

AUGUST WILSON'S
GEM OF THE OCEAN
 DIRECTED BY RUBEN SANTIAGO-HUDSON

Resource Guide

Introduction

For more than twenty years, August Wilson has been chronicling the African-American experience in the 20th century through his acclaimed cycle of plays, one for each decade. Almost all set in Pittsburgh's historic Hill District (Wilson's birthplace), they touch on everything from the birth of the blues to urban redevelopment. These plays have been widely produced and have won numerous awards, including two Pulitzer Prizes.

Gem of the Ocean was the ninth of the ten plays to be written, though it is first in line chronologically, set in 1904. With the memory of slavery still fresh and the promise of freedom and reconstruction beginning to fade, economic distress and social upheaval are everywhere in the Hill District. While Pittsburgh offers a hopeful chance for Southern refugees, it's not hospitable to everyone. Troubled souls turn to the wise Aunt Ester, who holds 285 years of experience in her memories – the entire history of Africans in America. Both concrete and mystical, this story about the new challenges of freedom leads us on a journey of exploration and redemption.

Gem of the Ocean was produced on Broadway in 2004, where it was critically acclaimed and nominated for multiple Tony awards. Unfortunately, the economics of Broadway forced it to close far too soon. McCarter is thrilled to be able to present a new production of the play with Ruben Santiago-Hudson (who acted in the Broadway production) making his directorial debut.

This guide includes information on historical issues surrounding the play, information on Wilson and his work, and interviews with the artists who helped to create this production. We hope it will make your theatergoing experience a richer and more enjoyable one.

Plot Summary

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Citizen Barlow, a young African-American, arrives in Pittsburgh in 1904, part of the wave of freed slaves and their children migrating from South to North following the Civil War. While working at the local mill, Citizen steals a can of nails. Another man is accused and chooses suicide rather than face arrest and a life in which he would be unjustly identified as a thief. Citizen hopes to unburden

himself of the guilt he feels for the accused man's death and seeks out Aunt Ester, whose healing powers are legendary. At 285 years of age, Aunt Ester lives in a house with Eli, her friend and protector, and Black Mary, a young woman who takes in laundry to earn a living and to whom Aunt Ester hopes to pass on her powers. Eli is intent on building a strong wall around the house so that they will be protected, physically and metaphorically, from the tyranny of Black Mary's brother, Caesar, the local law enforcement official. To the people of the Hill District, Caesar represents a black man gone white, someone ready to oppress and exploit his people for personal gain.

Although the steel mills in Pittsburgh are booming, pay is low, and rent is high. Solly, Aunt Ester's good friend and sometime suitor, sees clearly the enormous economic and social barriers that face the newly arrived African-American workers. We learn from Solly that when the unjustly accused man chose death rather than arrest for stealing the nails, he became a martyr in the eyes of the workers; they have not gone to work for three days and are now rioting. Caesar has arrested more than 200 people and even shot a man.

Meanwhile, Citizen confesses to Aunt Ester that it was he who stole the bucket of nails and that he had been unable to confess to save the accused man's life. He asks if she can wash his soul and start him on the road to redemption. Aunt Ester consents and instructs Citizen to collect some items he will need for his journey to the City of Bones, a city built underwater in the Atlantic Ocean with bones of the slaves who lost their lives on the treacherous voyage to America. Shortly afterward, Eli reports that someone has set fire to the mill.

Later, Solly, Eli and Black Mary help Aunt Ester guide Citizen to the City of Bones. Citizen is plunged into the hold of the historic ship, *Gem of the Ocean*, and experiences the slaves' dreadful journey across the Atlantic. Citizen learns that after losing most of the water overboard mid-journey, the Captain took the remaining water and left the slaves and crew to die. Many survived by horrific but necessary means, and 45 days later arrived in Charleston harbor. Finally, Citizen nears the City gate, where he recognizes the gatekeeper: it is the man who was accused of stealing the nails. Citizen acknowledges his guilt to the man, and is welcomed into the City of Bones. Citizen returns from his journey, and Aunt Ester, Black Mary, Eli and Solly greet him with a song of celebration. When Caesar interrupts and accuses Solly of starting the mill fire, Solly smacks Caesar with his walking stick and flees.

Aunt Ester sends Citizen to find the peddler Rutherford Selig, to help smuggle Solly away. Citizen offers to go with them, and Selig, Citizen and Solly slip away as Caesar arrives to arrest Aunt Ester for aiding and abetting a fugitive. However, the judge releases her, and she returns home. Citizen returns with news that Caesar has shot Solly. Citizen and Selig bring Solly in, and Aunt Ester and Black Mary sing a hymn over Solly, as Eli delivers a eulogy. Just then, Caesar comes back, this time to arrest Citizen for his participation in Solly's failed escape. Before he can discover anything, however, Black Mary renounces him for his lack of compassion for others. Without speaking, Caesar leaves. Citizen takes Solly's walking stick and coat and leaves to continue Solly's work, bringing his people to freedom.

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Character Profiles

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Aunt Ester

is both the physical and the mystical link between present and past. Her home is a sanctuary where troubled people come to be cleansed of guilt and sorrow. Aunt Ester's birth, 285 years before the play takes place (1904), coincided with the arrival of the first shipment of African slaves in the English colonies. She is both the keeper and the transmitter of African-American memory. *"People say you crazy to remember. But I ain't afraid to remember. I try to remember out loud. I keep my memories alive. I feed them. I got to feed them otherwise they'd eat me up. I got memories go way back. I'm carrying them for a lot of folk."*

Black Mary

lives in Aunt Ester's house, earning her living by taking in wash, cleaning people's clothes much the way Aunt Ester cleanses their souls. She is Aunt Ester's chosen successor, although she doesn't always relish the role. *"It's been three years now. I can't do nothing to satisfy you. I may as well lay down somewhere and forget about it...Your way ain't always the best way. I got my own way and that's the way I'm doing it. If I stay around here I'm doing my own way."*

Citizen

is a young African-American recently arrived in Pittsburgh from Alabama, seeking understanding and redemption from Aunt Ester for his role in the death of another man. *"I don't know, Miss Tyler. I feel like I got a hole inside me. People say you can help me."*

Eli

owns a rambling house in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, which he shares with Aunt Ester and Black Mary. He accompanied Aunt Ester north many years before, and now serves as her friend and protector. *"I want a wall. See if I can keep Caesar on the other side. The way he going he gonna have everybody in jail."*

Selig

is a white traveling merchant who keeps track of and reports on people's whereabouts and activities along his route. He is friends with Aunt Ester. *"My mama say trouble is man made. Say if man didn't make trouble it wouldn't have to follow you."* Self-named for biblical kings David and Solomon, the 67-year-old **Solly** is Aunt Ester's sometime suitor. He is an ex-slave and Underground Railroad worker who shares Aunt Ester's sense of history and the need to keep its memory alive. *"That's sixty-two notches. That's sixty-two people I carried to Freedom. I was looking to make it sixty-three when Abraham Lincoln come along and changed all that."*

Caesar

is Black Mary's brother, a police officer who rules his district with an iron hand, intent on using his power to bring order to the confused masses who in his estimation can't think for themselves. *"People think the law is supposed to serve them. But anybody can see you serve it. There ain't nothing above the law."*

Glossary

Aiding and abetting: Assisting someone in committing a crime.

