

Sep/08

Anna Deavere Smith

Season 08/09

Ellen McLaughlin

Diane Paulus

In Search of Grace

ANNA DEAVERE SMITH RETURNS TO THE
A.R.T. WITH HER NEW WORK, *LET ME DOWN EASY*

On the Loeb Stage, September 12 – October 11



Ms. Smith Goes to Washington

THE THEATRICAL JOURNEY OF ANNA DEAVERE SMITH

by Sean Bartley



Anna Deavere Smith in *Let Me Down Easy*.
Photo: T. Charles Erickson

MANY AMERICANS RECOGNIZE Anna Deavere Smith for her roles in *The West Wing* and *The American President*. In theatre circles, the story is different. Her one-woman shows have earned two OBIE awards, a MacArthur Fellowship, and *Newsweek's* declaration that she is “the most exciting individual in American theatre.” What is all the buzz about?

In her plays, Smith struggles with the central conflicts of a torn nation. Not only does she tackle incendiary events like the race riots of Crown Heights and Los Angeles, but she does it alone, playing dozens of characters and moving seamlessly from presidents to death row inmates. In any given performance, she portrays more characters than most actors do in a lifetime.

After years as an acting professor, Smith burst onto the theatre scene in 1992 with *Fires in the Mirror*, her chronicle of the Crown Heights riots. When a Hasidic driver ran over a seven-year-old Guyanese-American boy, violence erupted. Hours later, an angry mob murdered a young Hasidic professor. Clashes between Jews, African Americans, and police officers continued for days.

In the wake of the violence, Smith conducted hundreds of interviews with residents, politicians, and pundits. The purpose was not to cull information, but character: “I needed evidence that you could find a character’s psychological reality by ‘inhabiting’ that character’s words . . . I knew that by using another person’s language, it was possible to portray what was invisible about that individual.”

Smith’s solo performances explore language as deeply as politics. Her mastery of a character’s language, achieved by continuously playing back taped interviews, gives her an avenue for understanding *any* individual. Smith draws this approach from her grandfather’s assertion that “if you say a word often enough, it *becomes* you.” Through this rigor-

ous study of a person's words, anyone becomes playable. In *Fires in the Mirror*, Smith moves from the Reverend Al Sharpton to families of the riot's victims, from New York's most powerful rabbis to street youth at war in Crown Heights.

The portrayals are unflinching. Smith makes no attempt to clean up her subjects' attitudes or speech. "Um" and "uh" are crucial elements of her dramaturgy. In fact, Smith is more interested in moments of inarticulate searching than in polished sound bites. Each of her plays fits within a career-spanning framework for linguistic exploration that she has dubbed "On The Road: A Search For American Character." Her work, she says, "Is not about a point, it is about a route. It is *on* the road. Character lives in the linguistic road as well as the destination."

Fires in the Mirror succeeds because of Smith's refusal to take sides in the Crown Heights struggle. Smith gives voice to dozens of perspectives, never allowing one viewpoint to dominate. Closing the piece with Carmel Cato, father of the dead seven-year-old, the play expresses the lingering emotions of the riot's participants: pain and bitterness.

While previewing *Fires in the Mirror* (which would later play at the A.R.T.), Smith hit upon the source for her next groundbreaking play. In April 1992, an all-white jury acquitted the four white police officers who had brutally beaten Rodney King. Violence and looting engulfed Los Angeles. Despite the fact that thousands of National Guardsmen had been sent to keep the peace, Smith rushed to L.A. to conduct more interviews. The resulting piece, *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*, cemented Smith's status at the center of political theatre.

Smith refused to see the L.A. riots in terms of black and white. *Twilight* presents audiences with voices forgotten in the media blitz: innocent Korean-American store owners whose shops were



Anna Deavere Smith in *Fires in the Mirror*.
Photo: Martha Swope

looted, Mexican-Americans who rioted alongside their Black neighbors, and ministers trying to stop the spread of violence. At the play's conclusion, L.A. native Twilight Bey shares her hope for understanding: "I see darkness as myself. I see the light as knowledge and the wisdom of the world and understanding others...I can't forever dwell in darkness."

Twilight became a national sensation. When the play performed at Ford's Theatre in Washington, the audience included President Clinton and Vice-President Gore. Before *Twilight's* tour was up, it would claim an OBIE, a Drama Desk award, two Tony award nominations, and a nod for the Pulitzer Prize. Smith also teamed up with George C. Wolfe for a PBS version.

Instead of resting on her laurels, Smith tackled an even more ambitious project. *House Arrest*, four years in the making, chronicled the role of the media in American life. President Clinton's relationship with the press set the backdrop for a sprawling play, reaching back to the days of Abraham Lincoln. Smith's fear of the modern press' power is urgent. "If those who have power own the news,

"Smith's solo performances explore language as deeply as politics. Her mastery of a character's language...gives her an avenue for understanding any individual."

create our fantasies, and ultimately own history," she warns, "the promise of democracy can become frail."

For *House Arrest*, Smith took on another diverse group of interviews – from Gary Hart and Anita Hill to journalistic superstars like George Stephanopoulos and Ed Bradley. In the final scenes, Smith presents her smoking gun: candid interviews with Presidents H.W. Bush and Clinton. For the first time, Clinton speaks openly about his emotional reaction to the Whitewater scandal. Bush, munching on a chocolate chip cookie, produces a chilling one-liner: "As long as the economy is good, everybody is fat, dumb and happy, we might not need a President."

But even an enormous project like *House Arrest* wasn't enough to drain Smith's creativity. During the play's development, she also founded Harvard's Institute on the Arts and Civic Dialogue. Bringing together international multidisciplinary artists, Smith envisioned not a think tank, but a "think and *do* tank." For three summers the group convened in Cambridge, presenting their art and engaging in dialogue on current events.

