

**PRESS RELEASE 1 „DISGRACED“  
February 2015**

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**2015 Theater Drachengasse Bar & Co**

**Opening 2015: vienna theatre project presents the 2013 PULITZER Prize for  
Drama Winner & Obie Award Play-writing Winner**

## **DISGRACED**

by Ayad Akhtar

**Premiere 9. February 2015**

Performances 10. February until 21. February 2015  
(No shows Sunday/Monday)

**Address:** Theater Drachengasse Bar & Co, Fleischmarkt 22 1010 Wien

**Tickets:** Tel.: 01/5131444

Mail: [karten@drachengasse.at](mailto:karten@drachengasse.at)

On-line: [www.drachengasse.at/karten.asp](http://www.drachengasse.at/karten.asp)

### **Cast:**

**Amir** - American with Pakistani roots, non-practicing Muslim, Lawyer - *Norman Stehr*

**Emily** - White, Christian, Artist Amir's wife - *Bronwynn Mertz-Penzinger*

**Jory** - Afro-American, Lawyer, Amir's friend and colleague - *Lynne Ann Williams*

**Isaac** - Jewish Art critic and gallerist, Mann von Jory - *Dave Moskin*

**Abe** - Amir's nephew, Immigrated to the USA when 8, student *David Rodriguez*

**Director:** *Joanna Godwin-Seidl*



## ***About the Play***

Vienna theatre project is thrilled to premiere, in Continental Europe, this 2013 Pulitzer Prize Winner for drama (9 nominations, 3 wins in total). „Disgraced“ is an astonishing play chronicling the present day life of a successful, American born, non-practicing Muslim lawyer in the aftermath of the 9/11 era of America. The play centres around a dinner party given by Amir and his white, christian wife Emily for their friends; African American legal colleague Jory and her husband Jewish art dealer Isaac. As discussion turns to politics and religion, the mood quickly becomes heated. Described as a "combustible powder keg of identity politics," the play depicts racial and ethnic prejudices that "secretly persist in even the most progressive cultural circles."(Variety). Proceeds further heat up when Amir is inadvertently shown appearing to publicly support a local Imam. This play is not to be missed and has received an extended run on Broadway in 2015 (Lyceum Theatre) owing to its immense success. Now on in Vienna for a limited period only. Performances in English

## ***Das Stück***



Aus einer Dinner-Party wird ein emotionaler Kampf der Worte: Ayad Akhtar spielt in "Disgraced", dem letztjährigen Pulitzerpreis-Drama, gekonnt mit Themen wie Assimilation, Antisemitismus, Islamophobie und Identitätsverlust. Ein hochpolitisches und gleichzeitig persönliches Stück voller Wut und Zorn.

Amir Kapoor ist Rechtsanwalt einer angesehenen jüdischen Kanzlei in New York. Er hat eine elegante Wohnung in der teuren Upper East Side und seine Frau Evelyn ist eine erfolgreiche weiße amerikanische Malerin, deren Bilder durch die islamische Kunst des 13. Jahrhunderts beeinflusst sind. Er ist zwar von Hause aus pakistanischer Muslim, hält aber nichts von seiner eigenen Religion. Am Beginn seiner Karriere hat er wie viele seiner

Glaubensbrüder vorsorglich seinen Namen geändert und seinen Geschäftspartnern versichert, seine Eltern stammen aus Indien. Als Evelyn und sein Neffe Abe ihn bitten, einen wegen Verdachts auf Unterstützung eines terroristischen Netzwerkes zu Unrecht festgenommen Imam beizustehen, stimmt er widerwillig zu. Ein Artikel in der New York Times erwähnt seine Anwesenheit, seine Loyalität in der Kanzlei wird infrage gestellt und seine sichere Beförderung zum Partner ausgesetzt.

"Disgraced" ist ein hochpolitisches und gleichzeitig persönliches Stück voller Wut und Zorn, das sich nicht in Klischees verliert.

