



artslandia[®]
AT THE PERFORMANCE

FIRES IN THE MIRROR

BY ANNA
DEAVERE
SMITH



PROFILE
THEATRE

DIRECTED BY
BOBBY BERMEA

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR JOSH HECHT
MANAGING DIRECTOR MATTHEW JONES

PLAYWRIGHT PROFILE

ANNA DEAVERE SMITH

Welcome to the third production of our 2018–2019 season!



Anna Deavere Smith has had a wide and varied career. Most may know her as hospital administrator Gloria Akalaitis on seven seasons of “Nurse Jackie,” National Security Advisor Nancy McNally on “The West Wing,” or her current role on the new Shonda Rhimes drama “For The People.” But Smith’s work as a dramatist goes back nearly thirty years and transformed the field.

Smith worked as an actor on stages across the country throughout the 1980s. While teaching at Stanford and at Princeton, she started a project she called *On The Road: The Search for American Character*. It was here that she honed what would become her signature style: in-depth, on-camera interviews with diverse subjects,

which she would then excerpt into monologues that she performed verbatim, including every verbal tic and self-interruption, and every accompanying physical gesture. Smith calls these pieces her ‘portrait galleries.’ “What I try to do is create a kind of document of what the person said, and the physical part follows,” she has said.

The interviews themselves can take an hour or more — however long it takes for them to, in her words, “come into character. I’m watching for them to discover their own personal literature, their own poem. I think everyone has a poem.”

In 1991, she began using this technique to document the Crown Heights riots and the communities that lived through them. *Fires In The Mirror* premiered at The Public Theatre in 1992 to rave reviews, notably from Frank Rich in *The New York Times*, an early champion of Smith’s. Smith subsequently performed the piece in cities throughout the US and at the Royal Court in London.

Her follow-up piece, *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* turned her incisive lens on the Rodney King beating. That show transferred to Broadway, where Smith was nominated in both the Best Play and Best Actress categories.

Subsequent pieces have included *House Arrest*, about the tense relationship between the American presidency and the media, *Let Me Down Easy*, her exploration of the vulnerability and resiliency of the body through the lens of the national debate about healthcare (which we’ll produce this spring at Portland Playhouse), and *Notes From The Field*, an exploration of the school-to-prison pipeline.

Her body of work is remarkable not only for its breadth of subject matter, but for the complexity she is able to render simply by letting her subjects speak for themselves. More than any other dramatist, Smith holds a mirror up to our lives as Americans in all of our complicated, painful, joyous dignity.

PROFILE THEATRE
PRESENTS
(UN)CONDITIONAL
WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY **SARA ZATZ**
in collaboration with the performers
[FEBRUARY 8 – 17, 2019]

Announcing an exciting addition to our season!

Commissioned by Profile Theatre from National Medal of Arts Awardee Ping Chong + Company, (UN)CONDITIONAL uses real stories told by the Portland residents who live them to examine the experience of **living with chronic illness** or caring for someone who does.

This **In Dialogue** production uses stories from our own community to amplify themes found in the work of Lisa Kron and Anna Deavere Smith.

Our **world-premier commission** is made possible in large part by an \$85,000 Creative Heights grant from the Oregon Community Foundation, awarded to support innovation and creative risk-taking and the merger of world-renown artists and local community stories.

TICKETS NOW ON SALE

\$25 REGULAR / \$20 SUBSCRIBER / \$15 STUDENT/UNDER 30

BOX OFFICE: 503.242.0080 (Tu-F, 12-4 pm) ONLINE: PROFILETHEATRE.ORG

FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR JOSH HECHT



I first saw Anna Deavere Smith perform *Fires In The Mirror* at The Public Theatre when my eighth grade class went to a student matinee. The riots in Crown Heights,

Brooklyn had rocked the city just a year before and we were still feeling its after-effects. How could New York, with its rich Jewish and African-American populations — some of the oldest and most prominent in the country — be the site of race riots? The deep fissures and intense anger between two communities that had once presented as allies was shocking to many.

