

**Prior to Broadway!** DIRECTED BY **KENNY LEON** MARCH 18 – APRIL 8, 2007

# AUGUST WILSON'S **RADIO GOLF**

VENUE: Matthews Theatre



## Introduction

For more than twenty years, August Wilson has been chronicling the African-American experience in the twentieth century through his acclaimed cycle of plays, one for each decade. With all but one 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. Last season McCarter produced *Gem of the Ocean*, the chronological beginning of the cycle. This season we present *Radio Golf*, the final play of the cycle, completed just before Wilson's death in 2005.

Set in 1997, *Radio Golf* is about Harmond Wilks, a successful real estate developer and mayoral candidate. Wilks has a plan to revitalize the Hill District, where he grew up. But doing so requires having the neighborhood declared blighted, forever changing its character. It also requires tearing down 1839 Wylie Avenue, Aunt Ester's house from *Gem of the Ocean*, a place imbued with history, spirituality and the stories of the past. When a stranger appears claiming ownership of 1839 Wylie, Wilks is forced to confront his relationship with his past, his community and his values.

Rich with heart and humor, *Radio Golf* examines the definition of success, asking complex questions about urban development, class, community and what is gained and lost when neighborhoods change. In highlighting the relationship of the African-American upper middle

class to the rest of the black community, Wilson comments by extension on the responsibility of all Americans for the future of this land.

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## Character Profiles

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### HARMOND WILKS

A successful real estate developer and mayoral aspirant on the verge of declaring his candidacy. Harmond grew up a privileged and responsible son of the Hill District and intends to bring the neighborhood back from urban blight through gentrification, while making a fortune in the process. He cares about the city of Pittsburgh, the neighborhood and its people, but is caught between what is politically expedient and what is morally and ethically just.

*"What they don't agree with is how to fix it. Some people say you got to tear it down to fix it. Some people say you got to build it up to fix it. Some people say they don't know how to fix it. Some people say they don't want to be bothered with fixing it. You mix them all in a pot and stir it up and you got America. That's what makes this country great." (I. ii.)*

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### MAME WILKS

A professional public relations representative and Harmond's wife of over twenty years. Mame is focused on Harmond's success, as well as her own, and confident that she has the proper plan to achieve both. Firm, independent and ambitious, her love of and belief in her husband are tested by his struggle to stay focused and on message.

*"The first time I saw Mame it was raining. I thought she was gonna melt. The rain look like it hurt her. Like the two wasn't supposed to go together. You couldn't mix them up. That's what made her stand out. She had a frown on her face and the rain was beating on her. She hurt from the injustice of it. That's what made me like her. She could be strong and soft at the same time. [...] She called the rain some names I ain't going to repeat." (I. iii.)*

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### ROOSEVELT HICKS

A bank vice president and avid golfer, as well as Harmond's business partner and college roommate. Roosevelt is preoccupied with his financial status and getting green time. He values the end result of a transaction more than the practical or spiritual virtues of a job well done. Had he any time for self-reflection, he might describe himself favorably as a consummate materialist and conspicuous consumer.

*"...This is business. This is the way it's done in America. I get to walk away with a piece of an asset worth eight million dollars. I don't care if somebody else makes some money cause of a tax break. I get mine and they get theirs. I pull this off and next time I'm on the other side of the deal, sitting at the head of the table. Right now I'm sitting here. I'd rather that than to be sitting on the other side of the door. Harmond, I have to take this. This is not going to come along again. The window of opportunity is already starting to close. If I don't do this Bernie will get somebody else." (I. iii.)*

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#### STERLING JOHNSON

Neighborhood handyman and self-employed contractor. Sterling and Harmond attended the same parochial school as boys, but the economically disadvantaged Sterling chose in youthful recklessness to rob a bank rather than build one. Now an older, reformed pragmatist, Sterling finds pride in his work and in his independence.

