

CONTACT:
Christina Kellogg 510.643.6714
ckellogg@calperfs.berkeley.edu
Joe Yang 510.642.9121
scyang@calperfs.berkeley.edu

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**CELEBRATED AUTHOR AZAR NAFISI SPEAKS AT ZELLERBACH HALL
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5 AT 8:00 P.M.**

BERKELEY, October 31, 2007—Award-winning author and women’s advocate **Azar Nafisi** comes to Cal Performances **Wednesday, December 5 at 8:00 p.m.**, to give a talk entitled "The Republic of the Imagination," named after one of her two new upcoming books. Best known for her 2003 book *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*, hailed as “remarkable... an eloquent brief on the transformative power of fiction” (*The New York Times*), Nafisi has earned international recognition for advocating on behalf of Iran's intellectuals, youth and especially young women. She writes extensively on the political implications of literature and culture, as well as the human rights of the Iranian women and girls and the important role they play in the process of change for pluralism and an open society in Iran.

Born in Iran in the mid-1950s and educated in England and the United States, Nafisi returned to her home country in the late 1970s to begin what would become an eighteen-year pedagogical career at the University of Tehran, the Free Islamic University, and Allameh Tabatabaai. Two years into teaching, she was expelled from The University of Tehran for her refusal to wear the mandatory Islamic veil. The duration of Nafisi's career would be mired with conflicts posed by the reactionary despotism of the Ayatollah regime that strove to stifle women's progress and freedoms. Nafisi remained in Iran until 1995, when she finally left her teaching post. In the two-year period between her resignation and her move to the United States, Nafisi taught an underground literature class to seven female Muslim students from the university, juxtaposing Western imagination from the literature of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Henry James, Vladimir Nabokov, and Jane Austen, among others, with fundamental artifacts of Middle Eastern folklore such as *One Thousand and One Arabian Nights*. Nafisi’s experience in this group is the basis of her wildly popular *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*, which delineates the relationship between the many Western works of literature that Nafisi and her students explored and the lives of her students and Nafisi herself, eight individuals from the

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collective female Iranian population whose rights and personal identities were institutionally being stripped away.

Praised by Margaret Atwood as a “stunning... literary life raft on Iran's fundamentalist sea,” *Reading Lolita in Tehran* met incredible success in the United States and abroad. The book spent over one hundred weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list and won Nafisi various literary awards, including the 2004 Non-Fiction Book of the Year Award from Booksense, the Frederic W. Ness Book Award, the 2004 Latifeh Yarsheter Book Award, and an achievement award from the American Immigration Law Foundation. *Reading Lolita in Tehran* was also a finalist for the 2004 PEN/Martha Albrand Award for Memoir. In 2006, Nafisi won a Persian Golden Lioness Award for literature, presented by the World Academy of Arts, Literature, and Media. Since its 2003 publication, *Reading Lolita in Tehran* has been translated into 32 languages.

Currently a Visiting Professor and the director of the Dialogue Project at the Foreign Policy Institute of Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, D.C., Nafisi has written for *The New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *The Wall Street Journal*. She is currently working on two books, *The Republic of the Imagination*, which is about the liberating power of literature; and *Things I Have Been Silent About*, a memoir about her mother and father that is to be published in fall 2008.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for **Azar Nafisi** on **Wednesday, December 5** at **8:00 p.m.** at Zellerbach Hall are priced at **\$18.00**, **\$26.00** and **\$30.00**. Tickets are available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at www.calperformances.net; and at the door. Half-price tickets are available for purchase by UC Berkeley students. UC faculty and staff, senior citizens, other students and UC Alumni Association members receive a \$5 discount (Special Events excluded). For more information, call Cal Performances at (510) 642-9988, or visit the Cal Performances web site at www.calperformances.net.

\$5 Student Tickets are now available for this special appearance for UC Berkeley students. Please note that there are a limited number of discounted tickets available, so order early. To purchase tickets, students must come to the Cal Performances Ticket Office in person. *This discount is not available online or via phone order, the limit is one (1) ticket per student with ID, and IDs will be checked at the door of the performance.*

For select performances, Cal Performances offers UCB student, faculty and staff, senior and community Rush Tickets. Rush Tickets are announced two hours prior to a performance and are available in person only at the Ticket Office beginning one hour before the performance; quantities may be limited. Rush Ticket sales are limited to one ticket per person; all sales are cash only. Rush Ticket prices are \$10.00 for UCB students; \$15.00 for UCB faculty and staff (UCB ID required) and seniors age 65 or older; and \$20.00 for all other community members. Information is available at 510-642-9988, press 2 for the Rush Ticket hotline, two hours prior to a performance only.

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CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Wednesday, December 5 at 8:00 p.m.

Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley Campus
Bancroft Way at Telegraph Ave., Berkeley

Strictly Speaking
Azar Nafisi, author

Program: Best-selling writer Azar Nafisi, author of *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*, comes to Zellerbach Hall.

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