I live in Portland, now, with a Jewish population of 35,000 and an African-American population of 37,000 (though that number nearly doubles if one includes Vancouver and Hillsboro). A far cry from New York, which is so closely identified with its Jewish community and its communities of color, which have formed the very character of the city. What will it mean to show this play in a city that wisdom claims has “no” people of color, “no” Jewish people (an obvious untruth that performs its own erasure from the city’s cultural identity)?

As I watched a recent rehearsal I found myself thinking about the complex webs of privilege and the ways ethnic groups are pitted against one another, fighting for a scarcity of acceptance in what can feel like a too-small cultural mosaic. I found myself thinking about the changing nature of neighborhoods and the way communities can inhabit the same small spaces without ever really knowing one another. I found myself thinking of centuries- and millennia-long histories of oppression that are the shadow of every encounter and sometimes explode into violence.

And I found myself thinking of the great power of Smith’s technique, which never presumes to speak for others, which insists on the dignity and autonomy of the individual, and which exemplifies art’s ability to metabolize pain into love.

FROM THE DIRECTOR BOBBY BERMEA



When Anna Deavere Smith first created *Fires in the Mirror* she was trying to reveal some facet of the American character. That was achieved in as much as any single piece of art can achieve such a thing. And there is something special, something unique to theatre, about the piece being performed by a single person. All of us contain multitudes. There is no emotion, no pain, no passion, no

idea, no thought, that you will see in the next hour and a half that you have not experienced yourself one way or another. There will be people you know specifically and people who remind you of someone you know. There will be moments that happen that remind you of things you’ve done and there will be moments that remind you of things that have happened to you.

My hope is that because of all that, audiences will walk away from *Fires in the Mirror* feeling empathy, not just for the people in pain but for the people who cause pain; not just for the victims but for the victimizers. Because all of us are sometimes one or the other. Sometimes, that’s really shocking. And heartbreaking. At those times, when we fail, when we fall short, when we’re at our ugliest — maybe that’s when we need empathy the most.

The United States of America is the greatest socio-political experiment ever attempted. As such, there is absolutely no guarantee that we will succeed. Or even that we should. Further, there’s no clear notion of what “success” looks like. Can 300 million people divided by culture, religion, class, sex, education and skin survive as a single nation? When I put it like that, to my own ear it sounds impossible. But when you realize that our current political climate barely even ranks among social crises of American history that have included genocide, slavery and civil war, I think maybe there’s a glimmer of hope. This play with all of its pain, anger, frustration, and grief gives me hope. Because it has empathy. It recognizes a simple truth. It’s hard to be human.

ABOUT PROFILE THEATRE

Founded in 1997 by Jane Unger, Profile Theatre centers a season around a single writer. Jane’s tenure established the theatre as a leading voice in Portland’s cultural scene, exploring the work of some of the 20th Centuries most important masters.

Profile’s second Artistic Director, Adriana Baer, was interested in exploring the writers we would come to think of as our “21st Century Masters,” contemporary writers investigating the most pressing concerns of our time. Josh Hecht became Artistic Director in 2017. His commitment to new work and robust community engagement has led to two new commissions in 2018-19 and our Community Profile Program that uses art-making as a means of community-building.

In 2010, Profile Theatre was awarded an inaugural “New National Theatre Company” Award from the American Theatre Wing designed to bring national attention to “the most inspiring and innovative theatre companies on our national landscape.” More recently, Profile has twice been recognized by Age and Gender Equity in the Arts for its leadership in equity, diversity and inclusion.



Presents

FIRES IN THE MIRROR

CROWN HEIGHTS, BROOKLYN AND OTHER IDENTITIES

By Anna Deavere Smith
Directed By Bobby Bermea

PERFORMED BY

Seth Rue*

DESIGNERS & PRODUCTION

Peter KsanderSet and Video Designer
 Wanda Walden Costume Designer
 Carl Faber*, Lighting Designer
 Casi Pacilio Sound Designer
 Jana Crenshaw Composer
 Mary McDonald-Lewis Dialect Coach
 Robi Arce Character Coach
 Bonnie Ratner Dramaturg
 Karen M. Hill* Stage Manager & Props Master
 Jamie M. Rea Line Producer
 Breydon Little Production Assistant

PRODUCERS CIRCLE FOR THIS PRODUCTION
 The Standard, Producer

Performed with no intermission.