Billy club: A short, wooden club carried by a policeman.

Bondage: The condition of being enslaved.

Clodhoppers: Big, heavy shoes. This word implies that the wearer is unsophisticated or a country bumpkin.

Consumption: Tuberculosis, a serious infectious disease of the lungs.

County farm: Slang, referring to prison, especially one in which the prisoners perform outdoor labor.

General Grant: Ulysses S. Grant (1822-1885). A Civil War general made commander-in-chief of the Union army in 1864. He served two terms as the 18th President of the United States.

Ham hock: The lower portion of a pig's hind leg, usually smoked or cured and often used to flavor soups or beans.

Hoecake: A thin cake made of cornmeal.

"I Belong to the Band": A traditional gospel song, which appeared in church songbooks as early as the 1830s.

Moonshine: Illegally distilled, homemade whiskey.

Opelika, Alabama: A small town in eastern Alabama, about 5 miles from Auburn. After the Civil War, the area was economically devastated.

Samson: In the Old Testament Book of Judges, he was known for his extraordinary strength. God had instructed him never to cut his hair, and when Delilah betrayed him and cut off his hair, he lost his strength.

Smote: Past tense of the verb "to smite," meaning to strike or to inflict a heavy blow.

Twelve Gates, Twelve Gatekeepers: Revelations 21:9-27 describes a new Jerusalem, a city made of gold and precious stones with twelve gates of pearl. Each gate is attended by an angel gatekeeper, each of whom is named for one of the twelve tribes of Israel.

W.C. Bryant: (1794-1878) An American poet, critic and editor who also studied law. He advocated many reforms, including abolition. He was the editor and part-owner of the *New York Evening Post* from 1829-1878.

Etymology of character names in *Gem of the Ocean*

After abolition, most slaves who had previously borne their masters' surnames, chose new names for themselves and for their children. They often took these names from the Bible, from their own family history, or from famous people they admired. Some names, such as "Liberty," (or Citizen) were chosen to celebrate their new freedom.

David, Solomon:

David and Solomon were the second and third kings of Israel. David killed the Philistine giant Goliath and wrote many Psalms. Solomon was famous for his great wisdom.

Junebug:

A type of beetle very common across the United States and especially in the Northeast. The beetles may swarm in early summer and are very destructive to vegetation.

Ester:

In the Old Testament, Esther was a Jewish woman who became Queen of Persia and saved her people from genocide. This Hebrew name is from a Persian word meaning "star."

Eli:

In the Old Testament, Eli was a Jewish priest and the teacher of Samuel, who became a great prophet.

Caesar:

Julius Caesar was a great general and became dictator of Rome. He was assassinated in the Senate, and his adopted son, Augustus Caesar, later became the first Emperor of Rome. All Roman emperors were then called "Caesar." Particularly in the bible, Caesar represents worldly power, government and wealth. (Matthew 22:21 - Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.)

Historical Terms:

Middle Passage:

This was the middle leg of the slave trade route. The first leg brought goods such as iron, gunpowder, and brandy from Europe to Africa. The Middle Passage took Africans to the Americas, where they were exchanged for tobacco, sugar and other goods. The final leg of the voyage carried those products back to Europe. The ships carrying slaves were very overcrowded, with 300-400 people packed into a small space with little ventilation. Historians believe that between ten and twenty percent of Africans transported died during the voyage, from disease or suicide, and far more were severely weakened or maimed.

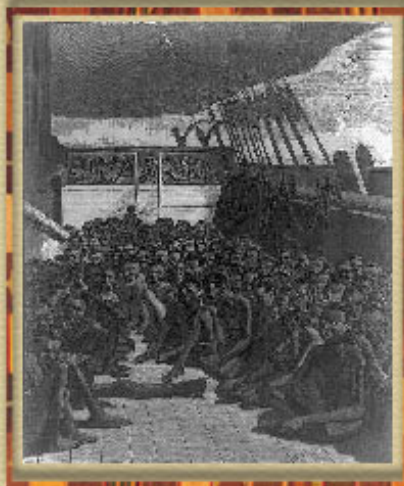
Underground Railroad:

Organized in 1838, the Underground Railroad was a system for helping fugitive slaves escape to free states or to Canada. Local groups of white abolitionists, often Quakers, and free blacks loosely organized systems for aiding the fleeing slaves. Harriet Tubman was the most famous Underground Railroad conductor.

Reconstruction:

After the Civil War, from 1865-1877, the Confederate states were administered by the federal government before being readmitted to the Union officially. Each Confederate state's government was restructured, and as they ratified the 14th and 15th amendments to the United States Constitution, which protected the rights of black citizens and gave black men the right to vote, the states were readmitted. This was a period of political and economic reconstruction, as the devastated South began to shift from an agrarian to an industrial economy. Reconstruction officially ended when federal troops were withdrawn from the South, but the period left intense bitterness and division between black and white, North and South.

Important Dates in African-American History



The Africans of the slave bark *Wildfire*, 1860. Courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division LC-USZ62-41678.

1619: A Dutch ship carrying a cargo of Africans pirated from a Spanish ship arrives in Virginia and trades slaves for food.

1641: Massachusetts is the first colony to legally recognize slavery.

1750: Georgia, the last free colony, legalizes slavery. It is now legal in all 13 colonies.

1776: Thomas Jefferson writes the Declaration of Independence. In his first draft, it includes language condemning the King for promoting slavery in the New World, but this language is later removed. At the time, Jefferson owns over 200 slaves.

1780: Pennsylvania becomes the first state to abolish slavery.

1808: End of international slave trade. Founding of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, first African-American church in Pittsburgh.

1831: Nat Turner, a slave in Virginia, leads a slave rebellion. Only 75 slaves join him, and they are quickly defeated by the state militia, and over 100 additional slaves are killed in retaliation. Rev. Lewis Woodson establishes a school for blacks in Pittsburgh.

1857: Dred Scott sues for his freedom in Missouri. A lower court initially finds in his favor, but the decision is reversed and Scott appeals all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. In the majority decision there the Chief Justice writes that because Scott is black, he is not a citizen, and cannot sue.

1860: Abraham Lincoln is elected president.

1861: Southern states, beginning with South Carolina, secede from the Union.

1863: Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing the slaves.

1865: End of the Civil War. 13th Amendment, outlawing slavery, ratified.

Ku Klux Klan organized in Tennessee as a social organization of Confederate veterans. It quickly becomes a terrorist organization.

