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Theater for the New City, Crystal Field Executive Director, Presents

## DESERT SUNRISE

Written and Directed by Misha Shulman

EXTENDED THROUGH MAY 21<sup>ST</sup>!!

Play Portrays Both Sides Of The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Performances Will Be Friday, May 5<sup>th</sup> Through Sunday, May 21<sup>st</sup>

At Theater For The New City, 155 First Avenue (between 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Streets)

April 24, 2006

Israeli Army veteran Misha Shulman's controversial new play about a female suicide bomber and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, *DESERT SUNRISE*, will continue at Theater for the New City. After a successful run in April, *DESERT SUNRISE* will take a short hiatus and then return on Friday, May 5<sup>th</sup> and run through Sunday, May 21<sup>st</sup>.

*DESERT SUNRISE* tells a story about a chance encounter between an Israeli soldier and a Palestinian man. Taking refuge in a desert wadi, the two men are initially antagonistic, but each is surprisingly open to the other's views. Just when they seem to have overcome their distrust for each other, they are joined by the Palestinian man's beloved, who embodies an odd, impermeable shell of ideology and radical zeal that neither of the men can penetrate. As the three reach into their own pasts, they not only find similarities, but also begin to understand the psychological and social fabric behind their political beliefs. Over the course of one memorable night the process of mutual understanding and forgiveness begins, halts, gets rejected, but is ultimately embraced by the pained characters. *DESERT SUNRISE* uses English, Hebrew and Arabic dialogue between the three characters and is interspersed with choral odes, performed by onstage musicians and adapted by Shulman from various translations of Aeschylus' "Agamemnon." At times, the characters quote Osama Bin Laden, an Israeli mother who lost her son to the conflict, Ariel Sharon, Hamas leaders, Israeli and Palestinian politicians, peace activists, and Palestinian cave dwellers. It also employs Indonesian shadow techniques that are shared with Egyptian puppetry.

The play is set in the desert hills south of Hebron, where several thousand Palestinian shepherds and farmers have been living in natural caves since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. For the past two decades the cave-dwellers have been terribly oppressed by both the Israeli Army and settlers in an attempt to force them out of the land and open it for take over by fundamentalist Jewish settlers. Over 80% of the caves have been demolished, wells stuffed with rocks, olive groves stolen and cattle poisoned, leaving the cave-dwellers with close to nothing to live on. Despite this unbearable injustice the cave-dwellers have remained non-violent, resisting the loud voices in Palestinian society to take arms against the Israelis. The region is birthplace of the Ta'ayush peace movement (the word means "living together" in Arabic), a group that will provide support for this production.

Author and director Misha Shulman was Commander in Charge of Education in the Communications Unit of Lebanon while serving in the Israeli Defense Forces from 1996 to 1999. He is now a member of the The Living Theatre and DADA New York, as well as founding director of the Free Theatre Collective. His memoir of service in Lebanon, "Memories of a Forgotten People," was published in the September-October 2005 issue of Tikkun magazine.

The New York Times wrote that *DESERT SUNRISE* is "elegant and affecting," and compared the play to Samuel Beckett's *Waiting For Godot*. Reviewing *DESERT SUNRISE* during its run in 2005, NYTheatre.com said that the play was "Moving and unforgettable... Shulman presents his message with eloquence, intelligence and beauty." Because of the success of the play, there will be a tour of college campuses across the United States beginning in May. *DESERT SUNRISE* also received the 2005 Andrew and Eleanor Mcglinchee Prize from Hunter College.

The cast for *DESERT SUNRISE* will include Alice Borman, Jared Miller, Haythem Noor, Yifat Sharabi and Morteza Tavakoli. Dalia Carella, a leading figure in the field of Middle Eastern dance in America, will choreograph and perform dances through the play. The original music is by former Israeli Paratroopers Lieutenant, internationally acclaimed Oud (Middle Eastern lute) and percussion player Yoel Ben Simhon. Design duties will be handled by Celia Owens (sets) and Itai Erdal (lighting).

*DESERT SUNRISE* will return on Friday, May 5<sup>th</sup> and run through Sunday, May 21<sup>st</sup>. Performances will be Thursdays through Saturdays at 8PM and Sundays at 3PM. Tickets are \$15.00 for all seats and may be purchased by calling (212) 254-1109 or online at [www.theaterforthenewcity.net](http://www.theaterforthenewcity.net). Photos are available for download at [www.brettsinger.com/clients/desertsunrise.html](http://www.brettsinger.com/clients/desertsunrise.html).

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SCHEDULE: Thursdays through Saturdays at 8:00pm, Sundays at 3:00pm

TICKETS: \$15.00; Call (212) 254-1109 or visit [www.theaterforthenewcity.net](http://www.theaterforthenewcity.net)

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