

ARTISTS REPERTORY THEATRE

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Artists Rep to present the final stage performance of

RODNEY KING

Created and performed by Roger Guenveur Smith

Only four shows | April 21-23 | FRONTIER SERIES

WHO: [Artists Repertory Theatre](#)
WHAT: [RODNEY KING](#)
Created and performed by Roger Guenveur Smith
Set & Lighting Designer: Jose Lopez
Production Stage Manager: Kirk Wilson
WHEN: FOUR PERFORMANCES ONLY: April 21-23, 2017
Friday-Sunday @ 7:30pm; Sunday @ 2pm
PRESS NIGHT: Friday, April 21 @ 7:30pm
WHERE: Artists Repertory Theatre, Alder Stage, 1516 SW Alder, Portland
TICKETS: \$30 regular price/\$15 students
Buy Tickets: 503.241.1278 or www.artistsrep.org
SHOW IMAGES: [HERE](#)
BRIC PRODUCTION VIDEO TRAILER: [HERE](#)
FRONTIER SERIES VIDEO: [HERE](#)
NEW YORK TIMES SCRIPT EXCERPT VIDEO: [HERE](#)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE. Portland, Oregon | March 30, 2017. Artists Repertory Theatre will present *Rodney King*, written and performed by acclaimed actor and performance artist Roger Guenveur Smith. This production at Artists Rep will be the final stage performances of Smith's piece that has been touring since 2012. Netflix will release the new film *Rodney King*, directed by Spike Lee, starring Smith, on April 28. Youth and community engagement programming surrounds the four public performances, and one free student performance, held for *Rodney King*, April 21 through April 23, 2017.

Artists Rep's production is presented on the eve of the 25 year anniversary of the Rodney King trial verdict of 1992, which acquitted the four police officers who brutally beat King in 1991 and sparked the devastating L.A. riots. This story that started decades ago will open conversations about the world we live in right now. Post show discussions will follow every performance.

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Fresh off show tours to Oakland and L.A., Smith unravels the myth of “the first reality TV star” in his riveting one-man performance. *Rodney King* tells the story of a flawed, good-hearted everyman – from his harsh entry into the national spotlight to a lonely death at the bottom of his swimming pool. It’s been 25 years since the media turned the spotlight to Rodney King’s treatment at the hands of four police officers, the subsequent acquittal that sparked angry riots in L.A. and opened eyes across the world. Now, Smith asks us once again, “Can we all get along?”

“*Rodney King* is one of the most powerful performances I’ve ever witnessed,” said Jerry Tischleder, Frontier Series curator. “We are deeply honored and incredibly lucky to host Roger’s monumental work at such a crucial time, one that coincides with the 25-year anniversary of the L.A. riots, the launch of the film version directed by Spike Lee, and most importantly, at a time when police accountability, racial tensions and our cycle of violence demand community action in Portland and across the country.”

Programming for this production includes a workshop and free student matinee for area youth, a Roosevelt High School student lobby exhibit and performances from the youth of Spit/WRITE, as well as moderated post show discussions after every performance.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMMING

Made possible by an Oregon Community Foundation grant, Artists Rep will offer a free student matinee and facilitate a student workshop led by Smith. The student workshop with the renowned performance artist, actor and educator will be held at 4pm on Thursday, April 20 at Roosevelt High School. The workshop is coordinated by S. Renee Mitchell, a teacher at Roosevelt High School, artist, journalist and mentor of Portland youth. The workshop will bring together students from throughout the Portland Public Schools to work with Smith on the intersections of history, journalism and performance. These students, along with classes from high schools throughout Portland, will be the first Portland audience for *Rodney King* for a Friday, April 21 matinee performance.

Prior to public performances, youth involved with Mitchell’s youth-voice initiative poetry project, [Spit/WRITE](#), will perform. Additionally, a student reflection exhibit by Roosevelt High School students will be featured in the lobby.

POST SHOW DISCUSSIONS

Opportunity for audience conversation about the themes and topics in *Rodney King* will be held after every performance. Friday through Sunday evening post show discussions will be moderated by [The Color of NOW](#). Saturday night’s post show discussion will include a panel of Portland history and race relations experts. Following the Sunday matinee Chisao Hata will conduct a “Move Back,” a movement-based post show exercise.

