

August Wilson
**new
voices**

**2024 NATIONAL
COMPETITION**

PITTSBURGH, PA



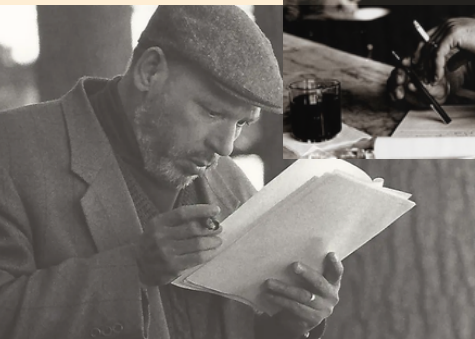
April 29, 2024 | Pittsburgh Public Theater

Cover Art by Mia Ruiz, 2023 August Wilson New Voices National Design Champion



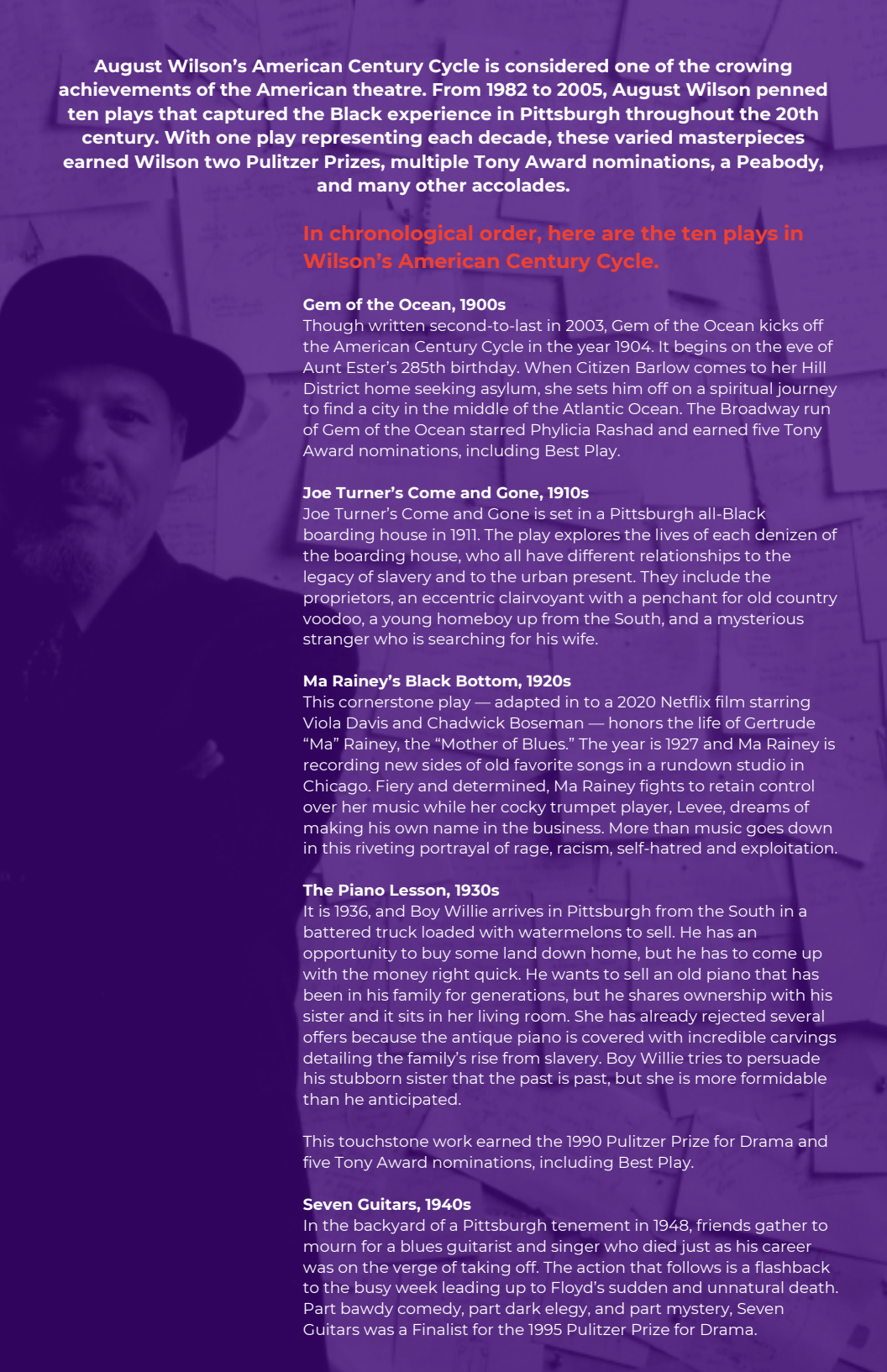
August Wilson

August Wilson was an American playwright best known for his extraordinary cycle of 10 plays that chronicle the 20th century African-American experience. All but one of Wilson's masterful plays are set in the Hill District, the working-class neighborhood of his birth in 1945. Each play is set in a different decade and collectively became known as the American Century Cycle.



