

## David Roche bio

“When I walk on stage, I encourage the audience to ask, **'What happened to your face?'**

“I then explain that I was born with a severe facial disfigurement. On the left side of my face is an extensive cavernous hemangioma, a benign tumor consisting of blood vessels. As an infant and child I underwent many facial surgeries and heavy radiation therapy, which left radiation burns on my temple and eyelid.

“Yet my face is a gift, because my shadow side – my difficulty and challenge – is on the outside, where I have been forced to deal with it.”

—**David Roche**

### Who is David?

David Roche is an inspirational humorist, motivational speaker and performer who has transformed the challenges and gifts of living with a facial disfigurement into a compelling message that uplifts and delights audiences around the world. Now, with the publication of his first book, *The Church of 80% Sincerity*, in February 2008, he is also an author.

David presents keynote speeches, motivational humor and entertainment at conferences, meetings and fundraisers for corporate events, and for association, non-profit, educational and disability organizations.

He has performed his signature one-man show, *The Church of 80% Sincerity*, across the U.S. and in Canada, England, New Zealand, Australia and Russia. David appeared at the Clinton White House and headlined at the Olympics Arts Festival in Sydney, Australia. David and his wife Marlena Blavin present *Love at Second Sight*, a program for adolescents about appearance, acceptance and diversity.

David has been featured in four films, including *Shameless*, a 2006 feature-length documentary by Bonnie Sherr Klein from the National Film Board of Canada. *The Perfect Flaw*, a 2005 documentary about David by Mike Grundmann, won first place awards at the Canadian International Annual Film & Video Festival and the Da Vinci Film & Video Festival. Two other award-winning films featuring David, *Face*

First (Mike Grundmann, 1999) and Able to Laugh (Michael J. Dougan, 1993) have been seen worldwide.

Paula Zahn recently profiled David on her CNN show as a result of viewer response to an earlier interview on CNN. Anne Lamott's newest bestseller, *Plan B*, includes a chapter about David.

**Keynotes** David is in demand as a keynote speaker and corporate humorist, offering business entertainment and presenting on a wide range of topics including self-esteem, diversity, disability and facing change. Clients include Hewlett Packard, Lockheed Martin, Lawrence Livermore Labs, the U.S. State Department, disability associations, universities and other organizations.

**In schools** David's favorite work is with students. He and his wife Marlena Blavin share their stories in *Love at Second Sight*. With simple honesty and warm humor, they confront the issues of appearance, acceptance and diversity.

**On stage** In addition to his own acclaimed one-man show, *The Church of 80% Sincerity*, David has appeared in ensemble work in two world premieres held in San Francisco: *Opening to You* by Corey Fischer and *Summertime* by Charles L. Mee Jr.

"Everyone watching gets happy because he's secretly giving instruction on how this could happen for them, too, this militant self-acceptance. He lost the great big outward thing, the good-looking package, and the real parts endured. They shine through like crazy, the brilliant mind and humor, the depth of generosity, the intense blue eyes, those beautiful hands."

—Anne Lamott, *Plan B*  
about David in *The Church of 80% Sincerity*

## Background

Born to an Irish Catholic family in Hammond, IN, David is the eldest of seven children. He spent four years in a Roman Catholic seminary and later obtained his BA in philosophy (Magna Cum Laude) at St. Joseph's College.

David developed his stage skills as a comedian in shows produced by Lee Glickstein and later worked with Access to Comedy, a troupe of disabled comedians. Subsequently he created his signature theater work, *The Church of 80% Sincerity*, while playing to the San Francisco

Bay Area's many diverse communities.

David and his wife Marlena Blavin live in Mill Valley, CA, and love to spend time at their cohousing home in Roberts Creek, BC, Canada. Their homes are filled with photos of friends and family, including David's beloved daughter Amy and storytelling colleagues.

David's presence is strong in his communities as well as on stage. He is a member of the Marin Arts Council and president of the Board of Directors of the Society for Disability Arts and Culture in Vancouver, BC. He is a co-founder of the Childcare Switchboard/Single Parent Resource Center and of the massage therapy internship program at California Pacific Medical Center, both in San Francisco.

### **Awards and honors**

- Leadership Award, Fair Housing of Marin County, 2006
- Martin Luther King Humanitarian of the Year Award, Marin County Human Rights Commission, 2005
- California Arts Council Roster of Touring Artists, 2000-2004
- Milley Award for Excellence in Performing Arts, Mill Valley Arts Council, 2001
- Grants: California Arts Council, Ethel Louise Armstrong Foundation, Marin Arts Council, Morris Family Foundation, Theatre Bay Area C.A.S.H., Zellerbach Family Fund, 1999-2006
- Headliner, Olympics Arts Festival, Sydney, Australia, 2000
- Featured performer, Clinton White House, Washington, DC, 1999

### **Clients (sample)**

American Anaplastology Association

Beyond Borders Diversity Program

California State Association of Licensed Investigators

Clarion University, President's Commission on Disabilities

Hewlett Packard

Kaiser Permanente

Laughlin Air Force Base

Lawrence Livermore Labs  
Lockheed Martin  
National Organization for Rare Disorders  
Office Depot  
Stanford University  
UC Berkeley  
UCLA  
UCSF  
University of Florida  
World Institute on Disability

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