

Live!

WHO: Firoozeh Dumas

WHEN: 8 p.m. Monday

WHERE: CenterStage, Reston

» It was a late October evening in the early 1970s and the Jazayeri family, recently arrived in California from Iran, faced a situation for which it was utterly unprepared: A group of strange, costumed children was standing on the front porch, demanding candy.

Flummoxed by the unfamiliar cultural ritual and without so much as a single fun-size Snickers in the house, Nazireh Jazayeri, the wife and mother, directed that the family's fruit stock be raided to placate the trick-or-treaters. And so were subsequent comers treated until all the fruit was gone and the stragglers were forced to accept miniature cucumbers.

The tale is one often told by Firoozeh Dumas, the youngest child of Kazem and Nazireh Jazayeri and the author of "Funny in Farsi: A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America" and "Laughing Without an Accent," collections of humorous essays about her life as a child and as a woman from a country that most Americans couldn't even find on a map before 1979.

Dumas — a former finalist for the PEN/USA literary award, the Audie Award for best audio book and the Thurber award for American humor — will speak at CenterStage on Monday evening in what the Reston Community Center bills as a sort of appetizer for the Reston Multicultural Festival, which begins Sept. 26. The author will share stories from her life, take questions and sign copies of her books.

Born in the oil-rich desert city of Abadan, Iran, in 1965, Dumas first came to the United States with her family in 1972 when her engineer father, a former Fulbright scholar to Texas A&M University, was offered a chance to do consulting work in California for the National Iranian Oil Co. After a two-year stay, the family returned to Iran to live briefly in Abadan and Tehran but returned to the United States for another consulting assignment.

After the Iranian Revolution of 1979, the family elected to stay in the United States rather than face the uncertain future of a politically unstable Iran. Dumas would eventually attend the University of California at Berkeley, where she would meet her French husband. The two have three children.

Dumas has stated that a goal of her writing is to remind readers that despite cultural differences, commonalities outweigh the differences among people.

— C. WOODROW IRVIN

CenterStage is at the Reston Community Center Hunters Woods, 2310 Colts Neck Rd., Reston. \$15 for Reston residents, \$25 for nonresidents. 703-476-4500. More information is at www.firoozehdumas.com.





BY STEPHANIE RAUSSER

Writer Firoozeh Dumas has been sharing stories of family and culture through her talks and her books, which have been nominated for national awards. She will appear Monday at CenterStage in advance of the Reston Multicultural Festival.