*"...you don't understand. I'm my own union. I got my own everything. Except my own bank. But I got my own truck. I got my own tools. I got my own rules and I got my own union. I don't play no games. I have to have my own. That's the only way I got anything. I've been going through the backdoor all my life. See people get confused about me. They did that ever since we was in school. But I know how to row the boat. I been on the water a long time. I know what it takes to plug the holes. I ain't dumb. Even though some people think I am. That give me an advantage..." (I. iv.)*

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#### ELDER JOSEPH "Old Joe" BARLOW

A wandering citizen, recently returned to the Hill District, where he was born in 1918. Although ostensibly as harmless as he is homespun, his temperament belies a life checkered by run-ins with the law and a series of wives. He sees and calls things plainly, requires little and seeks only harmony.\_

*"...I ain't never asked nobody for nothing. But the people give me all the time. They don't want to see me want for nothing. They been giving me for years. I used to go around singing songs and the people like that. They take care of me. If I had my guitar I'd sing one for*

you. *But my guitar's in the pawn shop. It's been in the pawnshop since January 22, 1970.*" (I. ii.)

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## About August Wilson - By Sarah Powers

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Photo by David Cooper

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 an 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 in 1987 and also set a new Broadway record for the highest-grossing non-musical, bringing in \$11 million in its first year. 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. It will move to Broadway after its McCarter run.

With the completion of his extraordinarily ambitious ten-play cycle, Wilson secured his place as one of the most important American

playwrights of his generation. New York's Signature Theatre devoted its 2007 season to his work and in October 2005 Broadway's Virginia Theater was renamed for him, marking the first time a Broadway theater has been named for an African American. In August of 2005, Wilson announced that he had 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.

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

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Phylicia Rashad and John Amos in *Gem of the Ocean* at the McCarter Theatre.

1900: *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 city in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. Here he makes startling discoveries, and his sense of duty leads to his redemption.

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1910: *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*

(written in 1986, set in 1911)

Herald Loomis is searching for the wife that 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 he really is searching for himself.

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1920: *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*

(written in 1981, set in 1927)

Music talents Ma Rainey and Levee face discrimination because of their skin color. Set in Chicago, *Ma Rainey*



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

is the only play in the cycle not to take place in Pittsburgh.

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1930: *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.

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1940: *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.

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

1950: *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 part of their relationship.

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1960: *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 Johnson has just been released from prison and insists on righting an injustice committed years earlier.

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1970: *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.

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1980: *King Hedley II*

(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.

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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.

1990: *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 on Wylie Avenue will have to be torn down. Mayoral candidate Harmond Wilks faces a moral struggle as he pursues financial success but risks losing his heritage and ethnic identity. In addition to Aunt Ester, another familiar character in this play is Sterling Johnson, now in working construction and arguing for the preservation of the house on Wylie Ave.

# Wilson's 4 Bs - By Hilly Hicks

"My influences have been what I call the 4 Bs—the primary one being the blues, then Borges, Baraka, and Bearden."

- August Wilson, *The Paris Review: The Art of Theater* no. 14, Winter 1999.



Romare Bearden, *Pittsburgh Memories* (1984)  
Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Ronald R. Davenport and Mr. and Mrs. Milton A. Washington

The Blues is a musical form that can be traced back to African rhythms, African-American slave songs, spirituals and dance tunes known as "jump-ups." Blues performers such as Bessie Smith and Gertrude "Ma" Rainey helped popularize this musical continuation of the oral tradition. The blues remain a strong influence in many other popular forms, including jazz, country, rock and soul music. For Wilson, each character's ideas and attitudes are rooted in the blues; the philosophies in the music teach the characters how to live their lives.

Romare Bearden (1911-1988) grew up at the height of New York City's Harlem Renaissance and was influenced by such family friends as Langston Hughes, W.E.B. DuBois and Duke Ellington. Although he was a successful painter and dedicated civil rights activist, Bearden is best known for his vibrant collages fusing depictions of Harlem life with images and impressions of the American South. This sense of a cultural narrative spanning generations and expressing the African-American experience is also a hallmark of Wilson's plays.

Amiri Baraka (1934- ) was born Everett LeRoi Jones in Newark, New Jersey, but changed his name in 1968 to reflect his African heritage. A passionate advocate of black culture, he achieved wide acclaim for his play *The Dutchman*, which presented a racially charged

confrontation between a beautiful but cruel white woman and a naïve black man in a New York City subway car. Wilson was drawn to Baraka's political poetry and plays and helped found a theater where he mounted several works by Baraka. Now a retired university professor, Baraka continues to write prolifically.

Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986) is one of the most prominent writers and intellectuals of the twentieth century. Although he became an influential Spanish language writer, Borges' first language was English. In his early life in Buenos Aires, Argentina, he nurtured a deep knowledge and love of American and European literature that would later influence his own work. His short stories, poems and translations

are considered world classics. Among other things, Borges' fiction is characterized by fantastical elements; his influence is felt in Wilson's stories with the presence of ghosts, trips to the past and other magical moments.

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## Wilson on Wilson

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From *The Ground on Which I Stand*, 1996

"We can make a difference. Artists, playwrights, actors—we can be the spearhead of a movement to reignite and reunite our people's positive energy for a political and social change that is reflective of our spiritual truths rather than economic fallacies. Our talents, our truth, our belief in ourselves in all our hands. What we make of it will emerge as a baptismal spray that names and defines. What we do now becomes history by which our grandchildren will judge us."

From *The New York Times*, April 2000

"Theater, as a powerful conveyer of human values, has often led us through the impossible landscape of American class, regional and racial conflicts, providing fresh insights and fragile but enduring bridges of fruitful dialogue. It has provided us with a mirror that forces us to face personal truths and enables us to discover within ourselves an indomitable spirit that recognizes, sometimes across wide social barriers, those common concerns that make possible genuine cultural fusion."

"The cycle of plays I have been writing since 1979 is my attempt to represent [black] culture in dramatic art. From the beginning, I decided not to write about historical events or the pathologies of the black community. The details of our struggle to survive and prosper, in what has been a difficult and sometimes bitter relationship with a system of laws and practices that deny us access to the tools necessary for productive and industrious life, are available to any serious student of history or sociology.

Instead, I wanted to present the unique particulars of black American culture as the transformation of impulse and sensibility into codes of conduct and response, into cultural rituals that defined and celebrated ourselves as men and women of high purpose. I wanted to place this culture on stage in all its richness and fullness and to demonstrate its ability to sustain us in all areas of human life and endeavor and through

profound moments of our history in which the larger society has thought less of us than we have thought of ourselves.”

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## The Hill District - By Kyle Frisina

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The first residents of the Hill District arrived in the 1840s, members of the Pittsburgh elite who sought relief from the increasingly industrial nature of the city’s center. In the years following the Civil War, as Pittsburgh expanded and the population of the city exploded, those residents were enabled by the invention of the trolley to move even farther away. They were soon replaced on the Hill by immigrant groups including Jews, Italians, Syrians, Greeks and Poles.

African Americans began migrating to Pittsburgh in the 1880s, motivated by the promise of jobs in the steel and railroad industries and by hope for relief from the segregation laws of the Reconstruction South. As blacks continued to flock to Pittsburgh and specifically to the Hill, they began to outnumber other ethnic groups, and by the 1930s, the Hill was a nationally recognized mecca of black culture and business. Like New York City’s Harlem, while the Hill was effectively a segregated, self-sustaining community by day, the neighborhood’s nightlife attracted people of all races. Music lovers thronged to jazz clubs like the Crawford Grill, where regular performers included Duke Ellington, Charlie Mingus, Miles Davis and Lena Horne.

After World War II, following patterns of urban renewal across the country, Pittsburgh initiated plans to rid the city of its largely industrial image and to create a gentrified cultural center for the middle and upper classes. Politicians hoped that a Civic Arena for sporting events and concerts and a Center for the Arts, both to be located where the Hill met Downtown Pittsburgh, would make the city truly competitive with urban centers like Chicago and New York.