During her career in academia, Smith has also become an important author. In her book *Talk to Me: Listening Between the Lines*, Smith describes her years in Washington creating *House Arrest*. *Talk to Me* is equal parts memoir, media criticism, and manifesto. Using the words of legendary broadcaster Studs Terkel, Smith proves the “difference between communications and communication.” Smith juxtaposes her own writing with the transcripts of her interviews, showcasing her theories on language in action and strategies for getting an interviewee to open up into uncensored speech.

In her most recent book, Smith passes the torch onto a new generation. *Letters to a Young Artist* is a candid portrayal of the struggle to make art that grapples with challenging issues in an era of escapist entertainment. Designed as a series of letters to the imaginary youngster “BZ,” *Letters to a Young Artist* is a call to arms. Smith shares her own tough artistic decisions, begging a new generation to follow her ambitious example: “I’m not just addressing you; I am *calling you out* – asking you to make yourself visible. We need you!”

Much has changed in the two decades of Smith’s “On The Road” project.

Her timely plays and books have also evolved, constantly exploring language, character, and theatrical form in new ways. This fall, Smith drives “On The Road” in a new direction with *Let Me Down Easy*. What can we learn from her latest adventure? What is her take on the American Character of 2008? What new road will Smith take us down with *Let Me Down Easy*?

Sean Bartley is a second-year dramaturgy student at the ART/MXAT Institute for Advanced Theatre Training.

A Search for Grace

ANNA DEAVERE SMITH TALKS TO GIDEON LESTER ABOUT THE ORIGINS OF *LET ME DOWN EASY*

Anna Deavere Smith is one of the country’s greatest writers and performers, with a unique theatrical style. Each of her productions is an investigation into questions of political and personal identity – the L.A. race riots in *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*, the violent encounters between African-Americans and Lubavitch Jews in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, in *Fires in the Mirror*. For each production she conducts hundreds of interviews, and then performs as the interviewees on stage, taking meticulous care to reproduce their vocal intonation and physicality. The result is a diverse and non-partisan approach to impossibly complex situations – a truly democratic interweaving of politics and theatre.

In her latest one-woman show, *Let Me Down Easy*, Anna takes a journey in search of human qualities that are too seldom in the news – compassion, generosity, and grace.

Channeling a dramatic range of interview subjects, from sports stars and philosophers to healthcare professionals and survivors of the Rwandan genocide, Anna Deavere Smith asks a question for our age: how do we pursue grace and kindness in a competitive and sometimes distressing world?

Let Me Down Easy runs from September 12 – October 11 on the Loeb Stage.



Gideon Lester: You've been developing *Let Me Down Easy* for more than a decade. Where did the journey begin?

Anna Deavere Smith: In 1998 I got a letter from Dr. Ralph Horwitz, who was then Chair of Internal Medicine at Yale University Medical School, now Chair of Medicine at Stanford. He asked me to come to Yale and interview doctors and patients, and to perform the interviews at the Medical School's lecture series, known as "grand rounds." I dodged him for almost two years, and then finally I went to Yale in 2000. Every weekend while I was at Harvard as director of the Institute on the Arts & Civic Dialogue I'd drive to New Haven and spend Saturday in Ralph's office, listening to stories from patients and doctors. That fall I performed at grand rounds. The speaker there is usually a scientist, and it took place in a medical amphitheatre with a blackboard behind me and a lab table in front of me, and all these doctors in there at 8am in their starched shirts and ties, annoyed that they were told to turn their beepers off. Much to my shock it was very well received. People were very moved, and it really found a way into my heart too. The patients I'd interviewed had come to see it, and it was powerful that they were there. They had an invaluable look on their faces that had nothing to do with how well I'd done; it was because they were hearing their stories in another medium. Nothing gives me a greater sense of fulfillment than that.

GL: Why did you dodge the invitation for two years?

ADS: I thought at first it was because I didn't want to make a fool of myself in front of smart people. Many of us are disappointed with the healthcare system and with the experiences we sometimes have with doctors; however, they are incredibly educated people with a very unusual attention to detail, which is intoxicating

for a person like me whose whole work is about listening. But now I understand that I was afraid of exposing myself to so many stories about illness. People's words are saturated with their experience, and if they're sick their language is saturated with their illness. After a weekend of interviews I'd feel physically ill.

GL: While you're performing, do you continue to feel a strong sense of empathy with the people you portray?

ADS: I have to be simultaneously distant and present. Much of what I'm doing on stage is technical; I'm like a singer trying to hit the right note. But the process of compiling one of these plays is long and complicated, and I can have an emotional response at many stages – during an interview, or when I'm transcribing the text, or listening to the words over and over, or learning the lines, dwelling in the lines, seeing what they mean.

GL: How did the project continue to develop after Yale?

ADS: At that time I thought the play would be primarily about mortality and the human body. In 2002 I met Samantha Power (the foreign policy expert), who was writing about Rwanda. She told me that if I was working on the body then I had to go there and talk to survivors of the genocide. So I went in 2005, and Samantha helped me to get set up. Rwanda was already in my heart because of an extraordinary Rwandan playwright, Hope Azeda, who had been at the Institute on Arts and Civic Dialogue. While still in Africa, my staff and I were shocked by images of Hurricane Katrina.



