

# American Repertory Theatre

**For Immediate Release:** August 4, 2008  
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**American Repertory Theatre  
presents**

**Let Me Down Easy**  
**written and performed by Anna Deavere Smith**  
**September 12 — October 11**  
**Loeb Stage**

Cambridge, Mass. — The American Repertory Theatre is pleased to welcome the return of Anna Deavere Smith, presenting her latest production *Let Me Down Easy*. The production is directed by **Eric Ting**, with new musical elements composed by **Joshua Redman**, sets by **David Rockwell**, costumes by **Anne Hould-Ward**, and projections by **Jan Hartley**. The production runs at the Loeb Drama Center from Friday, September 12 through Sunday, October 11, and will be available for press viewing on Tuesday, September 16 (please note that this date is different from our usual press opening date).

“Anna Deavere Smith is the ultimate impressionist: she does people's souls.” —  
*The New York Times*

Well known to the Boston/Cambridge community as the creator of *Fires in the Mirror*, *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*, and the Institute on the Arts & Civic Dialogue, Anna Deavere Smith is one of the most acclaimed and provocative writers, performers, and creative figures of our time. Her latest production, *Let Me Down Easy* — part of her ongoing series called *ON THE ROAD: A SEARCH FOR AMERICAN CHARACTER* — is a journey in search of human qualities that are too seldom in the news — compassion, generosity, and grace in the face of a complex world.

The project began with an invitation from the Yale School of Medicine for Ms. Smith to interview doctors and patients and to create a performance based on the interviews for the Medical School's lecture series, known as “grand rounds.” The success of that performance initiated a longer journey for Ms. Smith, who began to investigate the resilience and vulnerability of the human body and spirit. Her quest took her to several places — Rwanda to talk to survivors of the genocide, to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, and to the

M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. Her collection of interviews with doctors, patients, physicists, musicians, athletes, journalists, philosophers, health care professionals, and religious leaders are the source of this play. Channeling a dramatic range of interview subjects, Anna Deavere Smith asks a question for our age: how do we pursue grace and kindness in a competitive and sometimes distressing world? Generous and powerful in its vision, *Let Me Down Easy* is a virtuosic exploration of the resourcefulness of the human spirit.

**Anna Deavere Smith** is a Tony Award and Pulitzer Prize nominated writer, performer, and professor. She is best known for her "documentary theatre" style in plays such as *Fires in the Mirror* and *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*, both of which featured Smith as the sole performer of multiple and diverse characters, focusing on the circumstances of the two highly publicized riots. Both of these plays were constructed using material solely from interviews and archival pieces. *House Arrest* in 2000 and *Let Me Down Easy* in 2008 continue in this style.

Ms. Smith was last seen in performance at the A.R.T. in the sold-out run of *Fires in the Mirror* in 1992. In 1998, aided by a grant from the Ford Foundation, she created the Institute on the Arts & Civic Dialogue at Harvard under the joint sponsorship of the A.R.T. and the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African American Studies. The three-year program explored ways in which artists from all disciplines, in association with scholars and community leaders, can enhance public discussions of vital social issues. The Institute convened during the summers of 1998, 1999, and 2000 in Cambridge.

She appeared in several films, including Jonathan Demme's upcoming film *Rachel Getting Married*, as well as *The Human Stain*, *Philadelphia*, and *The American President*, and had recurring roles on *The West Wing* and *The Practice*. As a dramatist Smith was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize for Drama for *Fires in the Mirror*, which won her a Drama Desk Award for Outstanding One-Person Show. She was nominated for Best Actress and Best Play Tony Awards in 1994 for *Twilight*; it won a Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Solo Performance and a Theatre World Award. Smith was one of the 1996 recipients of a MacArthur Fellowship, often referred to as the "genius grant." She also won a 2006 Fletcher Foundation Fellowship for her contribution to civil rights issues as well as a 2008 Matrix Award from New York Women in Communications. Inc.

Smith teaches in the Department of Performance Studies at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University, and also teaches at NYU School of Law. In 2000 Smith published her first book, *Talk to Me: Travels in Media and Politics*. In 2006 she released another, *Letters to a Young Artist: Straight-up Advice on Making a Life in the Arts-For Actors, Performers, Writers, and Artists of Every Kind*.

*Let Me Down Easy* was first produced as series of staged readings at the Zachary Scott Theatre in Austin, followed by a production last winter at the Long Wharf Theatre in New Haven.

**Eric Ting** is Associate Artistic Director at Long Wharf Theatre. Recent directing credits include *The Bluest Eye* (Hartford Stage / Long Wharf), *Underneath the Lintel* (Long Wharf, Connecticut Critics Circle awards for Best Director and Best Production of a Play) and *The Little Prince* (Round House Theatre). He also recently designed puppets for Opera Boston's production of Bizet's *The Pearl Fishers*. Upcoming: co-adapting and directing Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, directing the American premiere of Fiona Evans' *Scarborough* (both Long Wharf) and Donald Margulies' *Shipwrecked: an Entertainment...!* (Shakespeare Santa Cruz). Awards and grants include a 2004-2006 TCG New Generations Future Leaders fellowship and the 06/07 Jerome & Roslyn Milstein Meyer Career Development Prize.