“Put them all together,” Wilson once said, “and you have a history.”

- August Wilson



August Wilson's American Century Cycle is considered one of the crowning achievements of the American theatre. From 1982 to 2005, August Wilson penned ten plays that captured the Black experience in Pittsburgh throughout the 20th century. With one play representing each decade, these varied masterpieces earned Wilson two Pulitzer Prizes, multiple Tony Award nominations, a Peabody, and many other accolades.

In chronological order, here are the ten plays in Wilson's American Century Cycle.

Gem of the Ocean, 1900s

Though written second-to-last in 2003, Gem of the Ocean kicks off the American Century Cycle in the year 1904. It begins on the eve of Aunt Ester's 285th birthday. When Citizen Barlow comes to her Hill District home seeking asylum, she sets him off on a spiritual journey to find a city in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. The Broadway run of Gem of the Ocean starred Phylicia Rashad and earned five Tony Award nominations, including Best Play.

Joe Turner's Come and Gone, 1910s

Joe Turner's Come and Gone is set in a Pittsburgh all-Black boarding house in 1911. The play explores the lives of each denizen of the boarding house, who all have different relationships to the legacy of slavery and to the urban present. They include the proprietors, an eccentric clairvoyant with a penchant for old country voodoo, a young homeboy up from the South, and a mysterious stranger who is searching for his wife.

Ma Rainey's Black Bottom, 1920s

This cornerstone play — adapted in to a 2020 Netflix film starring Viola Davis and Chadwick Boseman — honors the life of Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, the "Mother of Blues." The year is 1927 and Ma Rainey is recording new sides of old favorite songs in a rundown studio in Chicago. Fiery and determined, Ma Rainey fights to retain control over her music while her cocky trumpet player, Levee, dreams of making his own name in the business. More than music goes down in this riveting portrayal of rage, racism, self-hatred and exploitation.

The Piano Lesson, 1930s

It is 1936, and Boy Willie arrives in Pittsburgh from the South in a battered truck loaded with watermelons to sell. He has an opportunity to buy some land down home, but he has to come up with the money right quick. He wants to sell an old piano that has been in his family for generations, but he shares ownership with his sister and it sits in her living room. She has already rejected several offers because the antique piano is covered with incredible carvings detailing the family's rise from slavery. Boy Willie tries to persuade his stubborn sister that the past is past, but she is more formidable than he anticipated.

This touchstone work earned the 1990 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and five Tony Award nominations, including Best Play.

Seven Guitars, 1940s

In the backyard of a Pittsburgh tenement in 1948, friends gather to mourn for a blues guitarist and singer who died just as his career was on the verge of taking off. The action that follows is a flashback to the busy week leading up to Floyd's sudden and unnatural death. Part bawdy comedy, part dark elegy, and part mystery, Seven Guitars was a Finalist for the 1995 Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

Fences, 1950s

This sensational drama centers around Troy Maxson, a former star of the Negro baseball leagues who now works as a garbage man in 1957 Pittsburgh. Excluded from the major leagues during his prime for being Black, Troy has grown embittered, straining his relationships with his wife and his son, who now wants his own chance to play ball. Revived in 2010 starring Denzel Washington in the lead role, the play originally starred James Earl Jones as Troy Maxson. *Fences* was yet another awards darling when it first premiered, earning the 1987 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and three Tony Awards, including Best Revival of a Play, in 2010.

Two Trains Running, 1960s

Memphis Lee's coffee shop is located in a Pittsburgh neighborhood on the brink of economic development. As the play unfolds, we follow the characters who hang out there: a local intellectual, an elderly man who imparts the secrets of life as learned from a 322-year-old sage, an ex-con, a numbers runner, a laconic waitress who slashed her legs to keep men away, and a developmentally disabled man who was once cheated out of a ham. With Chekhovian obliqueness, *Two Trains Running* reveals the simple truths, hopes and dreams of this group, creating a microcosm of an era and a community on the brink of change. *Two Trains Running* earned its place as a Finalist for the 1992 Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

Jitney, 1970s

During the 1970s, regular taxi cabs would not drive to the Hill District in Pittsburgh, so residents turned to unofficial and unlicensed taxi cabs called jitneys. The play follows one such company, owned by Jim Becker, on the day his son, Booster, is released from jail early after serving twenty years for the murder of his college girlfriend. When news comes in that the building the station is located in is to be condemned, the estranged father and son must learn to fight back and try to build bridges. This tender, tragic look into a turbulent time premiered in 1982, making it the first play of the Cycle that Wilson penned.