Reverend Peter Gomes
Photo: Kris Snibbe

The U.S. looked like Africa in crisis. I went to do interviews in New Orleans when I returned. The journey continued with an intensive series of interviews at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. I then had an invaluable experience at the Zachary Scott Theatre in Austin, where I presented the newly acquired material in a series of staged readings, hot off the press. By last summer, when I worked on *Let Me Down Easy* at the Long Wharf Theatre in New Haven, I had an encyclopedia of interviews – doctors, patients, physicists, musicians, athletes, journalists, and on and on. I explored the material for two weeks with the Long Wharf's Artistic Director, Gordon Edelstein, and it was there I learned that the piece would be about life as much as death, about a search for grace. As Angie Farmer, the mother of a cancer patient in Houston, said to me, "Living – that's what you learn from this experience. You don't learn how to die, you learn how to live." With that in mind I'm now conducting more interviews, and we'll continue to develop the play in rehearsals at the A.R.T.

"Grace is in how we treat each other when we could choose to exert power and we find another way."

GL: Does religion play an important part in your life?

ADS: I had an extremely religious upbringing, and a very conservative Methodist background. Couldn't dance on Sunday, couldn't go to the movies on Sunday, that kind of thing. I am an Episcopalian, and at the moment I'm working through what my religiosity and spirituality are.

GL: Does "grace" have a religious meaning for you?

ADS: Reverend Peter Gomes, the Minister at Harvard's Memorial Church, describes grace as the moment when you are about to do something one way, and you realize God would want you to do it another way, and you actually go God's way and make another choice. In his mind, grace is doing what God would have you do. He also points out that we don't always go God's way. To my mind, Gomes's idea of grace requires discipline, or a change in your inherent nature and a subsequent taking of the higher ground. When I interviewed him we talked about the song "Amazing Grace," which was written about a slaveholder who freed his slaves. The slave owner had a conversion. A notion of grace actually first came to me from listening over and over to the Adagio from Schubert's "Quintet in C," the Christmas after my mother died. I'm haunted by the word "grace," because of something that happened to me during my confirmation at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco. The bishop had forgotten his glasses. He was an old man, I'd have thought he'd have known the word by heart, but he started stumbling. He repeated, "God grant her... God grant her..." and he leaned over to the priest and asked, "What is this word?" And the priest said, "Grace." That never left me, and the word became charged in my mythology. But I think of grace less as a religious concept than as a force in nature. Grace lies in a dancer trying to make a difficult movement look effortless and beautiful. My dog has an

incredible amount of grace. Grace is in how we treat each other when we could choose to exert power and we find another way.

Grace is related to kindness. It can be political, or social, or aesthetic. *Let Me Down Easy* is a great treasure hunt; I'm searching for examples of grace that I can share with the audience.

GL: The play is also very much about healing. One of the doctors you interviewed talks about the growth of the relationship between physician and patient as a journey that two people are taking, not just one person.

ADS: Yes, I love that. That's Asghar Rastegar, at Yale. He goes on to say that some of the most maturing events in his life have been going through a critical illness with a patient and seeing that person get over self-pity, accept, and move on. He talks about how it causes him to realize that he could be that other person on the other side of the table. This also has a relationship with the theatre, because when a performance is working, someone in the audience has that kind of relationship with the least expected character, the least expected idea.

GL: What do you hope the audience's experience will be?

ADS: I can't presume to say. I hope a connection happens, and I don't really think about the "takeaway," as they say in corporate America. I think less about what people take away than what they bring. Every member of the audience brings something into the theatre: a relationship to their body, to illness, mortality, vulnerability, resistance. It's exciting that they bring so much into that room, where we are trying to uncover the mysteries of the human condition. I remember my friend Evelyn Hammonds, now Dean of Harvard College, talking to me about science when she was a professor at MIT. She described science as "Mother Nature revealing her mysteries to you" – you

have to be present and patient for them when they come forward. It's wonderful when that happens in the theatre, and the presence of the audience is critical. Together we can discover some new mystery about how we are as humans, in that hour and a half we spend together, trying to peel away the layers of the onion. That's what I hope happens for them, and for me.

Gideon Lester is the A.R.T.'s Acting Artistic Director for the 08/09 Season.

What Does Grace Mean To You?



As the newsletter staff began to discuss how the word "grace" factors into Anna's interview, we realized how individual concepts of grace are very different, and very personal. One member of our group actually found himself uncomfortable with the word; others found it powerful. Some saw it spiritually, while others associated it only with the body. How do you think about grace? Do you think of yourself as someone who experiences grace in your life? Why? How? If you work in the world of health care and healing, how do you see grace fitting in?

We'd like to explore these issues on our online hubbub, at blog.amrep.org. Stop by, and participate! Or, feel free to write to us, and we will include your comments online. Selected comments may well show up in future issues of ARTICLES.

*Anna Deavere Smith in an IACD session.
Photo: Tony Rinaldo*

And the Women Are Tutsi

IN PREPARATION FOR *LET ME DOWN EASY*, ANNA DEAVERE SMITH TRAVELED TO RWANDA TO INTERVIEW GENOCIDE SURVIVORS

HOPE AZEDA IS a beautiful woman.

Though we thought she was extraordinary looking, she would probably consider herself a typical Tutsi – as she would describe herself, “Toll and skee-ney.” And then that wonderful laugh, an uninhibited giggle left over from childhood. Though Hope’s country had been through hell, she had more optimism, a healthier access to the creativity and energy of childhood than those of us who had lived in comfort and relative stability.

It was the late Elizabeth Neuffer, a war correspondent for *The Boston Globe*, who told me about Hope, a Rwandan playwright she had met in her travels, travels that inevitably took her to sites where death prevailed. Elizabeth was fascinated not with the rough face of war, or dodging bullets, but with how families managed to put themselves and their lives back together afterwards. Hope had lived most of her life as a refugee in Uganda and had returned to Rwanda after the genocide. There, she had produced a play that was meant to heal her country after the genocide. Elizabeth thought Hope would be perfect for a project I had just started at Harvard, the Institute on the Arts and Civic Dialogue, whose mission is to explore the intersection of the arts and political reality.

