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BOSTON SPEAKERS SERIES PRESENTS INAUGURAL SEASON OF LECTURES AT SYMPHONY HALL

Featured Presenters Include David McCullough, Tom Brokaw, Michael Pollan, and others

High resolution images available on request.

(BOSTON – August 29, 2011) **The Boston Speakers Series** 2011-2012 inaugural season features some of the country's most respected thinkers over seven evenings, approximately once a month, beginning with acclaimed historian David McCullough in October, and closing with legendary broadcaster Tom Brokaw in April. A complete schedule is listed below. Events are held at the esteemed Boston Symphony Hall (301 Massachusetts Ave., Boston). Tickets are sold by subscription only, and start at \$245 per person for seven lectures. Tickets can be purchased online at <http://www.BostonSpeakersSeries.org/order/htm>. They can also be purchased in person or by phone (617-266-1200) at the Boston Symphony Hall Box Office Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday from noon to 6 p.m. For more information, visit www.BostonSpeakersSeries.org.

Each lecture is followed by an audience Q & A, moderated by WGBH Managing Director Phil Redo.

Oct. 5, 2011, 8 p.m.

David McCullough

David McCullough, recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, will discuss, among other topics, his most recent work, *The Greater Journey: Americans in Paris* which explores the lives of Americans in Paris — many of them future household names like Oliver Wendell Holmes, Mark Twain, Samuel Morse, and Harriet Beecher Stowe — from the 1830's to the 1900's. He shows first how Paris affected each of them, and how that influence in turn helped shape American art, medicine, writing, science, and politics in profound ways when they came back to the United States. His Pulitzer Prize-winning biographies *Truman* and *John Adams* have both been adapted into television movies by HBO. His last book, *1776*, was a number one best-seller. An accomplished historian and author, McCullough also has narrated several PBS documentaries and the motion picture *Seabiscuit*.

Nov. 9, 2011, 8 p.m.

Michelle Rhee

Michelle Rhee has been working for the last 18 years to give children the skills and knowledge they will need to compete in a changing world. An outspoken yet controversial advocate for school reform, Rhee founded The New Teacher Project in 1997, which has recruited 23,000 new teachers across the country. She saw the key to improving education as ensuring that administrators are making decisions in the best interest of children. Under her leadership as Chancellor of the Washington D.C. Public Schools, the worst performing school district in the country at the time saw double-digit growth in state reading and math scores among seventh, eighth and tenth graders. But her tough approach to education reform in D.C. ignited fierce debate among teachers and District residents and earned her the hostility of the teacher's union. Each chapter of Michelle's story has convinced her: students of every background and ZIP code can achieve at high levels, and for our schools to become what children deserve, every educator is called to believe this. Her critics argue that teachers are being scapegoated, and are being held accountable for social conditions beyond their control. Rhee most recently founded StudentsFirst, an organization aiming to raise \$1 billion to reform education in the nation.

Nov. 30, 2011, 8 p.m.

Valerie Plame Wilson and Joe Wilson

As a covert CIA Operations Officer, Valerie Plame Wilson worked to protect America's national security and prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Without warning, in 2003 she found herself at the heart of a political firestorm when senior White House and State Department officials revealed her secret status to several national journalists — including Robert Novak, a syndicated conservative newspaper columnist who published her name. A subsequent investigation resulted in the indictment and subsequent conviction of Vice President Cheney's Chief of Staff, I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby.

Ambassador Joseph Wilson's distinguished career in international relations spans more than three decades, with service under five U.S. presidents — Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush Sr., and Clinton. Widely recognized for his diplomatic leadership, Wilson was hailed "a true American hero" by President George H.W. Bush for his efforts to free more than 100 American hostages in Iraq. Under direction from the Bush Administration, in 2002 Wilson was sent to investigate reports that Saddam Hussein was seeking yellowcake uranium from Niger for Iraq's nuclear program. Wilson reported back to the CIA that there was no truth to the claims. Later, when it became clear the administration had misled the American people about the yellowcake claim, Wilson became the first to openly challenge the administration on

its justification for war. Eight days after Wilson stated his conclusions in a New York Times article titled “What I Didn’t Find in Africa,” his wife’s identity as a covert CIA officer was revealed.

In 2010, the Wilsons’ story was made into a major motion picture starring Sean Penn and Naomi Watts, entitled *Fair Game*, after Valerie Plame Wilson’s memoir.

