

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Kevin Kopjak | Prismatic Communications | kevin@prismaticcommunications.com**BERKELEY REPERTORY THEATRE ANNOUNCES FULL CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM
FOR THE WEST COAST PREMIERE OF SANAZ TOOSSI'S
*ENGLISH***Berkeley Rep's Peet's Theatre
March 31–May 7, 2023

BERKELEY, CA (February 23, 2023)—**Berkeley Repertory Theatre** announced today the full cast and creative team for the West Coast premiere of award-winning playwright **Sanaz Toossi's *English***, performing at Berkeley Rep's **Peet's Theatre** (2025 Addison St., Berkeley) **Friday, March 31 through Sunday, May 7, 2023**. Press night will be held on Thursday, April 6, 2023. Tickets (\$43–\$119) for *English* are on sale now and can be purchased online at berkeleyrep.org/shows/english/ or by phone at **510-647-2949** (Tue–Sun, 12–7 p.m.). *Ticket prices are subject to change without notice.*

Directed by **Mina Morita** (Director of Artistic & Artist Development at Crowded Fire Theater), *English* is an incisive, funny, and moving seriocomedy that intertwines language and identity. In a classroom in Iran in 2008, four adult students are preparing for the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). But as they pursue fluency in a language that for them represents access, opportunity, and even escape, they find that while English may expand their world, it might also limit their voice. *English* is the winner of the 2022 Lucille Lortel Award for Outstanding Play.

"I am deeply honored to be making my West Coast debut as a playwright at Berkeley Rep," said **Toossi**. "Ever since my days at the Ground Floor in 2019, I have been eagerly waiting for the opportunity to return to this incredible theater. As ever, I take great pride in being Iranian, and I hope this production is a chance for the vibrant Iranian community in the Bay Area to see some of their experiences reflected onstage."

"I am so proud to welcome Mina Morita back to Berkeley Rep in her mainstage directing debut with the company," said Berkeley Repertory Theatre Artistic Director **Johanna Pfaelzer**. "Mina was part of the Berkeley Rep artistic staff for several years, and, of course, is well known throughout the Bay Area."

Adds **Pfaelzer**: "While I have been eager to have *English* on our stage from the moment I encountered it, I could not have anticipated that our production would arrive in the midst of the devastating events that have roiled Iran and the world over the last several months. What a moment to come together in the presence of Sanaz's warm-hearted, wise, and deeply humanistic play, which invites us to consider the ways in which language informs our sense of self, the way we define ourselves, and are seen and understood (or not!) by others. I am delighted to bring these two extraordinary women together, and can't wait to share this play, and these characters, with our audience."

“Sanaz’s effervescent and nuanced play grapples with the paradox of identity when learning another language, especially with the possibility of leaving home,” said **Morita**. “Who do we become when we speak in another tongue? Is language a home? As a daughter of a continuously migrating family, these questions are core to my lived experience.”

Adds **Morita**: “From 2008 to 2015, Berkeley Rep was an artistic home—where I learned from many great artists who continue to inspire me; where I supported the first five years of The Ground Floor, and where I learned how to be an artistic director. In returning home eight years later, it is striking to reflect on who I have become and how my own artistic language has deepened.”

The cast of *English* includes (in alphabetical order) **Sahar Bibiyan** (Marjan), **Mehry Eslaminia** (Elham), **Sarah Nina Hayon** (Roya), **Amir Malaklou** (Omid), and **Christine Mirzayan** (Goli).

Directed by **Mina Morita**, the creative team of *English* includes **Annie Smart** (Scenic Designer), **Shahrazad Mazaheri** (Costume Designer), **Reza Behjat** (Lighting Designer), **Mikhail Fiksel** (Sound Designer), **Ana Bayat** (Dialect Coach), and **Torange Yeghiazarian** (Cultural Consultant).

Berkeley Rep recognizes the generous support of **BART** and **Peet’s Coffee**, Berkeley Rep’s official season sponsors. Berkeley Rep is also delighted to recognize the support at the season sponsor level **Stephen and Susan Chamberlin**, **Bruce Golden and Michelle Mercer**, **Frances Hellman and Warren Breslau**, **Wayne Jordan & Quinn Delaney**, **Gisele and Kenneth F. Miller**, **Jack & Betty Schafer**, **The Strauch Kulhanjian Family**, and **Gail and Arne Wagner**.

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