It was not easy to get Hope to Cambridge. When we finally had a way of getting her there, the phone lines were so bad, it took forever to actually speak to her. All hours of day and night I tried. All I ever got was a busy signal. When I got her on the

phone, a voice full of melody made its way through a thick wall of static: “Ahna I have been so hangry and thirsty to talk to you!” When the time came, I sent my assistant to the airport to greet her. Her plane was delayed for several hours. Finally, I got a call. “She’s here. And she’s gorgeous,” my assistant said.

Four years passed. Elizabeth Neuffer was killed in Iraq. Her driver was speeding. She and her translator were killed. The driver lived. I tried to imagine what it was like. I thought they’d fallen off a cliff. Sitting in a shining clean white wooden church in a bucolic town in Connecticut for Elizabeth’s memorial, surrounded by her colleagues, journalists, dressed in black, listening to those church bells toll, once for each year of her life, I couldn’t imagine what it was like. For the longest time, I had imagined a heartless driver who went about his life after the accident without guilt or accountability. Now I know that’s not what happened. It was near a populated area. Her boyfriend, Peter Canellos, had gone to Dover to identify the body. “She was not decapitated,” he said, quietly, when we talked about it and I got the whole story. I am learning how important it is to get the facts, especially when imagination fails you. Apparently, the driver got out of the car and over or near Elizabeth’s dead body, he screamed, “I promised to protect her! I promised to protect her!” And he had made such a promise to Peter.

Elizabeth’s legacy in my life continues. She had always thought I should go to



Rwanda, and I had forgotten about that. A year before Elizabeth died I met Samantha Power, the author of the Pulitzer Prize winning book about genocide, *A Problem from Hell*. She “learned the ropes” from Elizabeth. I told Samantha my new play was going to be about the body and health care and about beauty and about death.

“If you are going to write about the body, you have to go to Rwanda!” she said as she put out coffee and fruit salad on the porch of her seaside flat not far from Boston. She pulled out a book of photographs of the Gachacha trials with Hutu murderers dressed in pink. The Gachacha is a traditional community court that has been reinstated in order to deal with the hundreds of thousands of Hutus in prison for the atrocities they had committed against Tutsis during the genocide. The modern justice system could not possibly handle the numbers. Whereas the South Africans speak of truth and reconciliation, the Rwandan national mantra is “forgiveness.”

“The most moving portion of the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre is a large room filled with pictures hanging from wires along the walls. Each photograph is the face of someone killed in the genocide. The photographs, posted by surviving friends and family, show men, women, and children in happier days – at weddings, birthday parties, graduations. All of them are now lost, killed in the genocide, and only their memory and these photos remain.”

—Timothy Longman



Photo: Timothy Longman

“Why are they dressed in pink?” I asked.

Over the phone before I left, Samantha said, in her matter-of-fact way, “Thirty thousand killers are about to be released from prison. You have to talk to some.” Go to Rwanda and talk to killers? Just like that? These human rights people amaze me.

Hope Azeda met me with open arms at the airport in Kigali. The last time I’d seen her had been five years before, on the day she’d left Harvard. She’d been crying nonstop all day, then headed off to fly home with bags full of running shoes and bed sheets – someone had taken her to a discount house. How could someone whose country was in a state of trauma have tears left for the likes of us, people who freely use the word atrocious to mean a bad movie.

It’s a small airport, the same one where Clinton met with Kagame – the trip he took where he went no further than the airport. Diane Walker, the photographer who was traveling with me to Rwanda, had been on that trip with Clinton, whom she photographed for *Time* throughout his presidency. “I could tell he was upset,” she said, as we waited for our bags. It was like a 1950s American bus depot, say in a small town in the south. “When he gets upset, he clenches his jaw.”

The customs officer insisted on inspecting each of my audio tapes, DATS,

and mini DV tapes. They were all sealed, and I had over a thousand of them. Hope managed to change the course of things. I had not yet seen such authority emanating from her, but then, I’d never seen her speak her native tongue. Was this what would be called “haughty” by those who stereotype Tutsi women as such? The customs officer let us pass on.

We headed the next day to a Gachacha trial. People were assembled on benches under an open wooden structure. I sat across from two killers, one whom the community “forgave” and released. The other, they determined, was lying. They sent him back to prison. Rich, dark brown skin, beautiful features. “Broad,” yes, but sculpted, bone meeting skin. Pink pants that didn’t quite reach the ankles, just as pink as in the photos that Samantha had showed me. Tennis shoes. With the immediate defeat of the trial on his face, the one who was headed back to prison declared his innocence into my tape recorder (still referring to the Tutsis as cockroaches). Members of the community stood around, saturating themselves with his every word, sucking their teeth, gasping, and then pushed themselves into my mike – pronouncing the man a liar, a murderer. I loved the Rwandans because they are expressive.

One rainy Saturday, we went to a genocide memorial that we were told had

corpses dug up from mass graves. As our van climbed the hill, we saw perhaps street clothes, these “killers.”

I talked to one man and one woman. I have no frame of reference for them. I can’t make a metaphor. It would be false, it would be full of me and you and our idea of normal, our idea of atrocity.