These redevelopment projects would force the relocation of thousands of poor (and predominately African-American) residents from the Lower Hill. Politicians justified their proposals, however, by pointing to the neighborhood’s overcrowded conditions, insufficient infrastructure and declining property values and were granted \$15 million from the 1949 Federal Housing Act as well as state funds. By 1961, over 8000 residents had been displaced. Proponents of urban renewal promised to build new low-income housing, but the little they provided was not enough to stem the tide of relocation to the

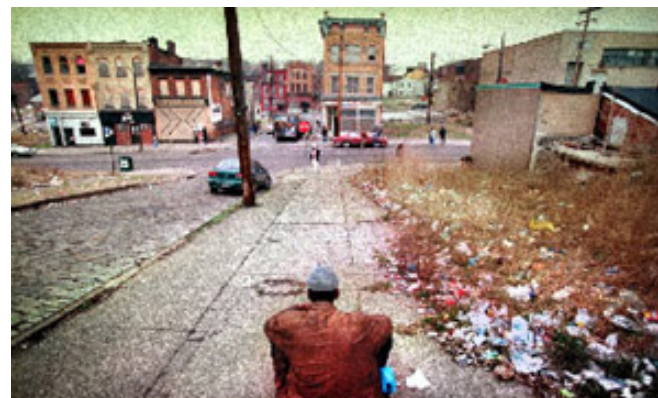


A view of the Civic Arena and its parking lot/Photo by Peter Diana, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* (4/16/99).

already overburdened Middle and Upper Hill. This deterred investors in the Center for the Arts, who feared association with the deteriorating neighborhood. Four days of rioting on the Hill after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., only exacerbated their concerns. Together with active lobbying from black residents and the Citizens Committee for Hill District Renewal, the riots spelled the end of the plans for the cultural center. What the Hill got instead was not much better: a massive parking lot for the Civic Arena. Over the next three decades the neighborhood continued to decline, its decay hastened by the heroin trade which took firm grip of major arteries like the once-proud Centre and Wylie Avenues.

Today redevelopers are making concerted efforts to work *with*

residents, in a model of “bottom-up” planning emphasizing “co-ownership in development.” Plans to reinvigorate the Hill’s commercial district focus on the streets overrun for years by pushers, but this time redevelopers are collaborating with community groups to link addicts and the homeless to service agencies. In addition the Hill District police are trying new neighborhood-specific tactics to fight crime. City leaders are also aware that one of the biggest problems facing the Hill is a lack of adequate employment.



Piles of trash line the Hill District sidewalks along Elmore Ave looking down into Centre Avenue/Photo by Peter Diana, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* (4/16/99).

Job opportunities created by new housing developments on the Hill, like Crawford Square, are part of the solution to this problem. Unlike earlier developments which excluded low-income residents, and different from public housing projects which segregated them, Crawford Square offers mixed income housing with homes for rent, rent subsidy and ownership designed to provide long-time residents of the Hill with diverse and vibrant community in a safe and comfortable environment. In 1999, as Crawford Square was expanding into its third phase of construction, it was estimated that the money spent on residential and commercial development over the course of the 1990s exceeded \$300 million. At that time, over 2000 new housing units had been built on the Hill.

Residents of the Hill say that one of the surest signs that the area is recovering from the blight of the late twentieth century is that people of all income levels are moving back.



Where the new Crawford development meets the old Hill District/Photo by Peter Diana, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* (4/16/99).

Conveniences like supermarkets, taken for granted in cities and suburbs across the country, are also returning to the Hill and bringing with them more jobs. An equally positive sign is that the famed Crawford Grill, razed in the construction of the Civic Arena, has reopened on Wylie Avenue. It is known to regulars as Crawford II.

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## Urban Planning Concept and Vocabulary

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As indicated by the preceding article, the concept of redevelopment is central to the legacy of the Hill District. It is similarly significant to the story of *Radio Golf*. A closer look at some of the characteristics of redevelopment will illuminate the complexities of the situation facing *Radio Golf*'s Harmond Wilks and Roosevelt Hicks.

Defined as the rebuilding and renewal of inner-city neighborhoods, **redevelopment** is in many ways a cyclical process in which portions of cities are renovated according to contemporary standards of healthy and productive urban life. Across the years, these standards have changed: principles of urban renewal of the 1950s-1970s, such as freeways slicing through large swaths of once-whole neighborhoods and the dense concentration of low-income housing projects, were viewed in their time as sensible solutions to urban problems. Today they are regarded as deeply flawed. Modern-day efforts toward renewal (often addressing the same problem-plagued areas of earlier decades) have been rephrased in terms of "community redevelopment," and frequently attempt to revitalize neighborhoods with special attention paid to existing social and economic networks.