King Hedley II, 1980s

Peddling stolen refrigerators in the feeble hope of making enough money to open a video store, King Hedley, a man whose self-worth is built on self-delusion, is scraping in the dirt of an urban backyard, trying to plant seeds where nothing will grow. Getting, spending, killing and dying in a world where getting is hard and killing is commonplace are threads woven into this 1980s installment in the author's renowned American Century Cycle. Drawing on characters established in *Seven Guitars*, *King Hedley II* shows the shadows of the past reaching into the present as King seeks retribution for a lie perpetrated by his mother regarding the identity of his father. Premiering in 1999, the play was a Finalist for the 2001 Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

Radio Golf, 1990s

A fast-paced, dynamic, and wonderfully funny work about the world today and the dreams we have for the future. Set in Pittsburgh in the late 1990s, it's the story of a successful entrepreneur who aspires to become the city's first Black mayor. But when the past begins to catch up with him, secrets are revealed that could be his undoing. The most contemporary of all August Wilson's work, *Radio Golf* is the final play in his unprecedented ten-play cycle. Completed shortly after his death in 2005, this bittersweet drama of assimilation and alienation traces the forces of change on a neighborhood and its people caught between history and the 21st century.

August Wilson
new voices

PROGRAM

WELCOME

REMARKS FROM THE AUGUST WILSON LEGACY,
LLC.

MONOLOGUE PERFORMANCES

REMARKS FROM THE AUGUST WILSON ARCHIVES

WHY AUGUST?

REMARKS FROM SAKINA ANSARI WILSON

AWARD PRESENTATION



Please be sure to visit the Designing August
Gallery in the lobby.

MONOLOGUE ADJUDICATORS



**MARK CLAYTON
SOUTHERS**

Mark Clayton Southers is an accomplished playwright, photographer, scenic designer, and stage director based in Pittsburgh's historic Hill District. As the founder and producing artistic director of Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company, he has produced numerous acclaimed plays, including August Wilson's complete ten-play Pittsburgh Century Cycle. With directing credits spanning various theaters and productions, he has received multiple awards for his exceptional contributions to the theatrical arts.



**JAVON
JOHNSON**

Javon Johnson, hailing from Anderson, S.C., is a seasoned actor, writer, director, and producer known for his versatile contributions to film, television, and theater. With a prolific career spanning over two decades, he has garnered numerous awards and honors for his compelling work, including a range of prestigious nominations and wins. Currently, Johnson is involved in various exciting projects, including a musical adaptation and original works for screen, stage, and television.



**SAKINA ANSARI
WILSON**

Sakina Ansari-Wilson is a dedicated advocate of holistic medicine with over 20 years of experience in natural healing modalities. Alongside her work as a natural health educator and wellness lifestyle consultant, she holds a B.S. in Psychology from Morgan State University. With a rich background in the arts, Sakina has collaborated on projects with her father, August Wilson, including the Hallmark Hall of Fame production of "The Piano Lesson." She continues to share her insights on her father's legacy as a guest lecturer and community volunteer, amplifying his impact worldwide.

DESIGN ADJUDICATORS



SUSAN TSU

Susan Tsu is an award-winning costume designer whose work has graced the stages of major LORT theatres in the United States as well as international venues the world over. She headed the costume programs at Boston University and the University of Texas at Austin before joining the School of Drama at Carnegie Mellon, her alma mater, in 2003. Designing costumes for theatre, opera, and television, she is cited in Who's Who in Fine Arts Higher Education and Who's Who of American Women, and has been a MacArthur Foundation "Genius Grant" recommender.



COURTNEY O'NEILL

Courtney O'Neill is an acclaimed Scenic Designer with a strong presence in Regional Theatre, particularly in her artistic hub of Chicago. Her impressive portfolio includes designs for productions like "English" at Goodman Theatre and "Little Shop of Horrors" at Kansas City Repertory. A recipient of prestigious awards such as the Michael Maggio Emerging Designer Award and the Joseph Jefferson Award, Courtney is also deeply involved in August Wilson educational outreach programs. Learn more about her work at www.courtneyoneill.com.

August Wilson
new VOICES

ATLANTA



Layla Mack

Martha Ellen Stilwell School of the Arts

Terrance Tate

Heritage High School

I'm Ready Foundation
501(C)(3)

ABOUT THE ARTS EDVOCATE

Driven by our mission to inspire lifelong learning, foster creativity, and empower communities, the Arts Advocate Consulting Firm strives to be a leading force in advancing arts education worldwide. Through our collaborative efforts and standards-driven programming, we aim to provide every individual with access to high-quality arts integration programs. The hope is that our offerings will ignite imagination, cultivate critical thinking skills, and promote social and emotional well-being.