Saxophonist and composer **Joshua Redman** graduated from Harvard University Summa Cum Laude and Phi Beta Kappa in 1991, and was accepted to Yale Law School, but requested and was granted a year deferment, moved to New York City, and chose to pursue a life in music. He won first place in the Thelonious Monk International Jazz Competition the same year; toured and recorded extensively as a sideman during the following two years. Since 1994 he has toured extensively as a bandleader and released eleven recordings, garnering several Grammy nominations.

In 2000 Redman became Artistic Director of the SFJAZZ Spring Season, a position held for seven years. Redman has performed and recorded with many artists, including Dave Brubeck, Chick Corea, The Dave Matthews Band, Herbie Hancock, Quincy Jones, B.B. King, The Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, Yo Yo Ma, Branford Marsalis, Simon Rattle, Dewey Redman, Dianne Reeves, The Rolling Stones, and Stevie Wonder, among many others. He appeared in the Robert Altman film *Kansas City*, wrote the original soundtrack to Louis Malle's film *Vanya on 42nd Street*, and played on the soundtracks to the Clint Eastwood films *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* and *Space Cowboys*.

The performance schedule of *Let Me Down Easy* is as follows:

September 12, 13, 19, 20, 26, 27, October 3, 4, 10, 11 at 8:00pm; September 16, 18, 23, 24, 25, 30, October 1, 2, 5, 8, 9 at 7:30pm; September 14, 20, 21, 27, 28, October 5 at 2:00pm. Please note that there is no performance on Wednesday, September 17 or Tuesday, October 7.

Single ticket prices range from \$15-\$79 (including \$25 advance tickets for students and \$15 student rush with \$10 off for seniors). Group discounts are also available.

The balance of the A.R.T. 2008-09 Season includes two World Premieres — *The Communist Dracula Pageant* by Anne Washburn, directed by Anne Kauffman (October 18 — November 9, Zero Arrow Theatre) and *Trojan Barbie* by Christine Evans, directed by Carmel O'Reilly (March 28 — April 22, Zero Arrow Theatre); *Aurélia's Oratorio*, written and directed by Victoria Thierrée Chaplin and starring her daughter Aurélia Thierrée (November 28 — December 28, Loeb Stage); *The*

*Seagull* by Anton Chekhov, directed by János Szász (January 10 — February 1, Loeb Stage); *Endgame* by Samuel Beckett, directed by Marcus Stern (February 14 — March 15, Loeb Stage); and *Romance* by David Mamet, directed by Scott Zigler (May 9 - 31, Loeb Stage).

The A.R.T. is offering various plans for season subscriptions — including **choose-your-own** and **flex** plans — with a host of benefits, including free Zipcar membership; free tickets to A.R.T. Institute productions; discounts on parking, on books at the Harvard Coop, fine dining, and tickets to other theatres; a *child-care series* (Saturday matinee), and *pre-performance* and *post-performance discussion series* (Saturday matinees).

To learn more about this production and the A.R.T.'s upcoming season, log onto the A.R.T. website at [www.amrep.org](http://www.amrep.org) or call the *A.R.T. InfoLine* at (617) 547-8300. The *InfoLine* is also available 24 hours a day to provide directions to the theatre; to order brochures, calendars, and newsletters; and to allow direct access to the A.R.T. Box Office (hours are noon to curtain time on performance days, noon to 5 pm on non-performance days, closed on Mondays).

The AMERICAN REPERTORY THEATRE (A.R.T.) is one of the country's most celebrated resident theatres and the winner of numerous awards — including the Tony Award and the Pulitzer Prize, and locally numerous Elliot Norton and I.R.N.E. Awards; it was recently named one of the top three theatres in the country by *Time* magazine. Over its twenty-eight-year history the A.R.T. has welcomed major American and international theatre artists whose singular visions generate and define the theatre's work, presenting a varied repertoire that includes new plays, progressive productions of classical texts, and collaborations between artists from many disciplines.

The Company has performed throughout the country, and worldwide in twenty-one cities in sixteen countries on four continents. The A.R.T. recently inaugurated its second stage at Zero Arrow Theatre, also in Harvard Square. This fall the organization welcomes its new Artistic Director, Diane Paulus, who begins to plan its 2009/10 Season, the Company's 30th in Cambridge.

The A.R.T., located at the Loeb Drama Center at 64 Brattle Street, and at the Zero Arrow Theatre at the corner of Arrow Street and Massachusetts Avenue, Harvard Square, Cambridge, are accessible to persons with special needs and to those requiring wheelchair seating or first-floor restrooms. Deaf and hard-of-hearing patrons can also reach the Theatre by calling the toll-free N.E. Telephone Relay Center at 1-800-439-2370.

Public transportation and discount parking are available nearby.