure/next to a shaking, stupefied form/o God, who knows what I did/In that dark and quiet seclusion," she writes in her famed poem, "Sin" (translated from Farsi). This openness set her in an emotionally exiled state, one that is mirrored in her artistic and activist interests. The quarantined, othered Lepers in a colony outside of Tabriz were the subjects of Farrokhzad's first and only work of film, the documentary from which Sussan Deyhim's performance takes its title. "She saw mysticism and sacredness though the eyes of Lepers and lovers," says Deyhim. *The House is Black* was an early example of and inspiration for Iranian New Wave cinema, and was made only four years before Farrokhzad's tragic death, at 32, in a car accident.

Deyhim says, in an interview for Ibraaz, "My work has always been about how I experience things. It's about the future and asking how we shape it. I feel [Forough] spoke the language of contemporary Iran. She spoke of the existential realities of women being jailed, being deprived of their sexuality, and their lack of ability to voice these things. It was about the here and now. Because [there are powerful visual metaphors] in her poetry and she was also a filmmaker, my project could not just be a full evening of compositions around her poetry, there had to be a visual component."

Though Sussan Deyhim may be most known for her complex and virtuosic vocal work, *The House Is Black* demonstrates the singularity and momentum of her entire artistic vision. The accompanying exhibition, *Dawn of the Cold Season*, curated by artist/architect **Kulapat Yantrasast** at the Wallis Annenberg for Performing Arts, adds yet another dimension to Deyhim's vital portrait of Farrokhzad, with a photographic series (produced during Deyhim's Robert Rauschenberg Residency) inspired by Farrokhzad's poetry. The exhibit, first shown in an earlier phase at LA's Shulamit Gallery, also features narrative stills from the video installations in *The House Is Black* stage production.

In her decades pioneering performance art, composition, singing, and dance, Deyhim has collaborated with playwright/activist Eve Ensler, Shirin Neshat, Bobby McFerrin, Jerry Garcia, Peter Gabriel, Alexandre Desplat, Rufus Wainwright, and, most consistently, composer Richard Horowitz, and contributed to film soundtracks including the Oscar winning *Argo*, *Any Given Sunday*, *The Kite Runner* and *The Last Temptation of Christ*. With *The House Is Black Media Project*, Deyhim is not the contributor but the visionary, activating the wide spectrum of her talents in one sweeping yet pensive work, leading a vast group of collaborators in conjuring the intimacy and provocation, humanism and darkness of Farrokhzad's writing from the page onto the stage.

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Dates, Times, and Ticketing

The House Is Black Media Project runs February 1- 3, 2018 at 7:30pm at Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts' Bram Goldsmith Theater in Los Angeles. Tickets range from \$25 to \$55 and can be purchased at TheWallis.org/House. Accompanying exhibit, *Dawn of the Cold Season*, will be on display at the Wallis from January 15-February 4, 2018.

The New York premiere of *The House is Black Media Project* will be performed on March 10, 2018 at 7 p.m. at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in the Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium. Tickets start at \$35 and can be purchased on [The Met's website](http://TheMet's website).

About Sussan Deyhim

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