FIVE-WEEK CHICAGOWIDE "AUGUST WILSON CELEBRATION" BEGINS MARCH 9, FEATURES ALL 10 PLAYS IN WILSON'S 20TH CENTURY CYCLE, UNPUBLISHED POETRY, DISCUSSIONS AND MORE

***RETROSPECTIVE CELEBRATES THE LATE PLAYWRIGHT'S ARTISTRY AND INFLUENCE ON AMERICAN CULTURE***

(Chicago, IL) In an unprecedented civic event, Goodman Theatre partners with more than 20 Chicago theaters, schools and organizations to present The August Wilson Celebration (March 9 – April 18), an extensive exploration of the enduring impact of Pulitzer Prize- and Tony Award-winning playwright August Wilson, “theater’s poet of Black America” (New York Times). Celebration Curator Chuck Smith, together with Constanza Romero (Wilson’s widow), Ron OJ Parson (actor/director) and Dr. Harvey Young (Northwestern University), has assembled a five-week line-up of readings, educational seminars, discussions, poetry and more. Information on all events appears below. For information and ticket reservations for the free Celebration events, visit The August Wilson Celebration. Note: some events may be sold out due to high demand and limited seating capacity. To purchase tickets for Two Trains Running (March 7 – April 12, $27-$80) visit GoodmanTheatre.org/TwoTrains or call 312.443.3800.

The Goodman and partnering organizations from the Pullman Historic District to Evanston present script-in-hand concert readings of nine plays in Wilson’s 10-play “Century Cycle,” which chronicles the African American experience in each decade of the 20th Century. Students from Chicago West Community Music Center, which provides quality music programs on the west side and throughout Chicagoland, perform music appropriate to each decade prior to each reading:

- *Fences* dir. Ilesa Duncan (presented by/performed at Goodman Theatre)
- *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom* dir. Harry Lennix (presented by Pegasus Theatre, performed at Logan Center for the Arts)
- *Seven Guitars* dir. Aaron Todd Douglas (presented by Goodman Theatre, performed at Chicago State University)
- *Joe Turner’s Come and Gone* dir. Reginald Lawrence (presented by MPAACT, performed at Beverly Arts Center)
- *Gem of the Ocean* (presented by Goodman Theatre, performed at Pullman National Monument Info Center)
- *The Piano Lesson* dir. Aaron Todd Douglas (presented by Fleetwood-Jourdain, performed at Evanston Public Library)
- *Radio Golf* dir. Ron OJ Parson (presented by/performed at Court Theatre)
- *Jitney* dir. Kamesha Khan (presented by eta Creative Arts Foundation, performed at Goodman Theatre)
- *King Hedley II* dir. Daniel Bryant (presented by Congo Square Theatre Company, performed at DuSable Museum)

Two Trains Running directed by Chuck Smith at Goodman Theatre is the centerpiece production of the Celebration.

Six panel discussions explore Wilson’s influences and creative milestones:

- **March 9 Kick Off Event:** “August Wilson in Chicago” moderated by Willa Taylor at Harold Washington Library
- “The Women of August Wilson” moderated by Michele Shay at Black Ensemble Theater Cultural Center
- “August Wilson at Yale” moderated by Romero at The Theatre School at DePaul University
- “August Wilson in St. Paul, MN” moderated by Lou Bellamy at Northwestern University
- “August Wilson in New York” moderated by Woodie King, Jr. at Goodman Theatre
- “Black Theater in America” presented by Congo Square Theatre Company at Goodman Theatre

Special events celebrate Wilson’s legacy and cultural impact:

- August Wilson Monologue Competition (Chicago Finals) at Goodman Theatre
- Two Trains and A Sidecar – Young professionals event presented by Goodman Theatre’s Scenemakers Board
- “August Wilson: From Poet to Playwright” presented by Universes at The Poetry Foundation

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CONCERT READINGS (FREE)

Fences | Tuesday, March 17 | 7pm at Goodman Theatre
Presented by Goodman Theatre, Directed by Ilesa Duncan
Reserve tickets: 312.443.3800 or GoodmanTheatre.org

The optimism of the 1950s collides with social reality in Wilson’s complicated exploration of family. As disillusioned trash collector Troy Maxson fights for new career opportunities for himself and other African Americans, his actions push his wife and children further and further away. Painful memories from his career as a Negro League slugger overshadow his son’s dreams of a football scholarship, while his wife comes to terms with the limits of their relationship.

Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom | Saturday, March 21 | 2pm at Logan Center for the Arts (915 E. 60th St.)
Presented by Pegasus Theatre, Directed Harry Lennix
Reserve tickets: 773.702.2787 or Ticketsweb.uchicago.edu

The Roaring Twenties have made “Mother of the Blues” Ma Rainey a star, attracting the young and ambitious trumpeter Levee to her band. But a routine recording session in Chicago turns ugly when Levee’s ambitions collide with the larger-than-life personalities of Ma, her entourage and the white producers looking to make money off their talents. Wilson’s searing drama features music that defined a decade and looks at the messy intersection of art and industry.

Seven Guitars | Tuesday, March 24 | 7pm at Chicago State University, Breakey Theatre (9501 S. King Dr.)
Presented by Goodman Theatre, Directed by Aaron Todd Douglas
Reserve tickets: 773.995.4512 or CSU.edu

Friends and family recall the hopeful future that lay in store for rising blues star Floyd “Schoolboy” Barton. Flawed plans and an unexpected clash with Hedley, a mystical old man from New Orleans, seal Floyd’s fate and devastate his attempts at reinvention and a better life.

Joe Turner’s Come and Gone | Saturday, March 28 | 2pm at Beverly Arts Center (2407 W. 111th St.)
Presented by MPAACT, Directed by Reginald Lawrence
Reserve tickets: 773.445.3838 or BeverlyArtCenter.org

Wilson dramatizes the plight of African Americans during the Great Migration in Joe Turner’s Come and Gone. Seth and Bertha Holly’s Pittsburgh boarding house hosts a variety of travelers as they journey from the South to find opportunities in the North. When Herald Loomis arrives with his young daughter in search of his wife, the Holly’s tenants help him realize that he has actually been searching for himself.

Gem of the Ocean | Tuesday, March 31 | 7pm at Pullman National Monument Info Center (11141 Cottage Grove Ave.)
Presented by Goodman Theatre
Reserve tickets: 773.785.8901 or PullmanArts.org or PullmanIL.org

August Wilson’s epic “20th Century Cycle” begins with his drama Gem of the Ocean. Set in 1904, the play introduces audiences to Aunt Ester, a much sought-out mystic and faith healer whose home in Pittsburgh’s Hill District serves as a center for the community. When Citizen Barlow seeks out her help, she sends him on a spiritual voyage that connects him with his history while cleansing his soul. With renewed vigor, Citizen Barlow returns to help his friend, Solly, find justice in an unfair world.

The Piano Lesson | Saturday, April 4 | 2pm at Evanston Public Library (1703 Orrington Ave.)
Presented by Fleetwood-Jourdain, Directed by Aaron Todd Douglas
Reserve tickets: 847.448.8620 or EPL.org/pianolesson

Wilson’s Depression-era drama pits Boy Willie against his sister, Berniece, when he appears at her Hill District home with plans for their family heirloom piano. Berniece hopes to pass its legacy on to her young daughter, while Boy Willie hopes to sell it and use the money to build a new life. Ghosts from the family’s troubled past emerge as brother and sister clash over the piano’s future.
Radio Golf | Monday, April 6 | 7pm at Court Theatre (5535 S. Ellis Ave.)
Presented by Court Theatre, Directed by Ron OJ Parson
Reserve tickets: 773.753.4472 | CourtTheatre.org
Steeped in the spirits and dreams of the past, Radio Golf tells the story of Harmond Wilks, an ambitious real estate developer whose plans for a slick new venture will likely make him Pittsburgh’s first black mayor. Everything proceeds smoothly until the arrival of a mysterious stranger forces Wilks to reconsider his path to (and definition of) success. Wilson’s final work for the stage, Radio Golf marks a triumphant conclusion to his extraordinary “20th Century Cycle.”

Jitney | Tuesday, April 14 | 7pm at Goodman Theatre
Presented by eta Creative Arts Foundation, Directed by Kamesha Khan
Reserve tickets: 708.926.4641
August Wilson’s first play, demonstrating his gift for capturing the rhythms and power of language, Jitney provides a window into the world of Pittsburgh’s jitney cab drivers. Becker manages the cab station where Turnbo, Youngblood, Fielding and Doub struggle to make ends meet and work their way out of hustling Pittsburgh’s streets. But the unexpected twists and turns of life work against the men, complicating their escape from the jitney station.