ABOUT I'M READY FOUNDATION

I'm Ready Foundation is an arts and cultural organization that is devoted to both personal and community awareness through arts enrichment. Its mission is to entertain, educate, and enlighten through storytelling and music. It brings to its work a social conscience and historical awareness, through its thought-provoking, entertaining, and inspirational content.

August Wilson
new voices

BOSTON



Alana (Lala) Cooks-Beeks
Boston Arts Academy

Demitrius Pepincepeda
Melvin H. King South End Academy

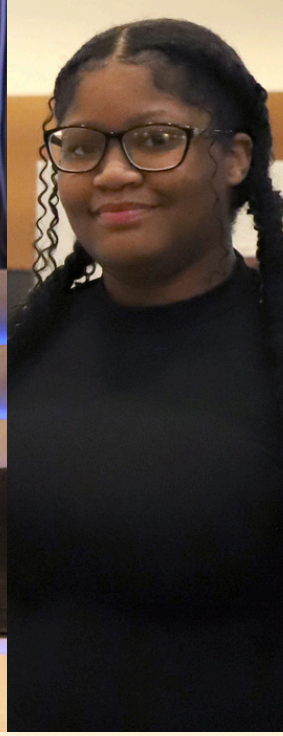
THE HUNTINGTON

ABOUT THE HUNTINGTON

The Huntington is Boston's leading professional theatre and one of the region's premier cultural assets. Since its founding in 1982, The Huntington has received over 150 Elliot Norton and Independent Reviewers of New England Awards, as well as the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre. In the past 36 years, The Huntington has played to an audience of 3.5 million, presented over 200 plays (18 of which went on to Broadway or Off-Broadway), and served over 500,000 students, community members, and other cultural organizations.

August Wilson
new voices

CHICAGO



John McBeth III

Thornton Fractional
North

Janeci Correa

Chicago High School
for the Arts
(Design)

Keniyah Stephenson

Thornton Fractional
North

J'Maria Stamps

DRW College Prep
(Design)



ABOUT THE LEAGUE OF CHICAGO THEATRES

Theatre is essential to the life of a great city and to its citizens. The League of Chicago Theatres is an alliance of theatres, which leverages its collective strength to support, promote and advocate for Chicago's theatre industry. Through our work, we ensure that theatre continues to thrive in our city.

August Wilson
new VOICES

LOS ANGELES



Amari Howell

View Park Prep High School



Yenay Cuevas

Ramón C. Cortines School of Visual
and Performing Arts

SUPPORT BLACK THEATRE

See • Create • Invest

ABOUT SUPPORT BLACK THEATRE

Support Black Theatre is a service organization dedicated to capacity-building Black theatres, developing Black artists, and cultivating Black audiences in Los Angeles. Our commitment is to our people, our stories, and our autonomy. We are creating a support system that prioritizes artist health, organizational resilience, and radical unity amongst theatre-makers and the community we serve.

August Wilson
new voices

PITTSBURGH



Layla Sewell-Wilson

Pittsburgh Creative and
Performing Arts 6-12

Adia Boccella

The Ellis School
(Design)

Sydney Pellegrino

The Barack Obama Academy
of International Studies

**BILL
NUNN** THEATRE
OUTREACH
PROJECT

ABOUT THE BILL NUNN THEATRE OUTREACH PROJECT

Established in 2008 by the renowned late film and stage actor Bill Nunn, the Bill Nunn Theatre Outreach Project (BNTOP) aims to provide a platform for underserved public school students in the Pittsburgh area to explore theatre arts and collaborate with experienced professionals in the industry. Annually, the BNTOP hosts August Wilson New Voices and NEXT NARRATIVE national competitions.



OUR PRODUCERS

The August Wilson New Voices National Program
is produced by:

**August Wilson
Legacy LLC**

**THEATRE
GOODMAN**



OUR SPONSOR

The August Wilson New Voices National Program
is proudly supported by:

THE HEINZ ENDOWMENTS

HOWARD HEINZ ENDOWMENT • VIRA I. HEINZ ENDOWMENT

OUR PARTNERS

Special thanks to our Pittsburgh partners



OUR TEAM

Derrick Sanders
National Director

Charlique C. Rolle
Associate National Director

Bianca Mitchell
National Coordinatro

Chazz Rolle
National Team

Courtney O'Neill
National Trainer

Charles Andrew Gardner
National Trainer

August Wilson
new voices

**WANT TO BRING THE
AUGUST WILSON NEW
VOICES NATIONAL PROGRAM
TO YOUR CITY, OR JOIN A
PARTICIPATING CITY?**

SCAN



VISIT

GOODMANTHEATRE.ORG/AUGUSTWILSON

EMAIL

HELLO@GILDEDROADPRODUCTIONS.COM