Jan. 25, 2012, 8 p.m.
Michael Pollan

For the past 25 years, Michael Pollan has been writing books and articles about the places where nature and culture intersect: on our plates, in our farms and gardens, and in the built environment. He is the author of four New York Times bestsellers: *Food Rules: An Eater’s Manual* (2010); *In Defense of Food: An Eater’s Manifesto* (2008); *The Omnivore’s Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* (2006) and *The Botany of Desire: A Plant’s-Eye View of the World* (2001). *The Omnivore’s Dilemma* was named one of the 10 best books of 2006 by both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. It also won the California Book Award, the Northern California Book Award, the James Beard Award, and was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. Pollan is also the author of *A Place of My Own* (1997) and *Second Nature* (1991).

Feb. 22, 2012, 8 p.m.
Azar Nafisi

Azar Nafisi is best known as the author of *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*, which electrified readers with a compassionate and often harrowing portrait of the Islamic revolution in Iran and how it affected one university professor and her students. Earning high acclaim, *Reading Lolita* is an incisive exploration of the transformative powers of fiction in a world of tyranny. It spent over 117 weeks on *The New York Times* best seller list. The book won diverse literary awards, including the Prix du Meilleur Livre Étranger, Non-fiction Book of the Year Award from Booksense, the Frederic W. Ness Book Award, the Latifeh Yarsheter Book Award, the Grand Prix des Lectrices de Elle, and an achievement award from the American Immigration Law Foundation. In 2006 Nafisi won a Persian Golden Lioness Award for literature, presented by the World Academy of Arts, Literature, and Media. In 2009 *Reading Lolita* was named as one of the “100 Best Books of the Decade” by *The Times of London*.

Azar Nafisi is currently a Visiting Professor and the director of Cultural Conversations at the Foreign

Policy Institute of Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, DC, where she is a professor of aesthetics, culture, and literature, and teaches courses on the relation between culture and politics. She studied in the US in the 1970s and taught at the University of Tehran. In 1981, she was expelled from the University of Tehran for refusing to wear the mandatory Islamic veil and did not resume teaching until 1987. Nafisi returned to the United States in 1997 — earning national respect and international recognition for advocating on behalf of Iran's intellectuals, youth, and especially young women.

March 28, 2012, 8 p.m.

Frank Abagnale

Frank Abagnale is one of the world's most respected authorities on forgery, embezzlement and secure documents. For over 35 years he has worked with, advised and consulted with hundreds of financial institutions, corporations and government agencies around the world. His rare blend of knowledge and expertise began more than 40 years ago when he was known as one of the world's most famous confidence men. This was depicted most graphically in his best-selling book, *Catch Me If You Can*, later made into a movie, directed by Steven Spielberg and starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Tom Hanks. A Broadway musical of the same title opened in April 2011. It has since been nominated for four Tony Awards, including Best Musical.

Between the ages of 16 and 21, he successfully posed as an airline pilot, an attorney, a college professor and a pediatrician, in addition to cashing \$2.5 million in fraudulent checks in every state and 26 foreign countries. Apprehended by the French police when he was 21 years old, he served time in the French, Swedish and U. S. prison systems. After five years he was released on the condition that he would help the federal government, without remuneration, by teaching and assisting federal law enforcement agencies. Mr. Abagnale has now been associated with the FBI for over 35 years.

April 25, 2012, 8 p.m.

Tom Brokaw

One of the most trusted and respected figures in television news, legendary journalist Tom Brokaw will discuss his career, which spans nearly five decades and ranges from reporting on the civil rights movement in Atlanta to serving as NBC's White House correspondent during Watergate. Best known for his more than 20 years as anchor and managing editor of *NBC Nightly News*, Brokaw has interviewed every president since Lyndon B. Johnson and has traveled the world to cover stories. The best-selling

author of *The Greatest Generation*, Brokaw has received numerous awards, including an Emmy Award for Lifetime Achievement and was inducted into the prestigious American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

The Boston Speakers Series is modeled after the highly acclaimed Philadelphia Speakers Series, now in its eighth consecutive sold-out season. As Speakers Series President Bill Conrow said, “Each of the fascinating speakers we have engaged for this season will have subscribers on the edge of their seats with enthralling stories and experiences. What many look forward to most about the evenings with our speakers is the opportunity for follow-up questions after the presentations. The audience has the chance to get the story behind the story, and delve into our speakers’ personalities without any filter.”

The Boston Speakers Series is presented with media support from 89.7 WGBH Radio, and with additional support from North Hill and Whole Foods.