King Hedley II | Saturday, April 18 | 2pm at DuSable Museum (740 E. 56th Pl.)
Presented by Congo Square Theatre Company, Directed by Daniel Bryant
Reserve tickets: 773.296.1108 | CongoSquareTheatre.org
The eighth play in Wilson’s “20th Century Cycle,” King Hedley II paints a vivid, almost operatic portrait of a neighborhood struggling to come to terms with the harsh realities of life in the mid-1980s. After his release from prison, King Hedley II, son to the troubled Hedley of Wilson’s Seven Guitars, returns home to find himself humiliated by his father’s memory. Adrift in the face-paced era of Reaganomics, his attempts to lift himself out of the poverty-stricken Hill District do more harm than good.

SPECIAL EVENTS

August Wilson Monologue Competition—Chicago Finals | Tuesday, March 10 | 6pm at Goodman Theatre
Reserve tickets: 312.443.3800 | GoodmanTheatre.org
Students from nine Chicagoland high schools—Harper, Senn, Kenwood, Southland College Prep, Wendell Philips, Chi Arts, Lincoln Park, Oak Park River Forest and Morton West—compete for a chance to represent Chicago in the national finals of the August Wilson Monologue Competition.

Two Trains and a Side Car | Wednesday, March 11 | 6pm at Goodman Theatre
Tickets ($65) include pre- and post-show receptions and performance
Reserve tickets: 312.443.3800 | GoodmanTheatre.org
The Goodman’s Scenemakers Board hosts over 150 young professionals for an exclusive reception in the Healy rehearsal room with diner-inspired food and classic cocktails before a performance of Two Trains Running. Following the performance, join the cast of the show for a nightcap back in the Healy.

August Wilson: From Poet to Playwright | Wednesday, March 25 | 7pm at The Poetry Foundation (61 W. Superior St.)
Presented by Universes, Moderated by Dr. Harvey Young
No Reservations; seating is first come, first served | 312.799.8040
The rarely heard, unpublished poetry of August Wilson receives a theatrical presentation by Universes, a nationally acclaimed performance ensemble from New York. The event also includes original pieces written by young Chicago writers influenced by Wilson.

How I Learned What I Learned | March 30 | 7pm at Northwestern University, Mussetter-Struble Theater (1949 Campus Dr.)
Performed by Ruben Santiago-Hudson
Reserve tickets: Wirtz.Northwestern.edu/Special_Events
In 2003, August Wilson wrote and performed this autobiographical one-man show, revealing intimate details from his life and how his plays reflect those events. This concert reading features Ruben Santiago-Hudson, a friend and colleague of Wilson’s, who thrilled New York audiences with the piece at Signature Theatre in 2013. A discussion about Wilson and his work will follow the presentation.

PANEL DISCUSSIONS
Kick-off event

August Wilson in Chicago | Monday, March 9 | 6pm at Harold Washington Library, Cindy Pritzker Auditorium (400 S. State)
Part of the Chuck Smith Lecture Series, Moderated by Willa J. Taylor
No reservations; seating is first come, first served | 312.747.4011
Local artists and scholars—including Goodman Resident Director Chuck Smith, actor/director Ron OJ Parson, director Derrick Sanders and Northwestern University professor Harvey Young—discuss August Wilson’s work and experiences in Chicago, from world-premiere productions at Goodman Theatre to Wilson’s love for Chicago’s jazz and art legacies.

The Women of August Wilson | Sunday, March 22 | 7pm at Black Ensemble Theater Cultural Center (4450 N. Clark St.)
Moderated by Michele Shay
Reserve tickets: 773.769.4451 | BlackEnsembleTheater.org
NYU professor and Broadway actress Michele Shay joins other notable actresses who have performed August Wilson’s plays in a conversation about the role of female characters in Wilson’s work. Exploring topics of gender and race, the women will examine the themes, challenges and opportunities presented by Wilson’s “20th Century Cycle.”

August Wilson at Yale | Monday, March 23 | 7pm at DePaul University, Fullerton Stage (2350 N. Racine Ave.)
Moderated by Constanza Romero
Reserve tickets: 773.325.7900 x2 or theatreboxoffice@depaul.edu
Constanza Romero, costumer designer and widow of August Wilson, leads a conversation between theater artists and scholars about the remarkable partnership between Wilson, Benjamin Mordecai and Lloyd Richards of Yale Repertory Theatre. Yale produced over half of the world premieres of Wilson’s “20th Century Cycle” plays. Personal recollections and professional insights explore the nuances of this successful partnership.