Conceived, written and originally performed by Anna Deavere Smith.

Original New York Production by New York Shakespeare Festival.

Fires In The Mirror: Crown Heights, Brooklyn And Other Identities is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York.

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*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the professional union of actors and stage managers.

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CAST & CREATIVE TEAM



SETH RUE

Actor

Anna Deavere Smith has said that the "thing that is unquenchable in [her,] is her desire to listen to people and hear their stories." You're here

because you share her desire. I hope that the work we've put such care into together over these past many weeks is, at the very least, a humble and unadorned invitation to absorb these stories, with deliberateness and openness, 27 years after the eruptions that were their impetus. Listen to these. Listen to your beloved, of course. And, listen to strangers, to the pained, the slighted, the unpopular, the angry, the trapped, the weeping, the wanting. Listen. Seth, a Drammy-nominated actor, studied at the American Conservatory Theatre and is based somewhere between Portland and NYC. www.sethrue.com

BOBBY BERMEA

Director

Bobby is the co-artistic director of The Beirut Wedding World Theatre Project, a founding member of Badass Theatre Company, a proud member of Sojourn Theatre and a long-standing member of Actors Equity Association. Bermea has recently helmed productions of *My Soul Grown Deep* and *The Green Book* with BaseRoots Theatre, *Hollow Roots* with BoomArts, critically-acclaimed productions of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *The Sexual Neuroses of Our Parents* with Theatre Vertigo, *Reborning* for Beirut Wedding and was a Drammy Finalist for Best Director for *Wait Until Dark* at Northwest Classical Theatre. He is excited to make his return to the Profile stage as a director for the first time since he helmed *Blue Door* here two years ago. Next up, Bermea will be co-directing (with Jamie M. Rea) *Top Dog/Underdog* for Street Scenes at the Chapel Theatre.

ANNA DEAVERE SMITH

Writer

Actress, playwright, and teacher, Anna Deavere Smith is said to have created a new form of theater. Her latest play, *Notes From the Field*, explores issues of justice and opportunity in America through the lens of education. She is recipient of two Tony nominations and three Obie awards. She was runner-up for the Pulitzer Prize for her play *Fires in the Mirror*. She has created over 15 one-person shows based on hundreds of interviews, including *Twilight: Los Angeles*, about the Los Angeles race riots of 1992 and *Let Me Down Easy*, which focused on

healthcare in the United States. Television work includes *The West Wing*, *Nurse Jackie*, and *Black - ish*. Films include *The American President*, *Rachel Getting Married* and *Philadelphia*. Books include *Letters to a Young Artist* and *Talk to Me*. She received the National Humanities Medal, presented to her by President Obama in 2013. She was the 2015 Jefferson Lecturer for the National Endowment for the Humanities. She is a MacArthur Fellow, recipient of a George Polk Award in Journalism, a Ridenhour Courage Prize, and The Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize. She is University Professor at New York University, where she also directs the Institute on the Arts and Civic Dialogue.

PETER KSANDER

Set and Video Designer

Peter is a scenographer and media artist whose stage design work has been presented both nationally and internationally. In 2006 he joined the curatorial board of the Ontological-Hysterical Incubator. In 2008 he won an Obie award for the scenic design of *Untitled Mars (this title may change)*, and In 2014 he won a Bessie award for the visual design of *This Was the End*. He holds a MFA from the California Institute of the Arts, is an Associate Professor at Reed College and is an associate company member with the Portland Experimental Theatre Ensemble. Previously with Profile he has created designs for: *Bright Half Life*, *Water by the Spoonful*, *The Happiest Song Plays Last*, and *2.5 Minute Ride*.