**Rights: CAA Agents New York**

<http://www.disgracedonbroadway.com>

**Ayad Akhtar**

Akhtar was born in Staten Island, New York City, to Pakistani parents. After spending most of his childhood in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, he attended Brown University where he majored in theater. After graduation he moved to Italy and studied acting with Jerzy Grotowski for a year. Akhtar then returned to the United States to teach acting classes with Andre Gregory and earn his Master of Arts in directing from Columbia University School of the Arts. While at Columbia he and classmates Tom Glynn and Joseph Castelo formed the idea for *The War Within*, a film about an ordinary man radicalized into becoming a terrorist. Akhtar also starred in the film playing Hassan, the would-be terrorist. Akhtar has written for the stage. His playwriting credits include *Disgraced*, which premiered at The American Theater Company in January 2012 and which was staged at LCT3/Lincoln Center in New York in October 2012, and won the 2013 Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

The play's original New York cast included actors Aasif Mandvi, Heidi Armbruster, Erik Jensen and Karen Pittman.

**Cast in brief:**

**Amir – Norman Stehr**, „Sweeney Tod“ „Rocky Horror Show“, *The Meeting* ( Ensemble Theater), *DIRT* (Ensemble Theater)

**Emily – Bronwynn Mertz-Penzinger** - "After Life" and "City Life" with Orcas Island Project internationally played, "Another One Opens" award-winning feature film with the English Lovers

**Jory -Lynne Ann Williams** –„Die Süssesten Früchte“, Kleine Komödie Cottbus, „Die Unendliche Geschichte II“ & „Wie Man Unsterblich Wird“, Theater der Jugend, Wien.

**Isaac - Dave Moskin** - "Chickenshit"(Butterbrot) - Vienna's English Theatre; "Medical Minds" - TV: "The Blues Brothers are Back" - Stadthalle Wien uva.

**Abe – David Rodriguez** - "Avenue Q" reading – Theatercouch, "West Side Story" – Felsenbühne Staatz, "Drowsy Chaperone" – KONS Theater

**Director: Joanna Godwin-Seidl** – „[title of show], "tick, tick...BOOM!", *TOPDOG/UNDERDOG* Theater Drachengasse, „Hautnah“ OFF Theater, „The Meeting“ Ensemble Theater.

## **Producers for vienna theatre project: Silke Müllner , Christina Köppl**

Technician	Johanna Franz
Set Design	Joanna Godwin-Seidl, Richard Panzenböck
Set building	Zsolt Kemenes, Johannes Stockinger
Poster/Flyer	Gernot Ottowitz
Photos	Ine Gundersveen & Thomas Schluet
Director's Asst	David Rodriguez
Stage Manager	Lisa Storch und Meli Helvin
PR and Sponsoring	Christina Köppl
Theater	Beate Platzgummer und Team
Leading team	Joanna Godwin Seidl, Silke Müllner, Christina Koepl

## **Sponsors; Theater Drachengasse, US Embassy Vienna, Theatercouch Wien, KA International and more**

### **vienna theatre project**

vienna theatre project was founded in 2002 to facilitate high-quality English-language theatre productions at different venues in and around Vienna. Drawing from a pool of Vienna-based professional actors, vienna theatre project offers a wide range of contemporary plays written in English, making the tremendous scope of first-rate English-language plays more accessible to Vienna audiences. We aim to integrate art into the community, creating a dialogue between the artist and the audience. vienna theatre project explores the boundaries of theatrical style, producing work that is both innovative and challenging. We are particularly committed to supporting new plays that can illuminate our time.

We encourage you to share and uncover with us rich, diverse, inspirational and exciting stories and voices. We look forward to welcoming you at a future production.

### ***Future Productions:***

#### ***April 2015***

Either: WILLIAM, the Musical. Award winning Musical about William Shakespeare.  
Or. Macbeth by William Shakespeare in Dialog im Dunkeln