SHOW HISTORY

Rodney King was developed at the Bootleg Theater, Los Angeles, in August 2012 and subsequently presented in that city at the Kirk Douglas Theatre, Grand Performances, University of Southern California, KAOS Gallery and the Manifest Justice Festival. Among the many international venues which have presented the work are the Tate Modern Museum, London and the Right About Now Festival, Amsterdam, as well as Woolly Mammoth, Penumbra Theatre, Seattle Theatre Group, The Public Theater and Long Wharf Theatre.

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REVIEWS

“Smith shifts his weight, bends his knees, churns the air with one hand, clutches his mike with the other, sometimes crouches — as if gauging, and flinching from, an oncoming disaster in a bewildering, slow-motion dream.” “...intensely cathartic and moving...”

-*The Washington Post*

“...sinuous, complicated, deeply moving...” “...impassioned and insightful...”

-*The New York Times*

“Rodney King was no MLK, but stage wizard Roger Guenveur Smith gives eloquent voice to his story ‘Somehow, he dug into his enlarged heart and was able to speak to the fundamentals of human survival, and stop a riot with a speech that begins with a question that everyone knows. “Can we all get along?””

- *Star Tribune*

“Few stage actors I've seen have come within a mile of Smith's expressive vitality, his utter command of the room, his astonishing verbal dexterity (in terms of tempo, volume, pitch, timbre, force, and grace), and above all, his capacity as a writer-performer to harness those qualities in the service of a story that matters.”

- *The Stranger*

“...intricate eulogy of an emblematic black Everyman whose victimhood was both self-induced and spectacularly escalated by irrefutable violent racial oppression highlights familiar facts from a complex multitude of perspectives.”

-*Hollywood Reporter*

“...rich in detail and nuance, yet as direct as a punch in the face.” “Fans of Spike Lee’s films would recognize the actor Roger Guenveur Smith instantly, and followers of theatrical solo performance wouldn’t think of missing a chance to see him live.”

-*The Independent*

ABOUT ROGER GUENVEUR SMITH

Roger Guenveur Smith adapted his Obie Award-winning solo performance of *A Huey P. Newton Story* into a Peabody Award-winning telefilm directed by his longtime colleague, Spike Lee. Lee’s direction of Smith’s Bessie Award-winning *Rodney King* marks the ninth collaboration in a relationship unparalleled in the American cinema. *Rodney King* will premiere on Netflix on April 28.

Smith’s historically-driven work for the international stage also includes *Christopher Columbus 1992*, *Who Killed Bob Marley?*, *Juan and John*, *In Honor of Jean Michel Basquiat*, *The Watts Towers Project*, *Iceland*, *Two Fires*, *Patriot Act*, *The End of Black History Month* and with Mark Broyard, the “not-too-dark-comedy” *Inside the Creole Mafia*. For the Frederick Douglass Bicentennial of 2018, Mr. Smith will present his signature *Fredrick Douglass Now*, which he initially devised as an undergraduate and has since played at the Kennedy Center, The Public Theater and the Institute of Contemporary Art, London.

Mr. Smith has recently directed Katori Hall’s *The Mountaintop*, Steven Berkoff’s *Agamemnon* and *The Hendrix Project* at CalArts, where he conducts his Performing History Workshop. Among Roger’s many screen credits are the recently acclaimed *Birth of a Nation*, *Chi-Raq* and *Dope*.

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2016/17 FRONTIER SERIES

Artists Rep's new series features internationally acclaimed artists who are breaking new ground in theatrical creation and presentation. The inaugural season featured three innovative works by internationally acclaimed artists from London, Vancouver, B.C. and Los Angeles. The 2017/18 FRONTIER SERIES lineup will be announced in May.