“Did you learn anything in prison?” I said, studying the Hutu prisoner’s face and speaking to Gabriel, the Tutsi translator. He repeated the question in Kinyarwanda. The prisoner looked at the translator and then at me. He didn’t seem to want to speak to me, nor did he seem not to want to speak to me. The Hutus it seems are followers. “Go out and kill the cockroaches,” and they did it. “Speak to this lady with the tape recorder,” and he did it. I noticed his neon multicolored flip-flops. He answered, now, studying my face: “Only some Swahili, and that, not very well.”

On the last day, I interviewed the translator. He had been telling me what people had said – it was through his lens, his voice, that I was hearing. How to move from beside his lens to behind it? How to translate his voice?

Gabriel was downright handsome and he had a perfect smile and eyes like you’d known him all your life. On an American television show he would play the boy next door, even in a show with an otherwise all white cast. His pants fit him perfectly – like

he'd had an Italian tailor, and the same with his shirt; a tight European cut that showed his long lean torso.

Listen to this:

GABRIEL: Yes, there was always a belief in Rwanda that Tutsi women were much more prettier than their Hutu counterparts, and this was also from history from colonialists. When Belgians came in, they say that Tutsis were not Bantu. They say Tutsis were originally from the north of Africa, nomads, and that whole sort of thing. But, anyway, not only that, that was one of the stereotypes, but when it came to it, it extended, and people always say that Tutsi women were the prettiest, and, generally, in Rwanda at the time, if you look at... while there are some... while Hutu politicians were calling on people to sideline Tutsis, to kill Tutsis, and that sort of thing, you would be surprised to notice that most of them, actually, had Tutsi wives, even those who are in detention in Arusha on trial. A big number of very senior government officials, the most radical at the time of the genocide, had Tutsi wives.

ADS: Did they kill them during the genocide? Those wives?

GABRIEL: The big politicians did not kill them, but they advised most other people to kill their wives, to kill anything Tutsi. So there were other... there were many other cases whereby people gave away their own wives. Quite often, they did not kill them on their own, but they advised most other people to kill their wives, to kill anything Tutsi. Quite often, they did not kill them on their own, but they handed them over to militias or in cases where they did not have their wives anymore, they handed over their kids because they told them there was nothing with Tutsi blood that was to survive.

I've seen cases of grandmothers who handed over their grandchildren because there was Tutsi blood somewhere in their lineage. But it never... when it came to

the senior ranking politicians who made all of this, they did not hand over their own wives. They still have their Tutsi wives. There is documented evidence, cassettes and all of that, of politicians calling for Hutu men to have their chance to see what a Tutsi woman is like, and this, of course, encouraged the rape, mass rape everywhere. It was a chance for every militia to take on, to have what

most people had only thought to be a special sort of possession, in fact, if I may call it that.

They say there was this phrase in Rwanda: "Watches are Swiss, cars are German, and women are Tutsi."

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Joshua Redman

One of the new components of the production of *Let Me Down Easy* at the A.R.T. are the musical elements created by renowned saxophonist and composer Joshua Redman.

Redman, a Harvard alumnus who graduated Summa Cum Laude and Phi Beta Kappa in 1991, was accepted to Yale Law School, but requested and was granted a year deferment. He never accepted his spot at Yale – he moved to New York City and chose to pursue a life in music. After winning first place in the Thelonious Monk International Jazz Competition that year, Redman began touring and recording extensively. Since 1994 he has released eleven recordings, garnering several Grammy nominations. Redman has performed and recorded with household names such as Dave Brubeck, The Dave Matthews Band, B.B. King, Yo Yo Ma, The Rolling Stones, and Stevie Wonder.



Joshua Redman receiving the Harvard Arts Medal from President Drew Faust. Photo: Kris Snibbe

Grace in the Dark

A SERIES OF DIALOGUES WITH ANNA DEAVERE SMITH AND HOMI BHABHA

Join us in September for a series of post-performance discussions led by Homi Bhabha, Anne F. Rothenberg Professor of the Humanities and Director of the Humanities Center at Harvard. He will be joined by Anna Deavere Smith along with other guests, and will discuss topics including her new work, past works, and medical ethics.

Discussions will follow the performances on **September 16, 23, and 30.**

For more information, visit the show website at www.amrep.org/letmedown.

Season 08/09

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date changes & ticket exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Available free of charge[‡] at any time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Available free of charge[‡] at any time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Available free of charge[‡] at any time.
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* Off-peak, section B

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- » **Free** drink coupons for the A.R.T. Bar
- » **Discounts** on parking
- » **Discounts** on fine dining
- » **Discounts** at local theatres

[†] textbooks excluded

Season Ticket Prices (3 or more plays)

Day of Week	Seating Section	Loeb Plays	Zero Arrow Plays
Off-peak: Matinees & Weeknights	A	\$64	\$37
	B	\$32	
Peak: Fri/Sat Eves	A	\$78	\$50
	B	\$54	
Children	Any	\$12	\$12



Let Me Down Easy

by Anna Deavere Smith

September 12 – October 11

"You are always aware of her commanding stage presence – but the personas of her subjects come through with a shining clarity, as easily as light moves through glass."

—New York Times

A meditation on the resilience, vulnerability, and beauty of the human body and spirit. Anna Deavere Smith channels a dramatic range of interview subjects, from supermodels and athletes to doctors and survivors of the Rwandan genocide.

The Communist Dracula Pageant

by Anne Washburn

directed by Anne Kauffman

October 18 – November 9

"Something is dismounting the horse of history, which has been ridden hard. Something has leapt to the earth and is striding towards us. You can hear the horse's heaving breath, and footsteps on the icy ground."

—The Communist Dracula Pageant

A wild and offbeat romp through the web of Romanian myth and history, drawn from the imagination of one of this country's most lauded young writers. Our own election season provides the perfect backdrop for this theatrical satire on the forging of a national identity and the power of a president to rewrite the news.