Mai/Juni 2015

Planned: ART by Jazmena Reza und & End of Season Flash Mob

## **Cast and Director:**



### **Norman STEHR (AMIR KAPOOR)**

Norman Stehr, this is his third appearance on a *vienna theatre project* stage and already being part of the Project's family, is an acclaimed actor, musical performer and writer. His first professional engagement brought him to the Hamburg State Opera when he was only 10 years of age. Norman is celebrating his 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary on stage since then. Shows include: 2013/14 Theater // an der Rott, Sweeney Todd, Rolle: Sweeney Todd, Regie: Karl M. Sibelius. 2010 Sommerfestspiele Wunsiedel/Luisenburg, ROCKY HORROR SHOW, Rolle: Frank 'N Furter, Regie: Hardy Rudolz. 2009 Theater Wechselbad, Dresden, LA CAGE AUX FOLLES, Rolle: Jacob, Regie: Wolf Dieter Gööck. Staatstheater am Gärtnerplatz, LA CAGE AUX FOLLES, Rolle: Jacob, Regie: Helmut Baumann. Ensemble Theater Wien, DIRT (Englisch) (Robert Schneider), Rolle: Sad, Regie: Joanna Godwin-Seidl. Stadttheater Wien, CABARET DER VERLORENEN SEELEN (Siméon/Laviosa), Rolle: Lullaby, Regie: Th. Schende. 2008 Ensemble Theater Wien, THE MEETING (Englisch), Rolle: Malcolm X, Regie: Joanna Godwin-Seidl to name a few.

After almost twenty years in Austria, successfully performing as well as directing quite a number, he moved back to Germany, where his current home is based in Berlin. His career includes TV, Film and other forms of artistry, such as painting. As a classical trained actor and singer, his goal was mainly to perform on stage as the most fulfilling form, pursuing his craft and characters. Norman now splits his love into two. This of course includes more work on screen, where he now sees a variety of opportunities that left him cold over many years. Norman is very much looking forward to performing the part of *Amir Kapoor* in this amazing play by award winning playwright Ayad Akhtar. [www.normanstehr.jimdo.com](http://www.normanstehr.jimdo.com)



### **Bronwynn MERTZ-PENZINGER (EMILY)**

Bronwynn was born in the USA but grew up in Australia.

She received her theatre degree from Murdoch University and since then has been working internationally as an actress for both stage and screen, she is also an impro player/ teacher/ director, CliniClown, Voice-over Artist, and more! She has lived in Vienna since 1992 where she performs in both English and German (often simultaneously!) with the English Lovers, the Vienna Theatre Project, TAG All Stars, amongst others. Since 2002 she has been a regular collaborator and participant in countless major international impro-theatre festival/ensembles. Since 2006 she has been part of the Orcas Island Project, an international theatre ensemble, focussing on improvisation performance research and experiments.

Her greatest inspirations come from her sons Zackery and Jeremy, her partner Roland and the love and laughter they find in life.



### **Dave MOSKIN (ISAAC)**

Dave was born in New Jersey and grew up in New York City.

He's returned to Vienna's English Theatre once again in CHICKENSHIT, after playing Richard Ehrlich in 2012's *Time Stands Still*.

As a child performer he was in numerous theater and television productions including *Oliver*, *Gypsy*, the national company of *The Rothschild's* and *The Grassharp* and *Seesaw* on Broadway. Musical theater credits include Berger in *Hair* at the Raimund Theater, Judas in *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Tommy*, *Footloose*, *Jekyll & Hyde*, Vince Fontaine/Teen angel in *Grease*, and the Big

Bopper in *Buddy the Musical* in Essen, Germany. Dave also sang the Rock Tenor part in Leonard Bernsteins *Mass* with the Tonkünstler Orchester NÖ at the Konzerthaus in Vienna and the Festspielhaus in St. Pölten.

Theater Productions in Vienna include Jamie in *Territory*, Ben in *IZ*, Leon/Nick in *Speaking in Tongues*, Shakespeare in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *A Christmas Carol*, Charlie in *Over The Threshold*, *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change*, Frank in *How the Other Half Loves*, Winston in *1984*, Richard Ehrlich in *Time Stands Still* and Martin Sterneck in Gabriel Barylli's *Chickenshit(Butterbrot)*

He is also the Producer of, and plays "Jake" in *The Blues Brothers Are Back*, touring Europe and appearing most recently in the Wiener Stadthalle.

Film credits include *Tootsie*, *The Godfather*, *Manhattan*, *Im Weissen Rössl 2013* and *Good Morning Kabul*.