1866: Civil Rights Act passed to counteract "black codes," which limit the rights of African-Americans in the South. This act ensures former slaves the right to enter contracts, sue, witness in court and own property.

1868: 14th Amendment ratified, prohibiting the states from denying the rights of citizenship to anyone born or naturalized in the United States. It is designed to protect the recently freed slaves.

1870: 15th Amendment ratified. It states that “the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” Senator Hiram R. Revels of Mississippi and Representative Joseph H. Rainey of South Carolina are elected to Congress. They are the first African-American members. Congress also passes the Enforcement Acts, a series of criminal codes that protect blacks’ rights to vote, hold office, serve on juries, and receive equal protection of laws. Aimed at punishing Ku Klux Klan activities, the Acts allow the federal government to intervene when the states do not protect these rights.



Portrait Group of African-American Bricklayers Union, Jacksonville, Florida, ca. 1899. Courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division LC-USZ62-35754.

1875: Civil Rights Act of 1875 passed, guaranteeing the rights of all Americans to public accommodations like inns, restaurants and theaters, regardless of race. It is never enforced. It is the last Congressional effort to protect the civil rights of African-Americans for over fifty years.

1883: Civil Rights Act of 1875 ruled unconstitutional.

1895: Booker T. Washington delivers his Atlanta Compromise speech, in which he suggests that blacks forego civil and political rights in favor of economic rights. It supports a “separate but equal” mentality, and vocational education for blacks. It is very well received by the white press, less so by many other African-American leaders, including W.E.B. DuBois. W.E.B. DuBois becomes the first African-American to receive a PhD from Harvard.

1896: Plessy vs Ferguson legalizes the “separate but equal” doctrine.

1901: Booker T. Washington dines at the White House.

1903: W.E.B. DuBois publishes *The Souls of Black Folk*.

1904: Supreme Court decides that exclusion of African-Americans from juries is a violation of the 14th amendment.

The Hill District



The Africans of the slave bark *Wildfire*, 1860. Courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division LC-USZ62-41678.

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The Hill District is a sprawling 650 acres that faces Pittsburgh and was the first district in the city to develop outside the walls of the original Fort Pitt. It was originally farmland owned by William Penn's grandson. When Thomas Mellon bought the land in 1840, he divided it into individual plots and began the first planned residential neighborhood in Pittsburgh. The first occupants of the hill were mostly wealthy professors. The ethnic makeup of the community began to change in 1870 when African-Americans and European immigrants began to settle down in the Hill

District, attracted by job opportunities in the steel industry. By the 1930s, the residents of the Hill District were mostly African-American, Jewish and Italian-American.

From the 1930s to the 1950s, the Hill District became one of the most energetic and powerful African-American neighborhoods in the country. Sometimes called "the Crossroads of the World" or "Fun City," the Hill District flourished as a center for business, art and music, and drew bustling crowds both day and night. The intersection of Wylie and Fullerton Avenues, overflowing with clubs, businesses and churches, was the center of the community.

Mill Workers and Their Living Conditions

The Hill District

The Hill District in the early 1900s was a growing African-American community whose residents were working to carve out a life for themselves by whatever means possible. For most of them that meant working in the steel mills and living in the tenements.

Mill Workers

From 1875-1945, Pittsburgh was a manufacturing metropolis, and steel was its primary product. To produce the cheap, high-volume steel, mill owners needed a steady supply of unskilled laborers. Labor unions were formed to protect the workers. After an 1875 strike crippled the iron industry in Pittsburgh, southern African-Americans were recruited to work in western Pennsylvania's mills. Many African-Americans were more than ready to leave the South for a better life up north – no more farm work, better pay and a chance to be treated as real U.S. citizens. Since African-American workers didn't trust unions and weren't accepted by the white union organizers, they provided steel mill owners a potential weapon to end strikes.

Living Conditions

Workers found themselves working 12-hour days for very little pay and living in cramped tenements owned by the mills. Renting housing to their workers was an effective way of keeping employees, since a worker would be less likely to quit his job if it also meant he would lose his home in the deal. Work conditions were often dangerous, and there was no compensation in the case of death or injury.

Drama Praxis



This resource guide enables teachers and leaders to explore drama as a mode of learning. Through this collaborative art form, teachers and students can act out, reflect upon and transform the story of *Gem of the Ocean*, allowing them to gain a better appreciation of the material through their own individual experience of it. In addition, by engaging with one another, students utilize skills that are vital to communication and interpretive skills in the school setting.

Drama-in-Education seeks to synthesize the activities of creative drama, arts-based curricula and theater convention into experiences aimed at developing imagination, awareness of self and others, aesthetic taste and life skills. Often these goals are achieved through the examination of a particular theme or topic, which contributes to critical thinking about the world in which we live. By providing structures and contexts, which both excite the interest of participants and call for creative problem-solving, Drama-in-Education promotes deeper thinking about a wide variety of issues.

This guide has been designed for teachers to utilize drama methods in an exploration of the themes and situations presented in the play. We encourage you to adapt these lessons and activities to your individual teaching situations, and thereby to discover the importance and power of drama in the classroom.

The following questions and activities are designed to help students anticipate the performance and then to build on their impressions and interpretations after attending the theater. While most of the exercises provide specific instructions, please feel free to adapt these activities to accommodate your own teaching strategies and curricular needs.

Core-Curriculum Standards

According to the NJ Department of Education, "experience with and knowledge of the arts is a vital part of a complete education." Our production of *Gem of the Ocean* and the activities outlined in this guide are designed to enrich your students' education by addressing the following specific Core Curriculum Standards for Visual and Performing Arts:

- 1.1 All students will acquire knowledge and skills that increase aesthetic awareness in dance, music, theater and visual arts.
- 1.2 All students will refine perceptual, intellectual, physical and technical skills through creating dance, music, theater and/or visual arts.
- 1.4 All students will demonstrate knowledge of the process of critique.
- 1.5 All students will identify the various historical, social and cultural influences and traditions which have generated artistic accomplishments throughout the ages and which continue to shape contemporary arts.
- 1.6 All students will develop design skills for planning the form and function of space, structures, objects, sounds and events.

Viewing *Gem of the Ocean* and then participating in the pre and post-show discussions suggested in this resource guide will also address the following Core Curriculum Standards in Language Arts Literacy:

- 3.3 All students will speak in clear, concise, organized language that varies in content and form for different audiences and purposes.
- 3.4 All students will listen actively to information from a variety of sources in a variety of situations.
- 3.5 All students will access, view, evaluate and respond to print, non-print and electronic texts and resources.

In addition, the production of *Gem of the Ocean* as well as resource guide activities will help to fulfill the following Social Studies Core Curriculum Standards:

- 6.1 All students will utilize historical thinking, problem solving and research skills to maximize their understanding of civics, history, geography and economics.
- 6.2 All students will know, understand and appreciate the values and principles of American democracy and the rights, responsibilities and roles of a citizen in the nation and the world.
- 6.4 All students will demonstrate knowledge of United States and New Jersey history in order to understand life and events in the past and how they relate to the present and future.
- 6.6 All students will apply knowledge of spatial relationships and other geographic skills to understand human behavior in relation to the physical and cultural environment.