As in *Radio Golf*, permission for redevelopment is often granted by a city's government once an area has been declared "**blighted**." Such declarations in Pittsburgh are governed by Pennsylvania's 1945 Urban Redevelopment Act, which associates these conditions with blight:

- Unsafe, unsanitary, inadequate or overcrowded living conditions
- Inadequate planning of the area or excessive coverage of buildings on the land
- Lack of proper light, air and open space

- Defective design or arrangement of buildings
- Faulty layout of streets or lots
- Economically or socially undesirable land uses.

In 1978, revisions to the law expanded the definition of blight to include properties that have become derelict, abandoned or unfit for human habitation, create fire and health hazards, are used for illegal or immoral purposes or depreciate adjoining property values (source: *The Pittsburgh-Tribune Review*, June 30, 2002).

Another component of the redevelopment of blighted areas is **gentrification**, which refers to the renovation of deteriorated property by middle- or upper-class people. Gentrification is usually initiated by businesses or individuals in the private sector, although in some cities, government policies also encourage gentrification by providing financial incentives to real estate developers attempting to revitalize downtown areas or replace decrepit low-income housing with new, mixed-income housing. Some of the most obvious signs of gentrification are signaled in *Radio Golf*: the arrival of national chains like Barnes & Noble and Starbucks. While gentrification has positive effects like improved municipal services, the rising property values (and rising rents) associated with gentrification often result in the displacement of lower-income residents who may have lived in the neighborhood for generations.

A final component of redevelopment addressed in *Radio Golf* is **eminent domain**, the power of the state to appropriate private property for its own use. Eminent domain is most commonly evoked when the acquisition of private land is required to complete large-scale projects like razing neighborhoods or building roads. The law requires that property owners be compensated, as Harmond attempts to compensate Old Joe for Aunt Ester's house, but does not stipulate that the owner consent to his or her removal.

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# Spotlight on Local Redevelopment

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Issues of urban renewal and redevelopment have been confronted by towns and cities across the country throughout the twentieth century. The history of the African American community in Princeton is fraught with these themes, beginning with the controversial creation of the commercial district north of Nassau and west of Witherspoon. Originally a neighborhood occupied almost entirely by African Americans, the area known today as Palmer Square was constructed in 1929, when town leaders felt that expanding the business district would help to mitigate the destabilizing effects of the Depression. Black residents were bought out and their homes replaced with commercial properties and residential situations for whites.

Two decades later, following World War II, the Housing Authority of the Borough of Princeton created the John F. Hageman housing development for veterans. Built in the heart of the black Witherspoon neighborhood, this development eventually housed a number of African American families but displaced dozens more. Many black families had difficulty finding other affordable housing in Princeton, as on the whole the homes built in those years were neither low-income nor rental. As a result, replicating the effects of the construction of the Civic Arena in Pittsburgh on a much smaller scale, African Americans were displaced from one area of their Princeton neighborhood only to strain the capacity of remaining housing.

In 1956, the Housing Authority responded to this strain by moving to declare the Witherspoon neighborhood blighted. Those in favor of an official declaration of blight argued that decrepit, unsafe buildings could finally be torn down and replaced. Those opposed to the declaration included many black residents who remembered the forced relocation of earlier redevelopment projects and feared they would be priced out of new housing built in the area. With the formation of the Witherspoon-John Street Citizens Committee, residents aggressively lobbied the Housing Authority to lower both the number of new housing units and the number of homes scheduled for demolition. In the spring of 1957, the Housing Authority conceded to many of their demands, moving ahead with a scaled-back program of renewal better suiting the community's needs.

# Stepping Up to the Tee

## - By Douglas Langworthy

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With roots that stretch back five centuries into the royal courts of England, golf has been open only to the upper echelons of society for most of its history. And though the sport has undergone a partial democratization over the past century, African Americans have found it particularly difficult to earn their place on the course. Today, a large number of the country's best courses are run by private clubs, many of which only recently offered membership to blacks, Jews and women.

