

For Further Ticket Information:  
PTC Box Office  
215-985-0420  
[PhiladelphiaTheatreCompany.org](http://PhiladelphiaTheatreCompany.org)

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**ANNA DEAVERE SMITH MAKES HER PHILADELPHIA DEBUT IN  
*LET ME DOWN EASY* AT  
PHILADELPHIA THEATRE COMPANY  
Star of *The West Wing* and *Nurse Jackie* To Perform March 18-April 10**

Philadelphia Theatre Company continues its 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season with the Philadelphia debut of **Anna Deavere Smith** in her one-woman, award-winning show ***Let Me Down Easy***, running March 18 through April 10, 2011 at the Suzanne Roberts Theatre (Broad and Lombard Streets). Directed by Leonard Foglia, the production explores the fragility and strength of the body and the resilience of the human spirit.

Previews begin Friday, March 18 with opening night on Wednesday, March 23. Performances run Tuesday through Sunday until April 10. Tickets are \$25 - \$59, with discounts for students, seniors and groups. Tickets are available by calling the PTC Box Office at 215-985-0420 or visiting [PhiladelphiaTheatreCompany.org](http://PhiladelphiaTheatreCompany.org).

“To write *Let Me Down Easy*, I interviewed over 300 people on three continents,” says Anna Deavere Smith. “My goal was to learn as much about a person as possible by studying the way they speak. My portrayals of the more than 20 people in this one-woman show are all drawn from the words of people who speak to the vulnerability of the human body, the resilience of the spirit, the price of care. The *Let Me Down Easy* journey began when I was invited to be a Visiting Professor at the Yale School of Medicine. My first thought was, ‘Really, me, a clown, to create something in such a serious elite environment?’ I walked away from the experience with an increased compassion for doctors and patients alike. The stories stayed in my heart and became the basis of this play.”

*Let Me Down Easy* is based on interviews with an eclectic range of people, from a heavyweight boxer to a supermodel, and from Texas Governor Ann Richards to legendary cyclist Lance Armstrong. A virtuosic and moving exploration into the power of the human body and the price of health, Smith takes an honest look at some important topics including the steroid scandal, cancer therapies, the impact of

Katrina and the ailing American healthcare system with her trademark journalistic precision and poignancy. *Let Me Down Easy* last year completed a successful run in New York at Second Stage Theatre and was most recently performed at Washington D.C.'s Arena Stage.

"We are truly honored to be presenting the extraordinary Anna Deavere Smith in her long-overdue Philadelphia debut," said Sara Garonzik, Producing Artistic Director of Philadelphia Theatre Company. "With the current struggle to achieve health care for all, her artistry, compassion and advocacy are a most welcome reminder of the underlying tenacity and common humanity we share as a nation."

**Anna Deavere Smith** is an actress, playwright and author who blends theatrical art, social commentary, journalism and intimate reverie. The recipient of the prestigious MacArthur Award, Smith has performed in film and TV as well as on stage. She currently plays Gloria Akalitus on Showtime's hit series *Nurse Jackie* for which she was just nominated an NAACP Image Award as Outstanding Supporting Actress. She is probably most recognizable in popular culture as Nancy McNally, national security advisor on NBC's long-running hit *The West Wing*.

Looking at current events from multiple points of view, Ms. Smith's theater combines the journalistic technique of interviewing her subjects with the art of interpreting their words through performance. These one-woman shows are a part of a series she began in the early 1980s called *On the Road: A Search for American Character*. Her goal has been to learn as much about America as she can, by interviewing individual Americans from diverse backgrounds, and putting herself in other people's words the way you might think of putting yourself in another person's "shoes." *Twilight: Los Angeles* received two Tony nominations, an Obie, Drama Desk Award, and a Special Citation from the New York Drama Critics Circle. *Fires in the Mirror*, examining a race riot in Crown Heights, Brooklyn (1991), when age-old racial tensions between black and Jewish neighbors exploded, received an Obie Award and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize.

Smith has been featured in several films, among them *The American President*, *The Human Stain*, *Dave*, *Rachel Getting Married* and *Rent*. She was a regular on the CBS series *Presidio Med*, had a recurring role on *The Practice* and co-starred in HBO's 2007 film *Life Support*.

Smith founded and directed the Institute on the Arts and Civic Dialogue, originally funded in large part by the Ford Foundation, and was the Ford Foundation's first artist in residence (1997). She was artist in residence at MTV Networks from 2001 to 2004 and was the inaugural Harmon/Eisner artist in residence at Aspen Institute in July 2006. She is currently artist in residence at Center for American

Progress, a Washington think tank. She has been awarded the 2009 Social Justice Award by the Urban Justice Center and the USA Susan V. Berresford Fellowship from United States Artists. In 2007, Americans for the Arts presented her with the Kitty Carlisle Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Arts. She also received the Mayor's Award for Art and Culture from the Mayor of New York City in 2007. In 2006, she received the Alphonse Fletcher Fellowship, which recognizes work by scholars, writers and artists who address and carry out the broad social goals of the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision of 1954. She was twice nominated for the NAACP Image Award and received the prestigious New York Women in Communication's Matrix Award for her remarkable achievements and outstanding leadership role in her field in spring 2008.