Pre-show Discussion Questions



1. Brainstorm a list of ideas and emotions that are associated with the word "freedom." How would you define freedom? What affects a person's freedom? How can it be taken away? Are there people in our society who are not free? What is more important than freedom? Can anyone else have control over someone's freedom? Choose an idea from the list created and use it to create a poem inspired by that thought. Share with your classmates. Discuss common themes that arise, as well as differing opinions.

2. Research the life of African-Americans in the first decade of the 20th century. What was life like in the years after emancipation? Were things different in the northern states than in the southern states? How easy was it to make a living? What were the communities that were established like? Were people's freedoms impinged upon in any way? What steps were taken to improve the quality of life?

3. Research the other works in August Wilson's ten-play cycle chronicling the African-American journey through the 20th century. What play did he write for each decade? What is each one about? Are there recurring themes or characters in any of the plays? Where is each one set? Why do you think he chose to take on a project such as this? Why do you think his body of work is considered so important to the American theater? What is his background?

4. Cultural mythology plays a large part in the world of *Gem of the Ocean*. What stories can you think of from your own childhood that played a part in your beliefs growing up? Are there stories you were told on a regular basis that you came to believe? What are some famous American myths you can think of? How do these influence your life?

5. Imagine you are going to be acting in this production. The play takes place in 1904, and it is important that the characters appear to live in this time period. What would you do to prepare yourself to live in this world? What kinds of things could you research? Where might you go for your information? Pick a character from the play and research what he or she might look like. Create the costume, hair and makeup for your character.

Post-show Discussion Questions



1. What surprised you most when you saw *Gem of the Ocean* at McCarter? How did this production compare to your expectations?

2. In a Huntington Theatre newsletter article about their production of *Gem of the Ocean*, August Wilson said of Aunt Ester that "obviously, no one can live to be as old as Aunt Ester...As for the decision to put her on stage, I knew from the beginning that I didn't want just this mystical presence hanging over everything. I wanted her to be very human. Then we find out that this position of being Aunt Ester – this body of wisdom and memory that is her – has been passed down from one Aunt Ester to the other over a period of time. Though technically, I think, she is 285 years old in *Gem*, the actual person is 72 or 73." Who do you think Aunt Ester really is? What does she represent? What is the wisdom that is being passed down? Where did it come from in the first place? Why do you think August Wilson chose to represent the character this way?

3. What is the City of Bones? Do you think it is a real place, or does it exist only in the mind? Aunt Ester says that it is necessary for Citizen to believe the two pennies are special because "he need to think that before he can come face to face with himself." What does it mean to come face to face with yourself? Why is this important? What really happened to Citizen while he was there? Do you think he was washed of his sin? Why or why not? When a man is guilty of another man's death, who do you think can grant forgiveness? What does it mean to be forgiven? Is it more important to forgive yourself or to have others forgive you?

4. The characters in the play are all living in freedom, but are they truly free? How do you define freedom? Is it as much a state of mind as anything? Consider the characters one by one, and discuss how free you think each is. How does each person deal with his or her freedom? How does each character's freedom change throughout the play?

5. Does your past define you? Do you feel that your past is just as important as what you do now? How much of what a person has been through determines who he is at the moment? Do certain things weigh more heavily than others? Does Citizen's guilt over Garret Brown's death make him a bad person? Does Solly's work with the Underground Railroad earn him dispensation from any wrongs he may perpetrate now? Did it surprise you to learn that he burned down the mill? Why do you think he did it? What about Black Mary? How do all of her past relationships with men affect the way she deals with them now?

6. August Wilson's main body of work consists of a ten-play cycle that focuses on the life of African-Americans in each decade of the 20th century. *Gem* is set in the first decade. How is the time period established through the language? Costumes? Scenery? Character choices? Would the play have worked if it had been set in a different time period?

Enhance the Performance: In-Class Activities



1. Where do we go from here?: At the end of the play, Citizen and Caesar both leave without saying a word. What do you think their lives will be like after this experience? How have they changed over the course of the play? Choose one of the two characters and write a monologue detailing his days after Solly's death. Be prepared to recite this monologue to your classmates.

2. Free at Last: Imagine you are experiencing freedom for the first time in your life. What would you do with your newfound freedom? How far would you go to protect it? Would you compromise another's rights to defend it? What matters more – individual rights or the rights of a society? Which do you think ultimately has a greater impact? Imagine yourself years down the line. How has this experience shaped you? What has become of your life? How

much does your past influence the choices you make today and in what way?
3. Wanted: Mythical Figure: Aunt Ester has some pretty big shoes to fill, but she cannot fill them forever. Part of her responsibility is to find her successor. She's chosen Black Mary, but we don't get to hear her reasons why. What makes Black Mary the right woman? What do you think the qualifications for such a position are? Write a job description for the job of Aunt Ester. What are the responsibilities? Qualities possessed by the ideal candidate? Job perks? Possibility for advancement? What kind of previous experience is necessary? What can someone expect a typical day on the job to be like? Where would you advertise for this job?

4. Halt! Who goes there?: The gatekeeper in Citizen's City of Bones is Garret Brown. Citizen cannot move on in his life until he can get past him. Use this idea to discuss characters in other stories. Choose someone who is struggling with a difficult issue, and imagine he had to work it out in the mythical City of Bones. Why is the City of Bones a good place for him to confront this issue? Who would accompany him? What would be his good luck charm? What person would be awaiting him at the gates? Act out this confrontation using students to play the various roles. The goal is for the character to get past the guard by earning his forgiveness.

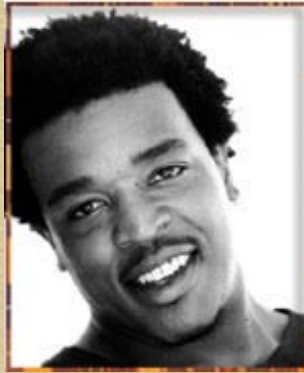
5. Law and Order: Citizen and Caesar are both responsible for a man's death. Is either of them more guilty than the other? Are one man's actions more justified? Create a mock trial where each man has to defend his actions. Choose students to play each of the characters, as well as witnesses, lawyers, a judge and jury. Other students can be reporters covering the trial and providing updates on the day's activities.