In the early 1900s, most African-American golfers became interested in golfing while working as caddies, since some clubs allowed them to play one day a week when the courses were closed for routine maintenance. One such player was Dewey Brown, who became a well known club designer. It has been estimated that in 1939, out of 5,000 courses in the U.S., fewer than 20 were open to black players. While black golfers began to gain limited access to courses, there was another huge barrier to playing professionally: the membership of the P.G.A. (Professional Golfers Association) was expressly limited to the "European races."

One way for African Americans to circumvent the barriers of racism was to open their own golf courses and form their own golf associations. Shady West Golf Club in Westfield, NJ, was one such black-owned club. In 1922, its membership included prosperous African-American merchants, lawyers, doctors, Pullman porters, waiters and janitors. In 1928, black players formed the U.G.A. (United Golfers Association) which held its own separate tournaments. Black women wanted access to golf courses as well, and so women's clubs sprang up in Washington D.C. and Chicago.

Through the 1930s and 40s, African Americans continued to demand access to the courses, and even took them to court. In 1947, a black dentist, P.O. Sweeny, won his case against the Louisville, Kentucky Parks Department. But it continued to be a struggle, and there was little interaction between black-owned clubs and the white ones. It wasn't until 1959 that an African American, Bill Wright, won the U.S.G.A. championship.

Eventually, under great pressure, the P.G.A. removed the "Caucasian only" clause in 1961. Throughout the 1970s, Lee Elder tried and eventually succeeded in being allowed to play in the Masters Tournament. Over the years, a number of African-American players have risen

to prominence in the sport: Dewey Brown, Robert Hawkins, Pete Brown, Renee Powell, Robert "Pat" Ball, Howard Wheeler, Calvin Peete, Charles Sifford and, of course, Tiger Woods. However, despite some gains, African Americans are still denied membership in many private country clubs across the country, and golf continues to be viewed by many as an elitist sport.

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## Who's Who in the Production

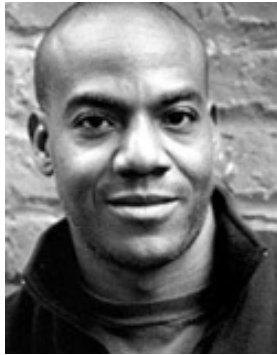
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### ACTING COMPANY



Anthony Chisholm

ELDER JOSEPH BARLOW



John Earl Jelks

STERLING JOHNSON



Harry Lennix

HARMOND WILKS



Tonya Pinkins

MAME WILKS



James A. Williams

ROOSEVELT HICKS

## ARTISTIC STAFF

Directed by	Kenny Leon
Set Design	David Gallo
Costume Design	Susan Hilferty
Lighting Design	Donald Holder
Original Music & Sound Design	Dan Moses Schreier
Producing Director	Mara Isaacs
Director of Production	David York
Production Stage Manager	Narda E. Alcorn
Stage Manager	Marion Friedman
Casting Director	Laura Stanczyk, CSA
Dramaturg	Todd Kreidler

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## BRIEF ENCOUNTER with Kenny Leon excerpted from Playbill.com

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*This interview first appeared on playbill.com on The article was first published January 9, 2007.*

Kenny Leon first came to the attention of the theatre community when he became the artistic director of Atlanta's Alliance Theatre. He was one of the few African-American artists to assume the top spot at a major nonprofit....Since leaving the Alliance in 2001, Leon has quickly established himself as arguably Broadway's leading African-American director, thanks to back-to-back productions of Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* and August Wilson's *Gem of the Ocean*....Currently, Leon is directing the Broadway-bound, Goodman Theatre staging of Wilson's final play, *Radio Golf*. Leon spoke to Playbill.com about Wilson's legacy...

**Playbill.com:** *Radio Golf* is the only August Wilson play that won't benefit from having its author present to make changes and rewrites during the production's zig-zagging journey across the U.S. Does that present an additional challenge for you?

Kenny Leon: No. Only in the personal sense, because I miss him. We worked together on the Broadway production of *Gem of the Ocean*. This is also different because, when he was writing it, he knew his fate. He only had one shot at really landing this play, so he had more rewrites at an earlier stage than with any other plays. The play was finished. He did the last rewrite the last week in September, which is almost a week before he passed. Really, it's just the cast and myself catching up to August.