WANDA WALDEN

Costume Designer

Wanda is a Costume Designer, Actor, Visual Artist and Writer. She has costumed plays for over thirty years with an impressive amount of credits. Most recent Productions include *In This Corner Cassius Clay* at Oregon Children's Theatre; *All my sons* at Portland Actors Conservatory; *Left Hook* at Vanport Mosaic; *Sibling Rivalry* at Confrontation Theatre; *How I learned What I Learned* at Portland Playhouse and *An Octoroon* at Artists Rep. For Profile Theatre she last designed *The Secretaries*. Wanda is a Board member and Resident Costumer for Passin Art Theatre. Wanda is a prolific writer of Historical Scripts and is Artistic Director of Retro-Spect Productions, A Theatrical Modeling Company.

CARL FABER

Lighting Designer

In four seasons with Profile Theatre Carl has designed *Water By The Spoonful*, *The Happiest Song Plays Last*, *Orlando*, *Dead*

Man's Cell Phone, and *Eyes for Consuela*. Recent designs with Artists Rep (*Magellanica*, *Between Riverside & Crazy*), Third Rail (*The Angry Brigade*), Broadway Rose (*Ordinary Days*, *Trails*, *Beehive*), NWCT (*Peter Pan*, *Chitra*). Outside of Portland: Arena Stage, Boston ICA, Ars Nova, Williamstown, Uferstudios Berlin. Touring Production for Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band, Touring Lighting/Video for Bon Iver and The National, Resident Light Artist at Eau Claire Festival. Drammy Award 2017 & 2018. Education: Catlin Gabel, Vassar College. Member: United Scenic Artists Local USA-829. www.carlfaber.com

CASI PACILIO

Sound Designer

Casi's home base is Portland and is excited to work with Profile Theatre again this season, having last designed sound for *2.5 Minute Ride*. She also works at The Armory, where recent credits include *Every Brilliant Thing*, *Twist Your Dickens*, *Wild and Reckless*, and *His Eye is on the Sparrow*. Other shows she has designed with composer Jana Crenshaw include *The Oregon Trail*, *Constellations*, *A Small Fire* and *Chinglish*. National shows: Holcombe Waller's *Surfacing* and *Wayfinders*; For Hand2Mouth theatre *Left Hand of Darkness*, *My Mind is Like an Open Meadow* (Drammy Award, 2011). Other credits include Squonk Opera's *Bigsmorgasbord-WunderWerk* (Broadway, PS122, national and international tours); La Jolla Playhouse; Imagineer/maker of the Eat Me Machine, a dessert vending machine.

JANA CRENSHAW

Composer

Jana (aka Jana Losey) is a singer-songwriter and composer originally from Lawrenceville, PA. After touring extensively as a performer, Jana moved to Portland in 2008, reinventing herself as a composer and teacher. Credits include: The Armory (*Futura*, *A Small Fire*, *Chinglish*, *Other Desert Cities*, *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*, *Constellations*), Portland Playhouse (*Left Hand of Darkness* by Ursula K LeGuin/Hand2Mouth), Liminal (*Our Town*), CoHo Productions (*Note to Self*), and performing in a devised piece called *Please Validate Your Identity* as part of Portland's Fertile Ground Festival. Jana is currently writing a third-grade musical, working on a new solo album, writing a solo theater piece, and hopes to be composing and performing more and more! Forever thank yous to Casi Pacilio, Mic Crenshaw, and Audrey Love. janacrenshaw.com

CREATIVE TEAM (CONTINUED)

KAREN M. HILL

Stage Manager, Props Master

Karen is overjoyed to be doing her first show with Profile, especially with such an incredible team. Karen also works as a Production Manager and Stage Manager with Portland Shakespeare Project, Artists Repertory Theater, Portland Opera, and The Oregon Children's Theater. She is grateful everyday that she gets to create beautiful art, and she thanks her husband, Mike, for supporting this crazy lifestyle.