Who's Who in the Production

ACTING COMPANY



John Amos
Solly Two Kings



Russell Hornsby
Citizen Barlow



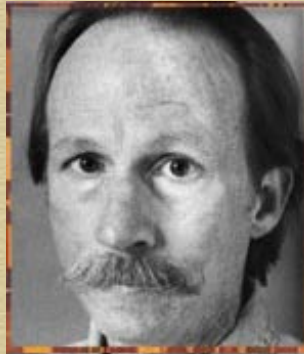
Chuck Patterson
Eli



Phylicia Rashad
Aunt Ester



Roslyn Ruff
Black Mary



Raynor Scheine
Rutherford Selig



Keith Randolph Smith
Caesar

ARTISTIC STAFF

August Wilson	<i>Playwright</i>
Ruben Santiago-Hudso	<i>Director</i>
Michael Carnahan	<i>Set Design</i>
Karen Perry	<i>Costume Design</i>
Jane Cox	<i>Lighting Design</i>
Garth Hemphill	<i>Sound Design</i>
Bills Sims, Jr	<i>Composer</i>
Broderick Santiago	<i>Additional Music</i>
Mara Isaacs	<i>Producing Director</i>

David York	<i>Director of Production</i>
Laura Stanczyk	<i>Casting Director</i>
Carrie Hughes	<i>Dramaturg</i>
J. Steven White	<i>Fight Choreographer</i>
Cheryl Mintz	<i>Production Stage Manager</i>
Kasey Ostopchuck	<i>Assistant Stage Manager</i>

Biographies

Ruben Santiago-Hudson (Director)

Received the Tony, Obie, AUDELCO, Helen Hayes, Clarence Derwent, Drama League, and New Professional Theater's Shining Star Award for his work as an actor. Ruben's autobiographical stageplay *Lackawanna Blues*, which debuted at The Joseph Papp Public Theater, received Obie, Helen Hayes, and HBO Arts Festival Awards. He recently received the Humanitas Award for Outstanding Television Screenplay for *Lackawanna Blues*, which aired on HBO this season, also garnering seven Emmy nominations including Outstanding Made-for-Television Movie. Ruben is delighted to make his directorial debut at the McCarter Theatre, which he considers an artistic home. Ruben sends praise and blessings to August Wilson for always illuminating the beauty, strength, and dignity of our people.

August Wilson (Playwright)

Author of *Jitney*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *Fences*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, *The Piano Lesson*, *Two Trains Running*, *Seven Guitars*, *King Hedley II*, *Gem of the Ocean*, and *Radio Golf*. These works explore the heritage and experience of African-Americans, decade-by-decade, over the course of the twentieth century. His plays have been produced at regional theaters across the country and all over the world, as well as on Broadway. Awards include Pulitzer for *Fences* (1987); and *The Piano Lesson* (1990); Tony Award for *Fences*; Britain's Olivier Award for *Jitney*; seven NY Drama Critics Circle Awards; and an Emmy nomination for *The Piano Lesson* screenplay. Mr. Wilson has received Rockefeller and Guggenheim Fellowships, Whiting Writers Award, 2003 Heinz Award, was awarded a National Humanities Medal by the President of the United States, numerous honorary degrees, and the only high school diploma ever issued by the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. He is an alumnus of New Dramatists, a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and a 1995 American Academy of Arts and Letters inductee. Mr. Wilson is from Pittsburgh's Hill District and currently makes his home in Seattle. He is the father of two daughters, Sakina Ansari and Azula Carmen Wilson and is married to costume designer Constanza Romero.

Michael Carnahan (Set Design)

Regional and Off-Broadway: Howie the Rookie (Irish Arts), Pygmalion (Cocteau Rep), Intrigue and Love (Cocteau Rep), Brando (Audax), The Widow's Blind Date (Blind Fate), The Miser, Candide, True West, and Macbeth. Four seasons at the Williamstown Theatre Festival where credits include: Tough Titty (premiere), Create Fate (premiere), Eric Bogosian's Red Angel (premiere), A Distant Country Called Youth, The Chekhov Cycle, Cabaret & Main, and Ruben Santiago-Hudson's Lackawanna Blues, which will also tour the country in 2006.

Jane Cox (Lighting Design)

McCarter Theatre: Loot. Recent theatre in New York includes: Dame Edna - Back with a Vengeance on Broadway and designs for Brooklyn Academy of Music, Playwrights Horizons, Vineyard Theatre, Signature Theatre, NYSF/Public Theatre, Classic Stage Company, and Primary Stages. Regional/international theatre includes: Guthrie Theatre, CenterStage, Arena Stage, Long Wharf Theatre, Alliance Theatre, CTC, National Theatre in London, and Project Theatre in Dublin. Jane is currently a recipient of a MAP/Rockefeller award for The Hearing Booths and was a recipient of an NEA/TCG grant 2001-2003.

Garth Hemphill (Sound Design)

Garth Hemphill was the Resident Designer for American Conservatory Theater for the past eight years and is now freelancing full-time. He has designed over 150 productions, including 15 World and American premieres, and many more West Coast premieres for some of today's greatest playwrights, including Tom Stoppard, Richard Nelson, Richard Greenberg, and Christopher Durang. He has earned numerous awards for his work on musicals and straight dramatic works from the classics to new work. Favorite productions include: The Three Sisters, The Constant Wife, The Dazzle, American Buffalo, Lackawanna Blues, Indian Ink, Buried Child, For the Pleasure of Seeing Her Again, The Beard of Avon, Enrico IV, Glengarry Glen Ross, Frank Loesser's Hans Christian Andersen, Edward II, The House of Mirth, The Invention of Love, The Threepenny Opera, Insurrection: Holding History, Mary Stuart, and A Streetcar Named Desire.

Karen Perry (Costume Design)

Karen is one of entertainment's foremost costume designers. Some of her career highlights include Spike Lee's Do the Right Thing, John Sayles' The Brother from Another Planet, Just Looking directed by Jason Alexander, Bring in -Da Noise, Bring in -Da Funk on Broadway, as well as Saturday Night Live, the UPN sitcom Abby, and the acclaimed CBS original movies One Day in Montgomery: The Rosa Parks Story for which she received a Costume Designers Guild award nomination. In addition, Karen Perry has worked as a personal wardrobe stylist to several premier artists including Gregory Hines, collaborating with Hines on numerous commercials, marketing campaigns, and theatrical projects such as The Tic Code, CBS' The Gregory Hines Show, and Showtime's original film, Bojangles. She is the recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award in Costume Design for American & Black American Theatre, Film & Television, presented at the National Black Theatre Festival.

Broderick Santiago (Additional Music)

Broderick Santiago is one of this generation's most talented and versatile entertainers. At the tender age of 10, Santiago fell in love with percussion at a local community center in his hometown of Lackawanna, NY. It was in this environment that the passion for sharing his talent manifested itself in the form of educating others. An accomplished and seasoned entertainer, Santiago has shared the stage with a host of renowned musicians including Jonathan Butler and Jimmy Delgado. Recently Santiago composed a selection for the Emmy nominated HBO film *Lackawanna Blues*. Santiago is a founding member of Rio Negro - a dynamic Latin Jazz band based in Atlanta, Georgia. When he's not teaching, he can be found playing with his band at various high-profile functions around the world.