August Wilson in St. Paul, MN | Tuesday, April 7 | 12noon at Northwestern University (1949 Campus Dr.)
Moderated by Lou Bellamy
Reserve tickets: Wirtz.Northwestern.edu/Special_Events
Before beginning work on his “20th Century Cycle” and establishing himself as one of the United States’ leading writers, Wilson worked in St. Paul, Minnesota. Lou Bellamy, founding Artistic Director of Penumbra Theatre and an early collaborator with Wilson, leads a conversation with theater professionals and scholars about Wilson’s early career as an unknown playwright.

August Wilson in New York | Sunday, April 12 | 6pm at Goodman Theatre (170 N. Dearborn St.)
Presented by Goodman Theatre
Moderated by Woodie King, Jr.
Reserve tickets: 312.443.3800 | GoodmanTheatre.org
Woodie King, Jr., founder of the New Federal Theatre and friend and colleague of August Wilson, has produced and championed African American theater for decades. Leading a public discussion with friends and colleagues, King shares memories of Wilson’s life and work in New York—and the influence Wilson had on a new generation of theater artists.

Black Theater in America | Monday, April 13 | 6pm at Goodman Theatre (170 N. Dearborn St.)
Presented by Congo Square Theatre Company
Reserve tickets: 312.443.3800 | GoodmanTheatre.org
Theater directors from across the United States discuss the history, achievements and challenges facing the African American theater community. Panelists include: Ekundayo Bandele, Hattiloo Theatre; Sarah Bellamy, Penumbra Theater; Lydia R. Diamond, Playwright; Jonathan McCrory, National Black Theatre; Dominique Morisseau, Playwright; Ron OJ Parson, Director; Derrick Sanders, Director; Jackie Taylor, Black Ensemble Theatre.

About August Wilson (April 27, 1945 – October 2, 2005)

August Wilson was born and raised in the Hill District of Pittsburgh and lived in Seattle at the time of his death. He is survived by two daughters—Sakina Ansari and Azula Carmen Wilson—and his wife, costume designer Constanza Romero. Wilson authored Gem of the Ocean, Joe Turner’s Come and Gone, Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom, The Piano Lesson, Seven Guitars, Fences, Two Trains Running, Jitney, King Hedley II and Radio Golf. These works explore the heritage and experience of African Americans, decade by decade, over the course of the 20th Century. Wilson’s plays have been produced at regional
thetaters across the country, on Broadway and throughout the world. In 2003, Wilson made his professional stage debut in his one-man show, How I Learned What I Learned.

His work garnered many awards, including the Pulitzer Prize for Fences (1987) and The Piano Lesson (1990); a Tony Award for Fences; Great Britain’s Olivier Award for JITNEY; and eight New York Drama Critics Circle awards for Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom, Fences, Joe Turner’s Come and Gone, The Piano Lesson, Two Trains Running, Seven Guitars, JITNEY and Radio Golf. Additionally, the cast recording of Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom received a 1985 Grammy Award, and Wilson received a 1995 Emmy Award nomination for his screenplay adaptation of The Piano Lesson. Wilson’s early works include the one-act plays The Janitor, Recycle, The Coldest Day of the Year, Malcolm X, The Homecoming and the musical satire Black Bart and the Sacred Hills.

Fellowships and awards include Rockefeller and Guggenheim fellowships in playwriting, the Whiting Writers’ Award and the 2003 Heinz Award. He was awarded a 1999 National Humanities Medal by the President of the United States, and received numerous honorary degrees from colleges and universities, as well as the only high school diploma ever issued by the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. He was an alumnus of New Dramatists; a member of the America Academy of Arts and Sciences; a 1995 inductee into the American Academy of Arts and Letters; and on October 16, 2005, Broadway renamed the theater located at 245 W. 52nd Street: The August Wilson Theatre. In 2007, he was posthumously inducted into the Theater Hall of Fame.