Aurélia's Oratorio

written and directed

by Victoria Thierree Chaplin

starring Aurélia Thierree

November 28 – December 28

"An absolute spellbinder...an enchanting dream, and like most vivid reveries, it momentarily colors the way you see the waking world."

—London Daily Telegraph

Discover Aurélia's topsy-turvy world of surreal surprises, tricks, and transformations, where dreams come to life and the impossible happens before your very eyes....

Inspired by the magic of music hall and circus, it's an ideal holiday treat for the whole family. Suitable for ages 8 – 100!

The Seagull

by Anton Chekhov

directed by János Szász

January 10 – February 1

"We have to show life not the way it is, or the way it should be, but the way it is in dreams."

—Konstantin in *The Seagull*

Written in 1896, Chekhov's tragicomedy of life and art astonished the old century as it heralded the birth of modern drama. Dreams born and shattered, loves won and lost – *The Seagull* paints a rich and tumultuous portrait of the human heart.

Endgame

by Samuel Beckett

directed by Marcus Stern

February 14 – March 15

"Use your head, can't you, use your head. You're on earth, there's no cure for that!"

—Hamm in *Endgame*

Spare, enigmatic, and absurdly funny, *Endgame* is one of the greatest dramas of the modern age. Beckett's language is pared down to a distilled beauty, and his archetypal characters achieve a poetic grace despite their bizarre condition.

Trojan Barbie

by Christine Evans

directed by Carmel O'Reilly

March 28 – April 19

"There is no life in another country. You'll always be a foreigner, stuck on the wrong side of the looking-glass."

—Trojan Barbie

Lotte Jones, a doll repair expert, vacations in Troy, where she finds more of a change of scene than she'd bargained for. Part homage to Euripides' *Trojan Women*, *Trojan Barbie* is an epic war story with a most unlikely heroine, who always looks on the bright side even as past and present collide about her.

Romance

by David Mamet

directed by Scott Zigler

May 9–31

"A joy...a fiesta of forbidden laughter...a giddy, glorious, bad-taste valentine.... The most skillfully constructed farce since Michael Frayn's Noises Off."

—Newsday

It's hay fever season, and in a courthouse a judge is popping antihistamines like candy. David Mamet as you've never seen him before. A courtroom farce that takes no prisoners in its quest for total political incorrectness.

Order Today!

Call 617.547.8300

or visit amrep.org/2009

For a complete calendar with dates and times, please see page 14.

A Taste of the Future

World-class international directors collaborating with up-and-coming young actors...FREE to season ticket holders!

FOUNDED IN 1987 as a training ground for the American theatre, the A.R.T. Institute for Advanced Theatre Training (IATT) at Harvard University is one of the most dynamic graduate theatre programs in the country. Each year, the Institute accepts the most talented acting, dramaturgy, and voice students from around the U.S. and from abroad to participate in a unique training program that combines classroom study with direct, professional experience in the field. Since 1998, the Institute has also been in a close partnership with the Moscow Art Theatre School (MXAT) in Russia. During their first year of training the Institute students spend a semester in Moscow, where they have the opportunity to be part of one of the world's most active theatre cultures and study with Russian master teachers. During their second year in Cambridge they join the professional company and are cast in major roles

in several A.R.T. productions. Institute graduates have gone on to highly successful careers in theatre, television, film, and academia.

As part of their training, the Institute also produces a full season of plays at Zero Arrow Theatre, staged by leading directors from this country and abroad. Over half of the Institute's season is dedicated to premieres of new American work, and some of the projects – such as Marcus Stern's sold-out stage adaptation of the hit film *Donnie Darko* – are so successful that they receive further development and a professional production during the A.R.T. season.

As a season-ticket holder, you are invited to attend all Institute productions for free.

Come see the next generation of actors performing provocative and exciting new work at the A.R.T. Institute.

Institute Fall Productions at Zero Arrow

**The Discreet Charm of
Monsieur Jourdain**
based on the play by Molière
directed by Dmitry Troyanovsky
September 4, 5, 6 at 7:30 p.m.
September 6 at 1:30 p.m.

Performed by the IATT second-year graduate acting students

Back from a sold-out run in Moscow, Dmitry Troyanovsky's groovy reinterpretation of this French neo-classical comedy moves Molière's bourgeois hero from the 17th century to the 1960s. *Nouveau riche* collides with decadent aristocracy, young love, and practical jokes in a production full of music, dancing, spectacle, and song.

Ajax in Iraq
by Ellen McLaughlin
directed by Scott Zigler
October 9, 10, 11 at 7:30 p.m.
October 11 at 1:30 p.m.

How does the experience of war affect the common soldier? What do veterans bring home from war? How are they treated when they return? These are just a few of the questions explored in the world premiere production of this new play by award-winning writer Ellen McLaughlin. Using Sophocles' *Ajax* as a lens through which to view and interpret the current war, McLaughlin's play combines ancient Greece and modern-day Iraq to grapple with these difficult and perplexing times.



Second year students Josh Stammel, Emily Alpern, Sheila Carrasco, and Renzo Ampuero in *The Discreet Charm of Monsieur Jourdain*.



Ellen McLaughlin on *Ajax in Iraq*

Ellen McLaughlin, an award-winning playwright and accomplished actress (the original Angel in Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*), has for the last year been developing a new play in collaboration with the Institute's second-year graduate acting and dramaturgy students. Her residence at the A.R.T. has been made possible by a grant from Theatre Communications Group (TCG) and the National Endowment for the Arts. Below, McLaughlin shares her thoughts about the process of writing the play and the sources she's drawing from.