Bill Sims, Jr (Composer)

An internationally respected "Master of the Blues" was last seen at McCarter in Polk County and Lackawanna Blues for which he also composed the original music (2001 OBIE Award for music). Other stage credits: *Moms and Her Ladies* (Producer's Club), *Deep Down* (INTAR), *Trick the Devil* (Freedom Theater, Philadelphia), and *Crowns* (Intiman, Seattle). Mr. Sims was the subject of the documentary *An American Love Story* (PBS) for which he composed many of the songs for the soundtrack. Other film credits: *Miss Ruby's House* for which he composed the music for the soundtrack, *New York Stories* for DKNY, and the recently completed film *Lackawanna Blues* for HBO. His voice can be heard in many TV and radio commercials (Mercedes Benz, Reebok, Coca-Cola and as "The Old Bluelman" Mr. Johnson on the newly launched Sirius satellite radio). His critically acclaimed 1999 CD release *Bill Sims* (Warner Bros.) demonstrates his knowledge of the many facets of the Blues.

John Amos (Actor) as *Solly Two Kings*

(*Solly Two Kings*) appeared in Albany's Capitol Repertory Theatre co-production of August Wilson's Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Fences*. His other stage credits include *The Boys Next Door* (Berkshire Theatre Festival), *The Life and Death of a Buffalo Soldier* at England's Bristol Old Vic, and his acclaimed one-man show, *Halley's Comet*. He is best known for his work as a television and film actor, most notably his portrayal of the adult Kunta Kinte in *ROOTS*, for which he garnered an Emmy nomination. His motion picture credits include *Lock Up*, *Coming To America*, and *Die Hard II*, among many others. While his television credits are too numerous to mention, Mr. Amos considers his role as Weatherman Gordy on *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, James Evans in the classic sitcom *Good Times*, and his recurring role as Admiral Percy Fitzwallace, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on *The West Wing* as being among his favorites.

Russell Hornsby (Actor) as *Citizen Barlow*

(*Citizen Barlow*) Off-Broadway credits include *Intimate Apparel* opposite Viola Davis and August Wilson's *Jitney*. His other stage credits include productions of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Joe Louis Blues*, *Six Degrees of Separation*, and *Here Come the Drums*. On television he was a series regular on ESPN's *Playmakers*, and has been seen on *Haunted*, *Gideon's Crossing*, *Grey's Anatomy*, *Wonderland* as well as *Keep the Faith*, a television movie for Showtime. His film credits include the upcoming *Get Rich or Die Tryin'* opposite 50 Cent (directed by Jim Sheridan), *Edmond* with William H. Macy, *After the Sunset*, *Meet the Parents*, and *Big Fat Liar*. Russell is a graduate of Boston University School for the Arts.

Chuck Patterson (Actor) as *Eli*

(Eli) Broadway: *Two Trains Running*, *Death of a Salesman* (with George C. Scott), *Gospel at Colonus*, *All God's Chillun' Got Wings*, *Home*, and *Proposals*. Off-Broadway and Regional: *Jitney*, *The Odyssey*, *Everybody's Ruby*, *Blade to the Heat*, *Driving Miss Daisy*, *The African Company Presents Richard III*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, *Miss Evers'Boys*, *A Soldier's Play*, *Fences*, *Othello*, *A Lesson from Aloes*, and *Twelve Angry Men*. Film and Television: *The Amazing Jett Jackson*, *The Five Heartbeats*, *The Royale*, *Vengeance: The Story Of Tony Cimo*, *Law & Order*, *New York Undercover*, and *Spenser For Hire*. As an associate artist in directing at The Cleveland Playhouse, Chuck directed mainstage productions of *Two Trains Running*, *Blues for an Alabama Sky*, *The Amen Corner*, *Crumbs from The Table of Joy*, and *The Piano Lesson*.

Keith Randolph Smith (Actor) as *Caesar*

(Caesar) has been seen on Broadway in *King Hedley II*, *The Piano Lesson*, and *Salome*. Off-Broadway credits include *Fabulation* (Playwrights Horizons), *Jitney* (Second Stage), *Holiday Heart* (Manhattan Theatre Club), *Before It Hits Home* (NYSF) and *Auturo Ui* (Classic Stage Company). Regionally, he has acted in *The Dreams of Sarah Breedlove* (Alabama Shakespeare), *In Walks Ed* (Long Wharf), *Les Trois Dumas* (Indiana Rep), *Tartuffe* (Hartford Stage), and *The Heliotrope Bouquet* (La Jolla Playhouse), among others. TV and film credits include *Law & Order*, *Cosby*, *I'll Fly Away*, *Girl Six*, *Dead Dogs Lie*, and *Fallout* plus the upcoming *The Warrior Class*. Keith studied at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in NY.

Phylicia Rashad (Actor) as *Aunt Ester*

(Aunt Ester) Broadway: *Gem of the Ocean* (Tony Award nomination), *A Raisin in the Sun* (Tony and Drama Desk Awards), *Jelly's Last Jam*, *Into the Woods*, *Dreamgirls*, *The Wiz*, and *Ain't Supposed to Die a Natural Death*. Off-Broadway: *Blue*, *The Story*, *Everybody's Ruby*, and *The Vagina Monologues*. Regional: *Blues for an Alabama Sky*, *Medea* (Alliance), and *Gem of the Ocean* (Mark Taper Forum). Awards: NAACP Image Awards for Best Actress in a Comedy Series for *The Cosby Show* and *Cosby*, NY Women in Film and Television Muse Award, two People's Choice Awards, and two Emmy Award nominations. TV movies: *Free of Eden*, *David's Mother*, *Polly*, *Polly: Comin' Home*, and *The Old Settler*. Film: *Once Upon a Time When We Were Colored* (director Tim Reid), *Loving Jezebel*, and *The Visit*. Ms. Rashad is a spokesperson for PRASAD, an international philanthropic organization; is on the board of Recruiting New Teachers; and a member of Broadway Inspirational Voices. She received her BFA from the College of Fine Arts, Howard University.

Roslyn Ruff (Actor) as *Black Mary*

(Black Mary) has appeared off-Broadway in *The Cherry Orchard* and *Macbeth* at The Classical Theatre of Harlem. The latter also played Germany at the 2004 Bonn Biennale Festival and Shakespeare Festival of Neuss. With The Acting Company, she toured the country in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (AUDELCO nomination) and *Taming of the Shrew*. Regional theater credits include: *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* (Alliance Theatre Company), *King Lear* (Yale Rep), *The Oedipus Plays* (Shakespeare Theatre DC/2003 Athens Festival in Greece), *A Panto: Sleeping Beauty*, *Once in a Lifetime* and *In the Blood* - 2003 Barrymore Award for Lead Actress (People's Light & Theatre Company), and *Three Farces and a Funeral* (American Repertory Theatre). Television appearances: *The Jury*, *The Sopranos*, and *All My Children*.