About the Curators of the August Wilson Celebration

Goodman Theatre Resident Director Chuck Smith celebrated his 20th anniversary—and 20 productions—with the Goodman this past season, and has been a prominent member of Chicago’s theater community for more than 40 years. His Goodman credits include the Chicago premieres of By the Way, Meet Vera Stark, Race, The Good Negro, Proof (with an all-African American cast) and The Story; the world premieres of By the Music of the Spheres and The Gift Horse; James Baldwin’s The Amen Corner (which transferred to Boston’s Huntington Theatre Company, where it won the Independent Reviewers of New England Award for Best Direction); Lorraine Hansberry’s A Raisin in the Sun; Pearl Cleage’s Blues for an Alabama Sky; August Wilson’s Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom (which was seen and applauded by Chicago’s Mayor Richard Daley, Vice President Al Gore and basketball legend Michael Jordan); the Fats Waller musical Ain’t Misbehavin’; the 1993 to 1995 productions of A Christmas Carol; Crumbs From the Table of Joy; Vivisections from a Blown Mind; and The Meeting. He served as dramaturg for the world-premiere production of August Wilson’s Gem of the Ocean at the Goodman. At Columbia College he was facilitator of the Theodore Ward Prize playwriting contest for 20 years and editor of the contest anthologies Seven Black Plays and Best Black Plays. He won a Chicago Emmy Award as associate producer/theatrical director for the NBC teleplay Crime of Innocence and was theatrical director for the Emmy Award-winning Fast Break to Glory and the Emmy Award-nominated The Martin Luther King Suite. He was a founding member of the Chicago Theatre Company, where he served as Artistic Director for four seasons and directed the Jeff Award-nominated Suspenders and the Jeff Award-winning musical Po’. He is a 2003 inductee into the Chicago State University Gwendolyn Brooks Center’s Literary Hall of Fame and a 2001 Chicago Tribune Chicagoan of the Year. He is currently an associate producer of Legacy Productions, a Chicago-based touring company, and a board member of the African American Arts Alliance of Chicago.

Constanza Romero’s Broadway costume design credits include The Mountaintop, Fences (Tony Award nomination, also associate producer), Gem of the Ocean (Tony nomination), Seven Guitars and The Piano Lesson. She also designed the artwork for the Broadway productions and publications of Two Trains Running and Seven Guitars. In addition to Goodman Theatre, Romero has worked with regional theaters including Seattle Repertory Theatre (where she is a resident artist), Huntington Theatre Company, Center Theatre Group (2003 Ovation Award for Best Costume Design for Gem of the Ocean), Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Crossroads Theatre Company, Intiman Theatre, A Contemporary Theatre, Yale Repertory Theatre and Milwaukee Repertory Theatre. Romero taught costume design at the University of Washington, as well as scenic design at the University of California at Santa Cruz. Romero received an MFA from the Yale School of Drama and currently resides in Seattle with Azula Carmen Wilson, her daughter with her late husband August Wilson. She currently serves as the Executor of the Estate of August Wilson, and has ushered many productions in the “American Century Cycle,” as well as the New York premier of Wilson’s one-man show How I Learned What I Learned.

Ron OJ Parson is a native of Buffalo, New York and a graduate of the University of Michigan's professional theater program. He is the co-founder and former artistic director of the Onyx Theatre Ensemble of Chicago, and current Producing Artistic Director of The New Onyx Theatre Project. He currently resides in Chicago, Illinois and is a Resident Artist at the Court Theatre. Since moving to Chicago, Illinois from New York in 1994, Parson has worked as both Actor and Director. He has

Harvey Young’s research on the performance and experience of race has been widely published in academic journals, profiled in The New Yorker, The Wall Street Journal and the Chronicle of Higher Education and cited in The New York Times and The Boston Globe. He has published seven books, including Embodying Black Experience, winner of “Book of the Year” awards from the National Communication Association and the American Society for Theatre Research and, most recently, Black Theater is Black Life: An Oral History of Chicago Theater (coauthored with Mecca Zabriskie). A past President of the Black Theatre Association and former Vice President of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education, he has served on the Board of Directors of the American Society for Theatre Research, the Yale Club of Chicago, and the African American Arts Alliance of Chicago. A former Harvard University and Stanford University fellow, Dr. Young graduated with honors from Yale University and holds a Ph.D. from Cornell University. He is Associate Chair and Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of Theatre at Northwestern University and holds appointments in African American Studies, Performance Studies, and Radio/Television/Film.

PRODUCTION SPONSORS

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