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Anna Deavere Smith

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Smith, Anna Deavere (b. Baltimore, 18 September 1950). US performance artist. Smith is credited with developing a new form of ONE-PERSON SHOW founded in journalism and listening skills. After conducting multiple extensive interviews with individuals affiliated with a particular issue or event, she creates solo performances in which she imitates the people she interviews. These monologues represent evening-length acts dedicated to exploring a particular social issue or theme. Smith shifts between each representation by altering her voice, physicality, and facial expressions, while making minimal costume changes. Her work includes *Fires in the Mirror* (1992), which explores the racial and ethnic tensions that rose to the surface of the Crown Heights neighbourhood in Brooklyn after a Jewish Lubavitcher rebbe's driver struck and killed a young African-American boy. Riots ensued that resulted in the death of an Australian Jewish scholar, a hotly contested trial for the accused black murderer, and the escape of the rebbe's driver to Israel. Smith next developed a companion piece, *Twilight Los Angeles: 1992* (1994), featuring prominent figures and ordinary individuals caught up in the riots that ensued after a jury found white police officers innocent of beating black motorist Rodney King. Her third major work, *House Arrest* (2000), depicts snapshots of American presidents from Teddy Roosevelt to Bill Clinton. *Let Me Down Easy* (2009) explores corruption, inequality, and compassion in the health-care industry and individual health crises. She has earned two Obie Awards, two Tony nominations, and a MacArthur Award. She is also featured in film and television roles.

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