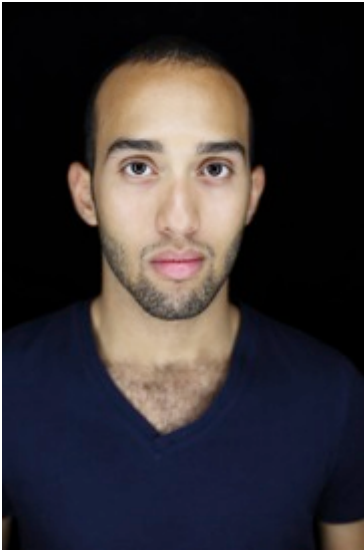


### **Lynne Ann WILLIAMS (JORY)**

The Berlin born American singer and actress has been performing for more than 25 years.

At 16 she moved to the U.S., went on to study musical theater in New York where she began her acting career. Finally work led her back to Germany where she performed in pieces like: *Cinderella passt was nicht*, *Hair*, *Chicago*, *Little Shop of Horrors* and the *Rocky Horror Show*. In recent years she has performed at the Theater der Jugend in Vienna in pieces: *Wie verliebt man seinen Vater*, *Just So*, *Alice*, *Wie man unsterblich wird* and *Unendliche Geschichte II*.

She sings soul and jazz in her own projects, teaches voice, plays the flute and piano and is a lyricist. Lynne also speaks German and Spanish.



**David A. RODRIGUEZ (ABE & Director's Asst.):**

The Venezuelan performer studies Musical Theatre at the Konservatorium Wien Privatuniversität since 2011.

Theater credits include James in Descent into youth, Odysseus in The Odyssey, Feelgood in Success, Jim in Chatroom at the William Kirk Theatre. Salvatore in Das Vergnügen, verrückt zu sein. Musical/Operetta credits include Spieler in Tango-Oper Azrael, Merkur in Orpheus in der Unterwelt, Aldolpho in the Austrian premiere of The Drowsy Chaperone at KONS Theater. Chino in West Side Story at the Felsenbühne Staatz. In Phantom of the Opera at Wiener Ronacher and in Jesus Christ Superstar at Stadttheater Baden.

He is also author of the critical theatre play "Descent Into Youth", which had its Premiere in January of 2011 in Vienna, Austria.



**Joanna GODWIN-SEIDL (REGIE)**

The actress and director studied theatre in the United Kingdom. She has been running VIENNA THEATRE PROJECT since 2006.

THE LAST FIVE YEARS was her solo musical debut at the Theater Drachengasse. German language theatre credits include directing MÄDCHEN MIT DEN SCHWEFELHÖLZERN (Ronacher Theater);, HAUTNAH (Patrick Marber) for Theaterverein Vision (OFF Theater) and MORD IM MUSIKANTENBEISL (Asst. director - Theater Drachengasse). Recent acclaimed musicals include ORDINARY DAYS, TICK

TICK..BOOM! She has a solid repertoire often choosing plays with social & political content; PLENTY (VIS Theatre), DIRT (Theater am Petersplatz) and THE MEETING (Black History Month/Theater am Petersplatz) to name a few. After the critically acclaimed TOPDOG/UNDERDOG (Theater Drachengasse Bar & Co) she went on to star in 4.48 PSYCHOSIS at the Dialog im Dunkeln. Most recently she directed the award-winning musical [TITLE OF SHOW].

As well as acting, directing and producing, Joanna lends her voice to commercials and documentaries. She is committed to further productions in 2015 to be announced. She is indebted to the audience, her family and the company team for their support. [www.joannagodwinseidl.com](http://www.joannagodwinseidl.com).

### What the papers say:

"This is one of the rare plays that one wishes were longer. Akhtar covers a lot of ground in just under 90 minutes in both plot and thought-provoking themes and ideas.....It's as if he didn't want to dwell too long on the crash site he had orchestrated for his flawed and deeply human characters." **Entertainment Weekly.**

"In the years since it was first produced here, the play's exploration of the conflicts between modern culture and Islamic faith, as embodied by the complicated man at its center — a Pakistani-born, thoroughly assimilated New Yorker — have become ever more pertinent. The rise of the so-called Islamic State, and the news that radicalized Muslims from Europe and the United States have joined the conflict raging in Syria and Iraq, brings an even keener edge to Mr. Akhtar's engrossing drama." **New York Times**



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