THE IDEA OF writing a piece with the A.R.T. Institute about the Iraq War occurred to me not because I thought I could do it, but because I thought I couldn't not do it. We are five years into what may be an unending war and I, for one, have yet to make sense of it. I knew the only way I was ever going to be able to come to grips with it was through the medium I work in, the theatre. And I needed all the help I could get. Specifically, I needed the help of theatre artists from the generation of the people doing the fighting and dying in the war rather than from my own peers, the generation that is sending them over there. I wanted the play we came up with to be something that spoke for the students at least as much as it does for me. I've had my say. My generation has been talking about itself culturally for some time now. It was time to listen. So I asked the students to tell me what they thought, not only about this war but about war in general.

We met for several hours twice a week for a few weeks in the fall of 2007 and then again in the spring this year, and the students generated a great deal of

theatrical material based on research and interviews, all related to war. The range of response was wide, the work nuanced and smart. We saw pieces about Korean comfort women, Supermax prison, Kurdish poetry, and the Crusades, to name a fraction. The collaborations were generous and effective, the presentations theatrically astute. I was bowled over.

While looking for a means of shaping this enormously varied wealth of material, I began to think about Sophocles' thorny and challenging play *Ajax*, a tragedy about a veteran's madness and suicide. I've adapted many Greek plays over the years and find the ancient Greeks particularly trenchant when it comes to their treatment of war, which all the great tragic playwrights knew intimately as veterans. The plays speak of war with candor and the wisdom born of the suffering war inevitably causes, no matter which side you're on. *Ajax* is a figure of pathos at the same time that he is adamantly complex and difficult. But his pain, however much we wish to turn from it, compels our attention and our empathy. Looking at this

play in the light of our times, his agony suddenly seems terribly modern. His voice can be heard in the voices of veterans speaking now about their experiences in Iraq. I came to feel that this disturbing and impossible play might be the means of grappling with this disturbing and impossible war.

These Greek plays – so ancient as to belong to no one – provide structures durable and capacious enough to encompass and shelter the new. They are the stories people have been telling and retelling for thousands of years in order to make sense of what they are living through. The talented and passionate students at the Institute and I are, I figure, in the grand tradition. We are speaking for these fraught and perplexing times. And we need, as I say, all the help we can get.

CURTAIN TIMES

7:30 pm	Tue, Wed, Thu, Sun evenings
8:00 pm	Fri & Sat evenings
2:00 pm	Sat & Sun matinees

PERFORMANCE STAGES:

LOEB DRAMA CENTER

64 Brattle Street, Cambridge

ZERO ARROW THEATRE

Corner of Mass. Ave. and Arrow St.,
Cambridge

SINGLE TICKET PRICES

LOEB STAGE	A	B
Fri/Sat evenings	\$79	\$56
All other perfs	\$68	\$39

ZERO ARROW THEATRE

Fri/Sat evenings	\$52
All other perfs	\$39

HOT DATES

\$25 for selected performances, side and rear seating. See calendar.

DISCOUNT TIX

STUDENT PASS

For full-time students, \$60 buys five tickets good for any combination of plays. That's only \$12 a seat!

STUDENT SINGLE TIX

\$25 in advance with ID.
\$15 on day of show with ID.
Based on availability.

50 @ \$15 @ NOON

\$15 tickets on sale at noon on the day of performance. In-person only, based on availability.

BOX OFFICE HOURS

LOEB DRAMA CENTER

Tue–Sun: noon–5pm

Monday: closed

Performance days: open until curtain

ZERO ARROW THEATRE

Box Office opens one hour before curtain.

EXCHANGES

Ticket exchanges are FREE for series ticket holders. Single-ticket buyers can exchange for a fee of \$10.

PRE-PLAY DISCUSSIONS

Held one hour before 7:30 curtain, led by the Literary Department.

PLAYBACK

Post-show discussions after all Saturday matinees. Free, open to the public.

DISCOUNT PARKING

LOEB DRAMA CENTER

Have your ticket stub stamped at the Loeb reception desk and receive discounts at the University Place Garage or the Charles Hotel Garage.

ZERO ARROW THEATRE

\$5 parking with permit at the Harvard University lot at 1033 Mass

Ave. (entrance on Ellery Street). For permits, visit amrep.org/venues/zarrow/#harvard.

GRAFTON STREET PUB & GRILL

1230 Mass Ave. (corner of Bow St.)
6pm–1am, Wed–Sat
Free valet parking with a \$50 purchase. 617.497.0400

INN AT HARVARD

1201 Mass Ave.
Free valet parking with \$35 prix fixe dinner. 617.520.3715

DINING DISCOUNTS

for season ticket holders only

Call for reservations and present your A.R.T. ID and ticket stub. Offers change; please call to verify. Information at amrep.org/restaurants

CAFE INDIA

52A Brattle St.
5% discount on bill, including alcohol.
617.661.0683 / cafeofindia.com

CHEZ HENRI

1 Shepard St.
One complimentary dessert for each one purchased.
617.354.8980 / chezhenri.com

CRAIGIE STREET BISTROT

5 Craigie Circle
“Curtain for Certain” 3-course pre-show prix fixe dinner \$38.
617.497.5511 / craigiestreetbistrot.com

GRAFTON STREET PUB & GRILL

See *Parking*, above

HARVEST

44 Brattle St. (On the walkway)
15% off on the day of a performance (excludes alcohol, tax, gratuity, and gift card purchase).
617.868.2255 / harvestcambridge.com

INN AT HARVARD

See *Parking*, above

RIALTO

1 Bennett St.
Special “Before the Show” 3-course \$45 prix fixe. Reservations required.
617.661.5050 / rialto-restaurant.com

