



PROFILE THEATRE

2018-19 DOUBLE SEASON:
Lisa Kron / Anna Deavere Smith

FOR IMMEDIATE MEDIA RELEASE:

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Profile Theatre presents *Fires in the Mirror*.
Anna Deavere Smith's 1992 solo docu-drama performed by Seth Rue

"Quite simply the most compelling and sophisticated view of urban racial and class conflict that one could hope to encounter." – New York Times

"Fires in the Mirror is one sure sign, an oasis of hope, that human art can triumph in the face of a frightening urban crisis— a crisis symptomatic of a national tragedy." — Cornel West



PORTLAND, OREGON, USA. September 13, 2018 - [PROFILE THEATRE](http://PROFILETHEATRE.org) presents a rare staging of renowned actress and playwright, Anna Deavere Smith's 1992 solo performance, ***Fires in the Mirror***. Winner of a Drama Desk Award for Outstanding One-Person Show and Pulitzer Prize finalist, the play chronicles the aftermath of the 1991 riots in Crown Heights Brooklyn following the death of a young black boy after he and another boy were accidentally struck by a Jewish religious leader's motorcade. In the weeks and months following the incident, tensions flared in a part of Brooklyn where Jewish and African American and Afro-Caribbean neighbors had long co-existed peacefully. From the Reverend Al Sharpton to Gloria Steinem, as well as lesser known figures involved or witness to the incident, Smith's play collects voices on all sides of the conflict. Set alongside one another, they tell a moving story of urban conflict and the complexity and richness of American identity.



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Fires in the Mirror is part of Smith's larger project, and series of solo shows called *On the Road: A Search for American Character* for which she interviewed hundreds of people of different ages, races, genders, across the cultural spectrum and performed them using their own words. Profile's production of *Fires* will star Seth Rue with direction by Bobby Bermea, scenic design by Obie and Bessie award-winning designer Peter Ksander and music by Jana Crenshaw. "Anna's work is so specific, so virtuosic, there are only a handful of people who can pull it off," says Profile's Artistic Director Josh Hecht. "Seth Rue and Bobby Bermea are long-time collaborators and friends, and gifted theatre artists. Their empathy, insight — and Seth's chameleon-like use of his voice and body — are that rare combination needed to bring Anna Deavere Smith's ground-breaking work to life." Profile's *Fires* will undoubtedly re-animate Smith's play and shine new light on social and political divides at work in contemporary America.

WHERE: Morrison Stage, Artists Repertory Theatre, 1515 SW Morrison Street, Portland OR 97205

WHEN: October 12-21, 2018, Thursday-Saturday @ 7:30 pm, with an additional evening performance on Sunday 10/21. Matinees on Sunday 10/14, Saturday 10/20 and Sunday 10/21.

TICKETS: Now available online at www.profiletheatre.org

Or contact box office at (503)-242-0080 or boxoffice@profiletheatre.org

Season Subscriptions on sale now to see 4 plays for \$80-\$144

[Single Tickets](#) on sale now for \$20-\$38

*Discounts offered for groups, students, teachers, ASL, 30-and-under, Arts for All and pre-views.

ABOUT THE PLAY

Fires in the Mirror by Anna Deavere Smith

"If only a man can speak for a man, a woman for a woman, a Black person for all Black people, then we, once again, inhabit the spirit of theatre, which lives in the bridge that make unlikely aspects seem connected." — Anna Deavere Smith

In August 1991 simmering tensions in the racially polarized Brooklyn, New York neighborhood of Crown Heights exploded into riots after an African-American boy was killed by a car in a rabbi's motorcade and a Jewish student was slain in retaliation. Pulitzer Prize finalist *Fires in the Mirror* is dramatist Anna Deavere Smith's stunning exploration of the events and emotions leading up to and following the Crown Heights conflict. Through her portrayals of more than two dozen adversaries, victims, and eyewitnesses, using verbatim



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excerpts from their observations derived from interviews she conducted, Smith provides a brilliant, Rashoman-like documentary portrait of contemporary ethnic turmoil.

Click [here](#) for an ASL interpretation of the description.

“For my first full season at Profile, and the third year of the Diversity and Inclusion Initiative,” says Artistic Director Josh Hecht, “I wanted to do something extra ambitious: a special double season featuring two of our most celebrated, most important national playwrights in conversation for a full eighteen months. Two writers at the peak of their powers whose work over the last twenty-five years will seem shockingly urgent and relevant and taken together, will connect us with Americans of every shape, size, creed and color and remind us of the tapestry in which we live.”

Anna Deavere Smith, Playwright

Anna Deavere Smith is an actress, playwright, teacher, and author. Her most recent play and film, *Notes from the Field*, look at the vulnerability of youth, inequality, the criminal justice system, and contemporary activism. *The New York Times* named the stage version of *Notes from the Field* among The Best Theater of 2016 and *Time* magazine named it one of the Top 10 Plays of the year. HBO premiered the film version in February 2018.

Looking at current events from multiple points of view, Smith's theater combines the journalistic technique of interviewing her subjects with the art of interpreting their words through performance. Plays include *Fires In the Mirror*, *Twilight: Los Angeles*, *House Arrest*, and *Let Me Down Easy*. *Twilight: Los Angeles* was nominated for two Tony Awards. *Fires in the Mirror* was runner-up for the Pulitzer Prize.

