



ANNA DEAVERE SMITH

Tuesday, February 18, 2020, at 7:30pm
Colwell Playhouse

PROGRAM

ANNA DEAVERE SMITH

Snapshots: Portraits of a World in Transition

Anna Deavere Smith, who is said to have created a new form of theatre, has been listening to people across the country from all walks of life for decades, using Walt Whitman's idea "to absorb America" as an inspiration. To illustrate her goal of bringing "people across the chasms" of what she calls the "complex identities of America," Smith performs portrayals of people she has interviewed during the course of her presentation, recreating a diversity of emotions and points of view on controversial issues.

Anna Deavere Smith appears by arrangement with:

ICM Speakers

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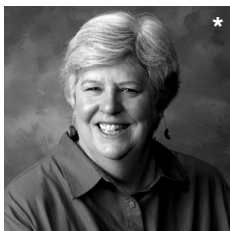
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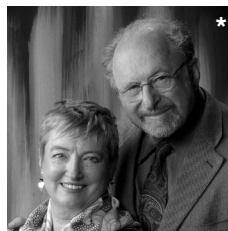
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PROFILE

Playwright, actor, and educator **ANNA DEAVERE SMITH** uses her singular brand of theatre to explore issues of community, character, and diversity in America. The MacArthur Foundation honored Smith with the “Genius” Fellowship for creating “a new form of theatre—a blend of theatrical art, social commentary, journalism, and intimate reverie.”

Best known for crafting more than 15 one-woman shows drawn from hundreds of interviews, Smith turns these conversations into scripts and transforms herself onstage into an astonishing number of characters. In her speaking events, Smith discusses the many “complex identities of America” and interweaves her discussions with portrayals of people she has interviewed to illustrate the diversity of emotions and points of view on controversial issues.

Her most recent play, *Notes from the Field*, looks at the School-to-Prison Pipeline and injustice and inequality in low-income communities. Winner of an Obie Award and the 2017 Lortel Award for Outstanding Solo Show, *Notes from the Field* was named one of the Top 10 plays of the year by *Time* magazine. The film adaptation of *Notes from the Field* is available through HBO, while the paperback adaptation is a collection of students and teachers, counselors and congressmen, preachers and prisoners discussing their direct and indirect experiences with the School-to-Prison Pipeline.

In 2012, Smith was awarded the National Humanities Medal, presented by President Obama, and in 2015, she was named the Jefferson Lecturer, the nation’s highest honor in the humanities. She also is the recipient of the prestigious Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize, a

Guggenheim Fellowship, and most recently, the 2017 Ridenhour Courage Prize and the George Polk Career Award for authentic journalism.

Smith’s breakthrough plays, *Fires in the Mirror*, a runner-up for the Pulitzer Prize, and the Tony-nominated *Twilight: Los Angeles*, tackle issues of race and social inequality that have become touchstones of her work. Her portrayals of patients and medical professionals in *Let Me Down Easy* delivered a vivid look at healthcare in the United States. The show aired on PBS’ *Great Performances*.

Currently, Smith appears on ABC’s hit series *Black-ish* and the ABC legal drama *For the People*. She is probably most recognizable as the hospital administrator on Showtime’s *Nurse Jackie* and the National Security Advisor on NBC’s *The West Wing*. Her films include *The American President*, *Rachel Getting Married*, and *Philadelphia*.

Smith is the founding director of the Institute on the Arts and Civic Dialogue, which was launched at Harvard University and is now housed at New York University where she is a professor at Tisch School of the Arts. Her books include *Letters to a Young Artist* and *Talk to Me: Listening Between the Lines*.

She has been an Artist-in-Residence at MTV Networks, the Ford Foundation, and Grace Cathedral in San Francisco. Smith was appointed to Bloomberg Philanthropies’ 2017 United States Mayors Challenge Committee, a nationwide competition urging innovative solutions for the toughest issues confronting US cities. She holds honorary degrees from Yale, the University of Pennsylvania, and Julliard, among others.