SANDRINE'S

8 Holyoke St.
20% off on the day of a performance (exclusive of alcohol and prix fixe).
617.497.5300 / sandrines.com

UPSTAIRS ON THE SQUARE

91 Winthrop St.
Dinner in the Monday Club (\$35 with glass of house red or white wine) or Soiree Room (Tue–Sat, \$45, with a glass of bubbly or house red or white wine). Reservations required.
617.864.1933 / upstairsonthesquare.com

ZOE'S

1105 Mass Ave.
10% discount on bill.
617.495.0055 / zoescambridge.com

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
2008				SEP. 4 JRD ●i	5 JRD ●i	6 JRD ○i ●i
7	8	9	10	11	12 HOT LMD ●	13 HOT LMD ●
14 LMD ○	15	16 LMD ●	17	18 LMD ●u	19 LMD ●o,t	20 LMD ○t ●
21 LMD ○	22	23 LMD ●	24 LMD ●	25 LMD ●p	26 LMD ●	27 LMD ○c,t ●
28 LMD ○	29	30 LMD ●	OCT. 1 LMD ●p	2 LMD ●	3 LMD ●	4 ●
5 LMD ○●	6	7	8 LMD ●	9 AJAX ●i LMD ●	10 AJAX ●i LMD ●	11 AJAX ○i ●i LMD ○t ●
12	13	14	15	16	17	18 HOT CDP ●
19 CDP ○	20	21 HOT CDP ●	22 CDP ●	23 CDP ●u	24 CDP ●	25 CDP ○t ●
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9 CDP ○●					28 HOT AUR ●	29 HOT AUR ●
30 HOT AUR ○●	DEC. 1	2 HOT AUR ●	3 AUR ●	4 AUR ●u	5 AUR ●o,t	6 AUR ○t ●
7 AUR ○●p	8	9 AUR ●	10 AUR ●	11 AUR ○m ●	12 AUR ●	13 AUR ○c,t ●
14 AUR ○	15	16 AUR ●	17 AUR ●p	18 AUR ●p	19 AUR ●	20 AUR ○t ●
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25 SEA ○●p	26	27 SEA ●p	28 SEA ●p	29 SEA ○m ●	30 SEA ●	31 SEA ○t ●
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31 ROM ○●						

Dates and times subject to change. Please see amrep.org/calendar for the most up-to-date calendar.

LMD	Let Me Down Easy	AJX	Ajax in Iraq	p	Preplay discussion
CDP	Communist Dracula Pageant	JRD	The Discreet Charm of Monsieur Jourdain	t	Talkback discussion
AUR	Auréli's Oratorio			c	Childcare series
END	Endgame			o	Out at A.R.T.
SEA	Seagull			u	Under 35 night
BAR	Trojan Barbie			m	10:30am matinee
ROM	Romance			i	Institute plays (1:30pm or 7:30pm)

HOT Hot Dates: a limited number of \$25 tickets are available, and are located at the rear and sides of the theatre.

Welcoming Diane Paulus



Here are some of the productions she staged this year:

Last April saw the premiere of her production of the Olga Neuwirth opera *Lost Highway*, based on the David Lynch film, which opened the season of the English National Opera at the Young Vic in London. The critics lauded her production:

“Director Diane Paulus marshals the stage and video action in a slick production.”

—*The Sunday Times*

“Director Diane Paulus does a stunning job. Her designers turn the Young Vic into a neon-lit installation.”

—*The London Independent*

Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* at Chicago Opera Theatre with Jane Glover on the podium followed. Her daring production, designed by her frequent collaborator and A.R.T. regular Riccardo Hernandez, set the opera in a sleazy, Vegas-style nightclub. The first video-simulcast in the opera company’s history, *Don Giovanni* was broadcast from the Harris Music and Dance Theater to the Jay Pritzker Pavilion in Millennium Park.

The Chicago Sun-Times raved:

“Chicago Opera Theater has scored another triumph with its new production of Don Giovanni...by the company’s superb partnership of conductor Jane Glover and director Diane Paulus.”

—*Chicago Sun-Times*, May 2008

In early June, Diane began work on the Glimmerglass Opera production of *Kiss Me Kate*, while simultaneously starting rehearsals in New York for the Public Theater’s 40th anniversary production of *Hair* at the Delacorte Theatre in Central Park. She commuted between Cooperstown and New York City for over a month until *Kiss Me Kate* opened in July to rave reviews, followed by *Hair* in early August to similar accolades.

Projects already in the works include *La Clemenza Di Tito* at Chicago Opera Theater; and *Death And The Powers*, a new opera by MIT composer Tod Machover and librettist Robert Pinsky, with story by Randy Weiner. The project is being created at the MIT Media Lab, and will receive its world premiere at the Grimaldi Forum in Monte Carlo.

We look forward to welcoming Diane, helping her settle here in Cambridge, and supporting her as she programs groundbreaking work in the A.R.T.’s coming seasons. Look for information in our next newsletter about opportunities to meet Diane, and join us in welcoming her to Cambridge!

THE A.R.T. COMPANY and staff members are thrilled about the appointment of Diane Paulus as our new Artistic Director. Diane will take A.R.T.’s artistic helm this fall, to begin the planning of our 09/10 Season.

A glimpse at Diane’s life over the past several months provides some hints of the energy, creativity, and dynamism that is in store for us here in Cambridge. Diane has been keeping busy with a number of projects both near and far – which hasn’t left much time for house-hunting in Cambridge with her husband and children!

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Anna Deavere Smith in Let Me Down Easy.
Photo: T. Charles Erickson



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A·R·T·

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