

The Persian Student Association at Stanford and The Stanford Film Society  
are proud to present:

An  
Open  
Discussion  
with  
**Abbas**  
**Kiarostami**

Thursday, May 4, 2000 - 7PM-9PM  
Annenberg Auditorium, Stanford University

With panelists:

**Jamsheed Akrami,**  
film professor at William Paterson University, New Jersey

**Jonathan Rosenbaum,**  
film critic for the Chicago Reader

**Mehrnaz Saeed-Vafa,**  
film professor at Columbia College, Chicago

The program will begin with a 20-minute film by Jamsheed Akrami, called  
*Kiarostami 101, An Introductory Collage.*

## Abbas Kiarostami

One of the true masters of contemporary cinema, Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami has won not only the admiration of audiences and critics worldwide, but also the support of directors as distinguished as Jean-Luc Godard, Nanni Moretti (who made a short film about opening one of Kiarostami's films in his theater in Rome), Chris Marker, and Akira Kurosawa, who has said of Kiarostami's "extraordinary" films: "Words cannot describe my feelings about them and I simply advise you to see his films... When Satyajit Ray passed on, I was very depressed. But after seeing Kiarostami's films, I thanked God for giving us just the right person to take his place."

Though Kiarostami emerged in the West as a major filmmaker in the early '90s--with films like **Close-Up** and **Through the Olive Trees**--he had already been making films in Iran for two decades. Born on June 22nd 1940 in Tehran, Kiarostami was interested in the arts from an early age. He won a painting competition at the age of eighteen, and left home to study at Tehran University's Faculty of Fine Arts. As a designer and illustrator, Kiarostami worked throughout the '60s in advertising, making commercials, designing posters, creating credit titles for films, and illustrating children's books.

In 1969--the year that saw the birth of the Iranian New Wave with Dariush Mehrjui's seminal film **The Cow**--Kiarostami helped to set up a filmmaking department at the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults. The department's debut production was Kiarostami's own first film, the twelve-minute **Bread and Alley**, a charming, neo-realist gem about a small boy's perilous walk home from school. The department would go on to become one of Iran's most famous film studios, producing not only Kiarostami's films, but also such modern Iranian classics as **The Runner** and **Bashu, The Little Stranger**.

Though Kiarostami's films have been compared at various times to those of Satyajit Ray, Vittorio de Sica, Eric Rohmer, or Jacques Tati, they remain uniquely Kiarostamian. Effortlessly simple and conceptually complex in equal measure; poetic, lyrical, meditative, self-reflexive and increasingly sophisticated, they mix fiction and documentary in unique ways, often presenting fact as fiction and fiction as fact. (Kiarostami has said "We can never get close to the truth except through lying.")

In the 28 years since **Bread and Alley**, Kiarostami has made more than 20 films, including fiction features, educational shorts, feature-length documentaries, and a series of films for television. He has also written screenplays for other directors, most notably **The White Balloon**, for his former assistant Jafar Panahi.

But it was not until the late '80s that his films began to be shown outside Iran. **And Life Goes On** (1992)--the first of Kiarostami's films to be shown at the New York Film Festival--and **Through the Olive Trees** (1994), the last two parts of what has become known as the Earthquake Trilogy (started with **Where is the Friend's Home?** in 1987) were the films that made Kiarostami's reputation in the West. In 1996 he was honored with a retrospective at the Film Society of Lincoln Center, New York, and in 1997 he came to the Cannes Film Festival at the eleventh hour with **Taste of Cherry**, only to walk away with the grand prize, becoming the first Iranian director ever to win the Palme d'Or.

Voting **Taste of Cherry** the best film of the year in the international edition of Time magazine, Richard Corliss wrote: "The film's artful simplicity, its respect for each speaker's beliefs, its refusal to sentimentalize: all underline the director's strategy of art. Let the rest of the film world ride a rocket to excess; Kiarostami will find a quiet place and listen to a man's heart, right up until it stops beating. And then he will listen some more."

## Panelists

### Jamsheed Akrami

Dr. Jamsheed Akrami is a former editor of the Iranian film magazines *Film and Art* and *Film Quarterly*. He has published extensively on Iranian cinema, and produced a number of films and videos including the two feature-length documentaries: *Cinema in Iran: Dreams Betrayed*, about political filmmaking under the Shah, and *Friendly Persuasion*, which is a study of post-revolutionary cinema.

Dr. Akrami teaches film and television at William Paterson University, and is a visiting professor of film at Teachers College, Columbia University.

### Jonathan Rosenbaum

Jonathan Rosenbaum is the film critic for the Chicago Reader and author of several books, including *Moving Places*, *Placing Movies*, *Movies as Politics*, and, forthcoming this fall, *Movie Wars: How Hollywood and the Media Conspire to Limit What Films We Can See* and *Dead Man*. With Mehrnaz Saeed-Vafa, he is currently writing a book about Abbas Kiarostami.

### Mehrnaz Saeed-Vafa

Mehrnaz Saeed-Vafa is a full-time faculty at the department of Film & Video Columbia College, Chicago. From 1978-1983 she taught film at the school of Television and Cinema in Tehran. She received her MFA degree in Film from university of Illinois at Chicago in 1987. Mehrnaz has made number of short films which has been screened in different festivals including *The Silent Majority*, *Ruins Within*, and her award winning documentary *A Tajik Woman*. Mehrnaz has been the artistic consultant of the Iranian film festival at the Film Center in Chicago. She has written and lectured extensively on the Iranian cinema.

## Interpreter

### Dorna Khazeni

Dorna Khazeni studied French literature at London University and at the Ecole Normale Supérieure. She has a Masters in Film from the University of Utah and has made several short films. She has previously been an interpreter for Abbas Kiarostami at the Telluride Film Festival. Ms. Khazeni was born in Iran and currently lives and works in Los Angeles.

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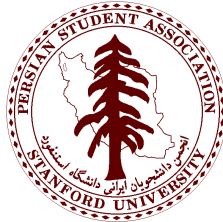
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This event is sponsored in part by grants from:  
**Bechtel International Center at Stanford &  
Arts Council Silicon Valley**

## Acknowledgements

### Special thanks to:

Jamsheed Akrami, Dorna Khazeni, Jonathan Rosenbaum, and Mehrnaz Saeed-Vafa  
Rachel Rosen & Peter Scarlet, San Francisco International Film Festival  
Lynn Kroner & John Pearson, Bechtel International Center, Stanford University  
Scott Scharpe, Stanford Film Society  
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## About PSA

The Persian Student Association (PSA) is a non-political, volunteer student organization whose objective is to sponsor Persian social & cultural activities and events, to promote understanding of Persian culture, to help foster friendship among different cultural groups, and to provide a source of union and support for the Persian community at Stanford. More information about our organization and events can be found at: <http://psa.stanford.edu>.



## About SFS

The Stanford Film Society believes in the power and beauty of film. Because filmmakers continually take new approaches to presenting the visual image, film has taken less than a century to grow into one of the most potent mediums for self-expression. This young art form combines technology and human imagination to create a formidable cultural force worldwide. Film not only moves us emotionally, but also alters our everyday lives as an impetus for the study and criticism of history and society. More info at: <http://www.stanford.edu/group/sfs>.