Raynor Scheine (Actor) as *Rutherford Selig*

(Rutherford Selig) An Actor's Equity member since 1973 is a veteran of over 100 plays, 50 feature films, and countless TV appearances and is thrilled to be playing Rutherford Selig again, a role he originated in Joe Turner's Come and Gone in 1986 (six cities and Broadway - 320 performances) and now again in Gem of the Ocean (three cities and Broadway - 220 performances). He has four feature films to be released in the coming year - Transamerica with Felicity Huffman this fall followed by The New World with Colin Farrell, Stealing Martin Lane with Dylan Baker, and The Sentinel with Michael Douglas and Eva Lagoria. His best NYC Marathon time is 3:49.

About August Wilson - by Sarah Powers



August Wilson. Photo by David Cooper, 2004.
Courtesy of Yale Repertory Theatre.

August Wilson was born Frederick August Kittel in 1945 in Pittsburgh's Hill District, where he lived for 33 years. Wilson was the fourth of six children of a white German father and African-American mother. He began his writing career as a poet in the 1960s and 70s, while also involved in the civil rights movement and working odd jobs. In 1965 he bought his first typewriter with \$20 his sister paid him to write a college term paper. Hoping to use theater to raise African-American cultural consciousness, he co-founded Black Horizons, a community theater in Pittsburgh, with Rob Penny in 1968. After producing and directing African-American plays at Black Horizons, Wilson began writing his own plays in the early 70s. In 1976, the Kuntu Theater staged his play *The Homecoming*, and in 1981 his first

professionally produced play, a satirical Western called *Black Bart and the Sacred Hills*, was staged at the Penumbra Theater.

Wilson's breakthrough came in 1982, when the National Playwrights Conference at the O'Neill Theater Center accepted *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* for a workshop. The play opened on Broadway in 1984, and in 1985 it earned Wilson his first New York Drama Critics Circle Award. Even as *Ma Rainey* was enjoying its success, Wilson was planning further installments in what would become a ten-play cycle exploring the African-American experience in the 20th century, with a play for each decade.

Fences, Wilson's second play to move to Broadway, won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama and also set a new Broadway record for the highest-grossing non-musical, bringing in \$11 million in its first year, 1987. Seven more plays have since followed, joining *Ma Rainey*, *Fences* and *Jitney*, which was written in 1979 but later revised. *Radio Golf*, which completes the cycle as the 1990s play, premiered at Yale Repertory Theatre in April 2005, and finished a run at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles on September 18. It will be moving to Broadway in the 2006-07 season.

With the completion of his extraordinarily ambitious ten-play cycle, Wilson has secured his place as one of the most important American playwrights of his generation. Broadway's Virginia Theater will be renamed for him on October 17, marking the first time a Broadway theater has been named for an African-American. In August of 2005, he announced that he has been diagnosed with terminal liver cancer. "It's not like poker, you can't throw your hand in," Wilson told the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. "I've lived a blessed life. I'm ready." August Wilson died October 2, 2005.

August Wilson's Awards and Fellowships

- **Pulitzer Prize for Drama:**
Fences and *The Piano Lesson*
- **Tony Awards for Best Play:**
Fences
- **New York Drama Critics Circle Awards for Best Play:**
Ma Rainey's Black Bottom, *Fences*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, *The Piano Lesson*, *Two Trains Running*, *Seven Guitars* and *Jitney*
- **Drama Desk Awards:**
Joe Turner's Come and Gone and *The Piano Lesson*
- **American Theatre Critics Outstanding Play Award:**
The Piano Lesson and *Two Trains Running*
- **Heinz Award (2003)**
- **1999 National Humanities Medal, awarded by the President of the United States**

Fellowships include the Bush, McKnight, Rockefeller and Guggenheim

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August Wilson's Cycle: African-Americans in the 20th Century

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Phylicia Rashad and John Earl Jelks in GEM OF THE OCEAN. Photo by Carol Rosegg, 2005. Courtesy of Yale Repertory Theatre.

1900s: *Gem of the Ocean*

(written in 2003, set in 1904)

Citizen Barlow arrives at Aunt Ester's house seeking her help and a safe place from Caesar, the local constable. Aunt Ester, now 285 years old, takes him on a journey of self-discovery to the City of Bones a mythical city in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. Here he makes startling discoveries, and his sense of duty leads to his redemption.

1910s: *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*

(written in 1986, set in 1911)

Herald Loomis is searching for the wife he lost years ago after he joined a chain gang. His search brings him to Seth and Bertha's boarding house, where "conjure man" Bynum shows him that is really searching for himself.

1920s: *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*

(written in 1981, set in 1927)

Music talents Ma Rainey and Levee learn that white society is not interested in their talents because of their skin color.



Charles S. Dutton and Aleta Mitchell in MA RAINEY'S BLACK BOTTOM at Yale Repertory Theatre. Photo by William B. Carter, 1984. Courtesy of Yale Repertory Theatre.

1930s: *The Piano Lesson*

(written in 1987, set in the 1930s)

A ghost helps a brother and sister decide what to do with an inherited family piano.

1940s: *Seven Guitars*

(written in 1994, set in the late 1940s)

Blues musician Floyd Barton gives his recording career a second try after his release from prison, until his life is cut short by a confused man named Hedley.

1950s: *Fences*

(written in 1985, set in 1957)

Garbage collector Troy Maxon has difficulties with his son pursuing his dream of a football career after Troy's own athletic hopes were erased by racism. Troy's wife Rose takes responsibility for his baby from an affair with another woman but puts an end to the intimate parts of their relationship.

1960s: *Two Trains Running*

(written in 1992, set in 1969)

Set in a Pittsburgh restaurant, characters discuss modes of action African-Americans should take towards civil injustices in the late 1960s. Sterling has just been released from prison and insists on righting an injustice committed years earlier: a man not rewarded with what was promised him after completing a job.



Mary Alice, James Earl Jones and Courtney Vance in *FENCES*. Photo by William B. Carter, 1985. Courtesy of Yale Repertory Theatre.

1970s: *Jitney*

(written in 1979, rewritten in 1996, set in 1971)

Set at a jitney stand in the Hill District, unlicensed taxi driver Becker is reunited with his son Booster, after Booster's release from jail. Their time together is cut short when Becker is killed; yet Booster continues to learn from him about pride and himself.



John Earl Jelks as Sterling Johnson and Richard Brooks as Harmond Wilks in the world premiere of August Wilson's *RADIO GOLF* at Yale Repertory Theatre. Photo by Carol Rosegg, 2005. Courtesy of Yale Repertory Theatre.

1980s: *King Hedley I*

(written in 1999, set in 1985)

Recently out of jail, King struggles to make a living selling refrigerators with his friend, Mister. To get the money to open their own video business, they decide to burglarize a jewelry store. King's mother, Ruby, is reintroduced from *Seven Guitars* and is now living with him and his wife, Tonya. They worry about King's illegal activities, and Tonya fears bringing a child into the world when King may end up in jail again or dead.