Smith co-stars on the new ABC / Shonda Rhimes series, *For the People*. She also appears on the hit ABC series *Black-ish*. She previously starred as Gloria Akalitus on Showtime's *Nurse Jackie*, and the National Security Advisor on NBC's *The West Wing*. Films include *The American President*, *Rachel Getting Married*, *Philadelphia*, *Dave*, *Rent*, and *The Human Stain*.

In 2012, President Obama awarded her the National Endowment for the Humanities Medal. She was the recipient of the prestigious 2013 Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize for achievement in the arts. In 2015, she was named the Jefferson Lecturer, the nation's highest honor in the humanities. She was the 2017 recipient of the Ridenhour Courage Prize. She was the 2017 recipient of the George Polk Career Award in Journalism. Smith is the founding director of the Institute on the Arts and Civic Dialogue at New York University, where she is also University Professor at Tisch School of the Arts.



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Bobby Bermea, Director

Bobby Bermea is the Artistic Director of BaseRoots Theatre and an artistic associate of the critically acclaimed Sojourn Theatre. Bermea has appeared at LaMama in New York, Centerstage in Baltimore, Vortex Repertory in Austin and Intiman, ACT, The Group, The Langston Hughes Cultural Center, A-Ha, The Empty Space and The New Mercury Theatre in Seattle with such theatrical luminaries as Ping Chong, Julie Harris, Marion McCClinton, James Marsters and Michael Rohd. On the Portland stage Bermea has

performed with Artists Repertory Theatre, Miracle Theatre, Portland Center Stage, Cygnet Productions, Tygre's Heart, and Sojourn Theatre. He most recently received a Drammy for Outstanding Actor in a Lead role for Ogun in *The Brother/Sister Plays* (Portland Playhouse) and another Drammy, for Supporting Actor, for his work as Asagai in *A Raisin in the Sun*.



Seth Rue

Seth Rue studied at the American Conservatory Theatre and divides his time between Portland and New York City. He starred in the world premiere of District Merchants at the Folger Theatre in Washington DC. Profile Theatre audiences will remember Seth in Tanya Barfield's *Blue Door* (with Bobby Bermea) for which he was nominated for a Best Actor Drammy. He has also appeared in two of Portland Playhouse's critically acclaimed productions in the August Wilson 'Century Cycle', including *The Piano Lesson* and *Fences*. For more information on Seth go to: www.sethrue.com

The **Creative Team** includes:

Peter Ksander, Scenic Design
Wanda Walden, Costume Designer
Carl Faber, Lighting Designer
Casi Pacilio, Sound Design
Jana Crenshaw, Composer



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Karl Hanover, Vocal Coach
Mary McDonald, Dialect Coach
Bonnie Ratner, Dramaturg
Karen Hill, Stage Manager
Jamie Rea, Production Manager
Breydon Little, Production Assistant

*For additional bios or to arrange interviews with artists, please contact Marketing Consultant Jen Mitas



Josh Hecht, Profile Theatre Artistic Director

Josh is the Artistic Director of Profile Theatre where he recently directed the Concert Staging of Anna Deavere Smith's *Twilight: Los Angeles*, 1992 as well as the rotating repertory productions of Quiara Alegria Hudes' *Water by the Spoonful* and *The Happiest Song Plays Last*. He is a Drama Desk Award-winning director whose productions have been seen in New York at MCC Theater, The Cherry Lane, The Duke on 42nd Street, New World Stages, Culture Project, regionally at The Guthrie Theater, the Berkshire Theatre Group, the Humana Festival at Actors Theatre of Louisville, Signature Theatre (DC) and internationally at the Dublin Arts Festival and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and elsewhere. His collaboration with Ping Chong and Company was commissioned by and premiered at The Kennedy Center before touring the Northeast. His writing has received the support of the Jerome Foundation. He is formerly the Director of Playwright Development at MCC Theater and the Director of New Play Development at WET. He's served on the faculty of the New School for Drama MFA Directing program, the Fordham University MFA Playwriting program, Purchase College SUNY's BFA Dramatic Writing program and has been a guest artist at The Juilliard School, NYU's Dramatic Writing MFA, Carnegie Mellon's MFA Playwriting, University of Minnesota's BFA Acting program and others.

Outreach and In Dialogue Readings and Events

In Dialogue Staged Readings include new and contemporary plays in conversation with Lisa Kron's and Anna Deavere Smith's work, as well as readings of Kron and Smith plays not in the Main Stage season. Staged Readings will be announced throughout the season. In Dialogue Events prior to or following every performance including lectures, pre-show talks, concerts and mat chats with cast and creative. Schedule posted on website.



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About Profile Theatre

Now in its 20th season, Profile Theatre's mission is to produce a season of first class productions and community engagement activities focused on a single playwright whose vision broadens our perspective on the world and deepens our collective compassion. With the 2018-2019 season, Profile continues an Initiative for Diversity and Inclusion, a three-year commitment to producing only the works of women and people of color and to examining how the core values of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion can be woven into their practices. There is energized and passionate conversation happening in theatres throughout the country around the ideas of diversity and inclusion. With this initiative, Profile places itself not only at the center of that conversation, but also on the leading edge of change.

Season Sponsors

Profile Theatre's 2018-19 Season Sponsor is Ronni LaCroute. Additional support by The Regional Arts and Culture Council and Work for Art, The Oregon Arts Commission, The Meyer Memorial Trust, The James F. & Marion L. Miller Foundation, The Oregon Community Foundation, The Collins Foundation, The Kinsman Foundation, The Shubert Foundation, The Autzen Foundation, The Rose E. Tucker Charitable and the PGE Foundation.

For more information, visit Profiletheatre.org or call 503.242.0080

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