**Leonard Foglia** returns to PTC where he directed the world premiere productions of Terrence McNally's *Unusual Acts of Devotion* and *Master Class*. He directed the Off-Broadway production of *Let Me Down Easy* at Second Stage. His Broadway credits include *Thurgood*, *Master Class*, *On Golden Pond* and *Wait Until Dark*. His regional work has been seen at Mark Taper Forum, Pittsburgh Public Theatre, Long Wharf Theatre, Kennedy Center and Westport Playhouse. A popular opera director, he has worked at Houston Grand Opera, New York City Opera, Cincinnati Opera and Pittsburgh Opera.

The creative team of *Let Me Down Easy* includes Scenic Designer **Riccardo Hernandez**, Costume Designer **Ann Hould-Ward**, Lighting Designer **Dan Ozminkowski**, based on the original by Jules Fisher and Peggy Eisenhauer, and Sound Designer **Ryan Rumery**.

Founded in 1974, Philadelphia Theatre Company is a leading regional theater company whose mission is to produce, develop and present entertaining and imaginative contemporary theater focused on the American experience that both ignites the intellect and touches the soul. By developing new work through commissions, readings and workshops PTC generates projects that have a national impact and reach broad regional audiences. Under the leadership of Sara Garonzik as PTC's Producing Artistic Director since 1982, PTC supports the work of a growing body of diverse dramatists and takes pride in being a home to scores of nationally recognized artists who have participated in more than 130 world and Philadelphia premieres. PTC has received 45 Barrymore Awards and 147 nominations. In October 2007, PTC moved into a home of its own, the Suzanne Roberts Theatre on Center City Philadelphia's Avenue of the Arts, solidifying the Company's status as a major player on the American theater scene. In October 2010, Kathleen Nolan joined PTC as its Interim Managing Director.

For further information, please call 215-735-7356.

**PHILADELPHIA THEATRE COMPANY'S PRODUCTION OF  
*LET ME DOWN EASY* FACT SHEET**

PREVIEWS: Friday, March 18 at 8:00 PM  
Saturday, March 19 at 8:00 PM  
Sunday, March 20 at 3:00 PM  
Tuesday, March 22 at 6:30 PM

OPENING: Wednesday, March 23 at 7:00 PM

PERFORMANCES: Thursday-Saturday at 8:00 PM  
All Tuesday performances at 6:30 PM  
All Wednesday performances at 7:00 PM  
Wednesday matinee at 1:00 PM on March 30 and April 6  
Saturday matinee at 2:00 PM on March 26, April 2 and 9  
Sunday matinee at 3:00 PM on March 20, 27, April 3 and 10

CLOSING PERFORMANCE: Sunday, April 10 at 3:00 PM

LOCATION: Philadelphia Theatre Company's Suzanne Roberts Theatre  
Broad and Lombard Streets

**TICKET PRICES:**

Tuesday and Friday previews, Tuesday evenings, Wednesday matinees and evenings:  
*All seats \$46*  
Sunday preview, Thursday and Friday evenings, Saturday and Sunday matinees:  
*All seats \$52*  
Saturday preview and Saturday evenings: *All seats \$59*  
Student, Senior Citizen and Group Discounts available

**PARKING/TRANSPORTATION:**

Onsite parking is available at the Symphony House as well as many other parking facilities on Broad Street.  
The theater is also accessible by taxi, SEPTA buses and trains, and the PATCO Highspeed line.

**ACCESSIBILITY:**

PTC provides large print and Braille programs upon request.  
Open-captioned performance on Saturday, April 9 at 2:00 PM

**TICKETS AVAILABLE AT:**

PTC's Suzanne Roberts Theatre, Broad & Lombard Streets  
Monday-Friday 10:00 AM - 5:30 PM  
(215) 985-0420 or online at [PhiladelphiaTheatreCompany.org](http://PhiladelphiaTheatreCompany.org)

**SPECIAL EVENTS:**

**Meet-the-Artists Talk Backs** on **Thursday, March 24, Tuesday, March 29,** and **Thursday, April 7** following the evening performance – Join members of the cast and creative team for a post-show discussion

**American Playwrights in Context** on **Sunday, March 27** following the 3:00 PM matinee – A free in-depth post-show discussion with the show's creators

**Night OUT!** pre-show LGBT-friendly reception on **Thursday, March 31** at 6:45 PM (prior to the 8:00 PM performance) – for theater lovers who enjoy cocktails, light fare, and great company

**Book Club** on **Thursday, March 24** at 6:30 PM – Meet before the show with Literary Manager Jackie Goldfinger and discuss *Truth and Beauty* by Ann Patchett

**Backstage Tour** on **Saturday, April 4** – Join PTC's Technical Director and Literary Manager for a post-matinee tour of the set

WRITTEN AND PERFORMED BY: Anna Deavere Smith

DIRECTED BY: Leonard Foglia

DESIGNERS: Scenic Designer – Riccardo Hernandez  
Costume Designer – Ann Hould-Ward  
Lighting Designer – Dan Ozminkowski  
Sound Designer – Ryan Rumery

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## SYNOPSIS

A virtuosic and moving exploration into the power of the human body, the price of health, and the resilience of the spirit, Smith takes an honest look at some important topics including the steroid scandal, cancer therapies, the impact of Katrina and the ailing American healthcare system with her trademark journalistic precision and poignancy.