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## Iranian Master Vocalist ‘Parissa’ to Fill New UC San Diego Visiting Professorship

The University of California San Diego’s Division of Arts and Humanities is welcoming its first visiting artist under the newly established Roghieh Chehre-Azad Distinguished Professorship. Parissa, Iran’s most distinguished female vocalist, will visit UC San Diego during spring quarter to share her deep knowledge of Radif—the classical repertoire of Persian traditional music. She will present a talk Tuesday, April 4 from 5 to 7 p.m. in the Conrad Prebys Music Center Recital Hall. The dean of the Division of Arts and Humanities, Cristina Della Coletta, will give the introduction.



*Master vocalist Parissa. Image courtesy Shahrokh Yadegari*

According to Shahrokh Yadegari, the UC San Diego music professor who is arranging Parissa’s visit in partnership with the Persian Cultural Center of San Diego and the Persian Arts Society of Los Angeles, Parissa’s professorship will have broad significance both for the UC San Diego arts community and the Persian community in the United States.

“She is one of the most important masters of Radif in the world,” said Yadegari.

Radif, a collection of melodic patterns preserved through many generations, provides the basis for improvisation in Persian traditional music. Radif includes a considerable amount of ornamentation which cannot be written in musical scores. Because of this, the music is taught through oral tradition and the repertoire evolves and is preserved by masters of each generation.

Similarly to Roghieh Chehre-Azad, who became renowned as the mother of Iranian theatre and film, Parissa has had a distinguished career as a performer and teacher of Persian traditional music. During her UC San Diego visit, Parissa will teach introductory and advanced courses in

Persian traditional music and vocal technique. She will also teach master classes in Los Angeles and San Diego for the local Persian community.

The Roghieh Chehre-Azad Distinguished Professorship was created to foster new projects and future works exploring the music, art, literature and history of Persian culture. It was made possible through the generosity of Distinguished Professor of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering Siavouche “Sia” Nemat-Nasser and his wife Éva to honor the memory of Nemat-Nasser’s mother, a pioneer of women actors of stage and film in Iran.



*Sia Nemat-Nasser and his wife Éva. Photo by Farshid Bazmandegan*

When he and his wife made their gift last year, Nemat-Nasser said the endowed chair would honor his mother’s talent, courage and astute efforts to defend the freedom and practice the beauty of the performing arts.

“This prestigious award will assure a permanent, visible platform for sharing her dedication to acting in a time and place where a woman risked being stoned to death for appearing on stage,” he said. “We are pleased to be able to support works that my mother would have enjoyed.”

Parissa is widely remembered for her performance at the Shiraz Arts Festival before the 1979 revolution in Iran, after which she was no longer allowed to perform as a solo artist in her homeland. She does, however, perform regularly outside of Iran and most recently performed at the Barbican in London last fall.

The UC San Diego Division of Arts and Humanities—comprised of the departments of history, literature, music, philosophy, theatre and dance, and visual arts—is listed among the top 23 divisions globally, according to U.S. News and World Report’s 2017 Best Global Universities rankings. The Department of Music is a leading program known for its innovative research and support for the creation and performance of experimental music.

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