1990s: *Radio Golf*

(written in 2005, set in 1997)

The Hill District is in decline, and federal money may be available for redevelopment—but Aunt Ester's house in Wylie will have to be torn down. Harmond faces a moral struggle as he pursues financial success but risks losing his heritage and ethnic identity.

Theater Artist Spotlight: Director Ruben Santiago-Hudson

When audience members attend a play, they can often easily recognize the result of many of the artists' labors: the scenery, the costumes, the sound effects, the words spoken by the actor, even the make-up and hair. But the chief artistic collaborator's work, whose contributions are usually the most prolific, is sometimes difficult to pinpoint. The director usually doesn't paint the scenery, or point the lights, or record any of the sound cues, but he or she does oversee everything that goes into these important elements. As much as the playwright is the author of the words, the director is often referred to as the author of the action, and yet the director is so much more. The director is the conductor of the theatrical orchestration, ultimately responsible for every artistic element of a theatrical production.

Because so much is incumbent upon their vision, directors are often the first artists to be hired for a production. Well in advance of rehearsals, the director meets with designers, the playwright, the producer(s), and theater staff to explain his or her vision for the production and approve the execution of much of the physical production. The director must also oversee the casting of actors and other artists who will perform in the play. During rehearsals, it is the director who serves as a guide for the actors, as he or she orchestrates the movements and emotional interaction of the production. At the end of the rehearsal process, the director leads his or her collaborators in combining all of the elements into one cohesive piece.

Ruben Santiago-Hudson, a renowned actor and playwright with a host of Broadway, television, regional theater and film credits, makes his directorial debut with McCarter's production of *Gem of the Ocean*. The McCarter resource guide staff discussed with him the process of directing and its challenges.

What made you want to direct *Gem of the Ocean*?

I primarily wanted to direct *Gem of the Ocean* because it's August Wilson's play. The language and poetry of Wilson's plays speak to me and to a people I'm very familiar with, a people I want to celebrate. He illuminates the very essence of the man who seems to be common in his everyday life, but comes home to be a king. To celebrate my people in this way has always meant a lot to me. The play also deals with the Middle Passage, which is something that I think has been overlooked. People talk about other crises and they kind of throw the Middle Passage along in there with them. So in the play we deal with the Middle Passage, and we look at the grotesque nature of what happened, and we bring it to life.

***Gem of the Ocean* is a play with huge scope. How do you begin to prepare to work on something like this?**

First of all, you've got to get in the context of the work. It's 1904. It's African-American people in Pittsburgh. I fed myself as much information about 1904 as I possibly could. I read all of August's plays more than once. I refer to them again and again; they are the bible, and they are the text. They are where we go to get whatever information we need, and so I continue, each day on the train, to read and rehash and reread and redo. I'll put *Piano Lesson* down and grab *Gem of the Ocean*. I'll put *Two Trains Running* down and grab *Gem of the Ocean*. I'll put *Fences* down and grab *Gem of the Ocean*. You have a body of work there to respond to, to refer to and use to prepare yourself. You'd be remiss if you did not look back and grab it. So I prepared

myself by informing myself with all the information I possibly could about that time, and I came into it open and ready to accept what an artist brings to it.

Can you talk about your process as a director?

In my process the words are first. Everything that is there is there to support the text, to illuminate the text, to highlight the text, to keep the words up front... My process is to make sure the words are clear and that the words are what lead us through this journey. The most significant part of this whole theatrical experience will be the words of August Wilson.

Having worked with so many directors as an actor, can you speak about whom you've tried or will try to emulate and why?

The three major forces that I feel shadowing me in my style are Lloyd Richards, George C. Wolfe and Douglass Turner Ward. I have little ways of all three and I try to put them together.

Lloyd asks a lot of questions. He never forces you to do anything. He takes you and leads you down a path, where you discover things.

George C. Wolfe is a problem solver. He is a visionary. George loves the essence and beauty of African-American people, and he is always fortifying the beauty, the dignity, the strength in African-American people. So he always pushing to make us almost bigger than life in how magnificent we are.

Douglass Turner Ward is very grassroots, very earthy. He doesn't have a whole lot of pretty ways to do things. Sometimes he cuts straight to the chase and sometimes there can be a lot of harsh language, but in a good way, just to describe certain things. Though he is an extremely intelligent man, he might talk to you like a guy at the bar sitting there having a drink with you, so you know he's never above you, but always right in the mix. So I use all three styles, sometimes in one stage direction.

What are the challenges in going from acting in *Gem of the Ocean* to directing it?

To come new, to come fresh, to erase a lot of the memories. Obviously, if things work, you don't throw them away just for the sake of throwing them away. If things work, you try to hold on to them. But you also give the freedom to the actors and to me as a director to discover, to reinvent moments, to find out, is there any more beauty in that moment? Is there any more depth to that moment? Is there any more substance in a moment? And yes, there is, always. Theater is always evolving; human beings are always evolving, and just in the same way the world turns, life turns, and as the world turns things are different every minute— every second things change in this world. So that's what I'm trying to do with this play: I'm trying to let it evolve and change and turn for the power of the journey of this production.

What kind of advice would you give to someone who is interested in directing for the first time?

The information I would give to a new director is to always try and make your actors feel safe and allow them to bring something to you. I would say be informed, do a lot of research. Be strict and stern enough to know what you want, but be loose and collaborative enough to allow

everyone to bring something and to effect change....Often I've looked at people around me and said, what do you think? I hear four or five opinions and a lot of information, and then I weigh it and find out what works best for what I'm trying to do.... I realize someone has to make a final decision and that person is me, so I make an informed final decision weighing all the elements that have come my way.

Ruben Santiago-Hudson's Bio

Ruben Santiago-Hudson (*Director*) Received the Tony, Obie, AUDELCO, Helen Hayes, Clarence Derwent, Drama League and New Professional Theater's Shining Star Award for his work as an actor. Ruben's autobiographical stageplay *Lackawanna Blues*, which debuted at The Joseph Papp Public Theater, and subsequently produced at McCarter, received Obie, Helen Hayes and HBO Arts Festival Awards. He recently received the Humanitas Award for Outstanding Television Screenplay for *Lackawanna Blues*, which aired on HBO this season, also garnering seven Emmy nominations including Outstanding Made-for-Television Movie. Ruben is delighted to make his directorial debut at the McCarter Theatre, which he considers an artistic home. Ruben sends praise and blessings to August Wilson for always illuminating the beauty, strength and dignity of our people.

Additional Resources

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 - *Jitney*. Overlook TP, 2003.
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 - <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/segregation2.html>
 - <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/home.html>
 - <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/reconstruction/index.html>
- The Huntington Theatre's study guide for *Gem of the Ocean*:
 - www.huntingtontheatre.org/season/gem/gem_dramaturgy.pdf
- For more information about August Wilson:
 - www.dartmouth.edu/~awilson/bio.html
- Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
 - www.post-gazette.com/pg/03001/497623.stm

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