JAMIE M. REA

Line Producer

From Berlin's aerialist street ensemble, Grotest Maru to Wellington's all female dance ensemble JAVA, Jamie has been exploring this powerful tool of connection and change for over two decades. Serving as an award winning director, designer and performer, she has worked up and down both coasts and as far away as Australia. She does however also love to plant roots, building a human-resource-focused way of working, as a foundation for extraordinary artistic expression. To that end, it has been her pleasure to join the Profile team as Line Producer after serving as Production Manager for Jewish Theatre Collaborative for 9 years, for Enlightened Theatrics for 3 years, and by project for many others including Sojourn Theatre & The Beirut Wedding World Theatre Project.

MARY MCDNOALD-LEWIS

Dialect Coach

Mary has been a professional artist since 1979. She resides in Portland, and is a dialect coach for film, television and stage. She also works as a voice actor, on-camera actor, stage actor and director. MaryMac is delighted to coach *Fires in the Mirror* for Profile Theatre, her second with the company. You can also hear her work at Portland Center Stage and Artists Repertory Theatre, where she is resident artist. Mary holds her MFA in Directing from the University of Portland. She thanks Sullivan and Flynn for always wagging their tails when she comes home. www.marymac.com

BONNIE RATNER

Dramaturg

Bonnie is a playwright, theatre artist and educator. She also writes professionally about community development and social justice and has taught writing in venues as diverse as college classrooms, community coalitions and county jail. Bonnie's work can be seen on Portland stages this season: *Cop Out: Beyond Black, White & Blue*, August Wilson Red

Door Project; *Hazardous Beauty*, PassinArt: A Theatre Company; and *That Diversity Bitch*, "The -Ism Project," Theatre Diaspora. Bonnie loves the literary detective work of dramaturgy and is thrilled to be working on *Fires in the Mirror*, a seminal work about community at Profile.

BREYDON LITTLE

Production Assistant

Breydon is thrilled to return to the stage management team for his fourth show at Profile having previously worked on *Twilight: Los Angeles 1992*, *Water by the Spoonful*, and *The Happiest Song Plays Last*. Some of his other credits in town include *A Christmas Carol*, *Pen/Man/Ship* (Portland Playhouse); *The Pride* (Defunkt Theatre); *Tender Napalm* (Dancingbrain Productions); *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Street Scenes); *Frost/Nixon* (Bay Street Theatre). He is the current production manager at Clackamas High School and Defunkt Theatre. You can catch him next working on *A Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed: A Rock Experience* at Oregon Children's Theatre.

JOSH HECHT

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.

Announcing

LISA KRON

In Conversation



Sunday, December 9th, 11:00 am
Morrison Stage, Artists Rep

Featured playwright Lisa Kron is travelling to Portland for a week-long residency!

Join us for a vibrant conversation facilitated by Artistic Director, Josh Hecht.

You'll get to know this playwright, comedian and solo performer as she shares insight into her creative career and performs some of her writing.

Catered reception and book signing to follow!

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PROFILE THEATRE

One Playwright, One Vision, One World



Mission: To produce a season of first-class productions and community engagement activities centered around a single writer whose vision broadens our perspective on our world and deepens our collective compassion.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION INITIATIVE

In 2016, Profile Theatre launched its Diversity and Inclusion initiative, committing to three consecutive seasons producing the work of women and writers of color. The Initiative was born out of a desire to correct a persistent imbalance in the diversity and complexity of lives we see reflected on our stages. It is our belief that by actively working to correct this imbalance in our own programming, we more accurately reflect the world around us, produce work of increasing relevance to our city and community, and help dream into being the dynamic and inclusive world we want. We also believe that by continuing to program the most accomplished mid-career writers of our time, all members of our audience, whatever their background, will recognize themselves in these stories.

STAFF

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2018-2019 Lisa Kron /
 Anna Deavere Smith
 2017 Quiara Alegria Hudes
 2016 Tanya Barfield
 2015 Sarah Ruhl
 2014 Sam Shepard
 2012-2013 Athol Fugard
 2011-2012 15th Anniversary Season
 2010-2011 Lee Blessing
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 2008-2009 Neil Simon
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Kira Batcheller

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