December 1-4, 2016: *The Future Show* by Deborah Pearson

March 24-26, 2017: *Winners and Losers* created & performed by Marcus Youssef & James Long
Produced by Theatre Replacement and NewWorld Theatre in association with Crow's Theatre

April 21-23, 2017: *Rodney King* by Roger Guenveur Smith

ABOUT ARTISTS REPERTORY THEATRE

[Artists Repertory Theatre](#)'s mission is to produce intimate, provocative theatre and provide a home for artists of varied backgrounds to take creative risks. Artists Rep is Portland's premiere mid-size regional theatre company and is led by Artistic Director Dámaso Rodríguez and Managing Director Sarah Horton. Founded in 1982, Artists Repertory Theatre is the longest-running professional theatre company in Portland. Artists Rep became the 72nd member of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT) in 2016 and is an Associate Member of the National New Play Network (NNPN). Artists Rep's 35th season is announced, the 2017/18 play selections can be found [here](#).

Artists Rep has become a significant presence in American regional theatre with a legacy of world, national and regional premieres of provocative new work with the highest standards of stagecraft. The organization is committed to local artists and features a company of Resident Artists, professionals of varied theatre disciplines, who are a driving force behind Artists Rep's creative output and identity.

Artists Rep is committed to developing new work through its new play development program Table|Room|Stage. With T|R|S, Artists Rep strives to empower and support Oregon-based playwrights while also creating a Portland home for writers from around the country to develop their work. Additionally, this program strives to make a meaningful impact on diversity, equity and inclusion in the theatre field by mandating opportunities for women writers and writers of color, and cultivating the next generation of theatre-goers by creating work specifically for young people (13 and up). Artists Rep makes a vital impact on the Portland arts community with its ArtsHub, creating space and offering a home to 10 multidisciplinary arts organizations within its facility.

[RESIDENT ARTISTS](#) – Artists Rep productions feature the work of a core group of over two dozen multidisciplinary theatre professionals. Hailing from around the country, our Resident Artists are nationally renowned and award-winning actors, directors, writers, designers and educators who have chosen to make Portland and Artists Rep their artistic home. Working together and independently, they create inventive and theatrically rich experiences for our audiences while playing a major role in defining Portland's cultural landscape.

[TABLE|ROOM|STAGE](#) – Through T|R|S, Artists Rep is committed to becoming an engine for new play development. As a recipient of a \$125,000 Oregon Community Foundation Creative Heights grant to establish a robust new play development program, the company is creating opportunities for local and national playwrights to ensure that underrepresented voices are heard on stage. The goal of the T|R|S program was to commission a total of eight plays by year-end 2017 – at least four of the eight commissions to writers of color, at least four to women, one play written for young adults and one is the
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[Oregon Play Prize](#), which was awarded to Oregon playwright Steve Rathje for his play *Signs*. In addition to Steve Rathje, Artists Rep has commissioned plays from Yusef El Guindi, Linda Alper, Larissa FastHorse, Andrea Stolowitz ([Lacroute Playwright-in-Residence](#)), Dael Orlandersmith and Hansol Jung – more information about these [At the Table](#) projects is on the website. [On the Workbench](#) is another aspect of the T|R|S initiative which is supporting the creation of new works by Anthony Hudson and Susannah Mars. Additionally, the [Fresh Eyes](#) program invites ‘civilians’ to attend productions in rehearsal and share their observations with our wider community. El Guindi’s play *The Talented Ones* will receive a full production at the theatre April 25 through May 21, 2017.

[ARTSHUB](#) – Artists Rep is also home to the ArtsHub, serving as a community arts center, where its performance venues and lobbies buzz with creative energy and Portland’s arts-loving audiences can gather. Artists Rep offers a home within its facility to a diverse range of artists and arts organizations. They can thrive here with access to affordable administrative, performance and rehearsal space, as well as a myriad of support services. Over the last year, hundreds of performances, events and happenings by Portlanders found a place in Artists Rep’s building.

The 2016/17 Artists Repertory Theatre season is presented by sponsors Ronni Lacroute/WillaKenzie Estate and David & Christine Vernier and the Robert and Mercedes Eichholz and Renaissance Foundations. Other season support comes from the Collins Foundation, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Meyer Memorial Trust, James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation, Theatre Communication Group and the Regional Arts and Culture Council and Work for Art. The FRONTIER SERIES is sponsored by the Oregon Community Foundation.

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