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**Playbill.com:** What was your relationship with Wilson like?

KL: It was probably one of the greatest relationships I've ever been a part of. I still feel that he's not far away, that he's still here. Theatre is the most powerful art form, and the greatest relationship is between the writer and the director — so you have that relationship. Then you have something like a friend relationship; and you have a father-like relationship. I grew from the plays, but I grew more just sitting around listening to him talk about life and talking about successful African-American artists, and trying to learn from his example. So, [our relationship] served many purposes over many years. I've had the opportunity to work on nine of the ten [Wilson] plays. I've acted in four of them. He was the first person that made it clear to me that my mother's rituals and myths were worthy of being raised on a stage. From the first time I saw *Fences*, I heard a rhythm that was true to me, which was an American rhythm, but it was an African rhythm as well.

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**Playbill.com:** Lloyd Richards directed many of the first productions of Wilson's plays. After that Marion McClinton directed a few, and now you have assumed the role of originating director. Do you think it's important that an African-American direct Wilson's plays?

KL: I think that as human beings we all have the leap of imagination to direct work by almost any playwright, as long as we have the respect for that culture and we do our homework. I think with August's plays it's easier if you're from that specific culture because then you won't have to take those extra steps of trying to research the culture. I think it was easier for him to have an African American who knew what he was talking about and didn't have to spend the rehearsal trying to figure it out. He and I had a lot of different shortcuts to the work, because we knew the tempo and the pace of an African-American funeral; we knew the culture of doing one's hair in the living room; we knew the relationship of the black man to the community. If you can have less conversation about those things, you can work more expeditiously. But I think that there are non-African-Americans who are certainly capable of doing the work. Irene Lewis of Center Stage has done some of his work. I think one of the things that August was trying to say to America is that race is one of the biggest issues in the country and we haven't

dealt with that. He would always wonder why African-American directors weren't brought up to do, say, for instance, [Tennessee Williams]. I've studied Tennessee Williams all my life, but when Broadway produced five or six of Williams' plays in a two-year period, they did not call out to an African-American director to direct them. August was always hoping for a fair community.

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Playbill.com: *Radio Golf* takes place in the 1990s, a decade that—as opposed to the 1900s of *Gem of the Ocean*—you actually lived through. Does the play resonate more for you because of that?

KL: Oh yeah. Because he wrote these two plays at the end, they absolutely have a lot to do with each other. I think that all of the plays are cut from the same cloth. *Gem of the Ocean* is cut from the same cloth as *Radio Golf*. If you look at 1904 in *Gem of the Ocean*, you'll see it was the end of slavery, but black Americans had no jobs and nowhere to go. You flash forward to 1997 and now you have economic success and you can go to most golf courses in the country and you can buy radio stations, but what are we doing about the total community? Are we caring about each other like we did in 1904? Where are we as Americans?

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## **“The Light in August”: Suzan-Lori Parks Interviews August Wilson excerpted from *American Theater***

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*In this article from the November 2005 issue of American Theatre, playwright Suzan-Lori Parks (Topdog/Underdog, Venus) interviews August Wilson about his play cycle, his process and his politics. The article was printed one month after Wilson's death.*

Seeing *Radio Golf* was such a pleasure because we were seeing the end of your great 10-play cycle, but also a whole new beginning. It's like a brand-new day at the end of the play.

Hey, you have to go forward into the 21st century. I figure we could go forward united.

You say “we.” Who's “we”?

I'm talking about the black Americans who share that 400-year history of being here in America. One of the things with *Radio Golf* is that I realized I had to in some way deal with the black middle class, which for the most part is not in the other nine plays. My idea was that the

black middle class seems to be divorcing themselves from that community, making their fortune on their own without recognizing or acknowledging their connection to the larger community. And I thought: We have gained a lot of sophistication and expertise and resources, and we should be helping that community, which is completely devastated by drugs and crime and the social practices of the past hundred years of the country. I thought: How do I show that you can go back and that you can't—nobody wants to be poor, nobody wants to live in substandard housing. No one is asking them to do that. But I think that here again we have resources.

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**Is there resistance to going forward together because some black middle class people define themselves as “successful” by the distance between where they are and where their not-so-fortunate brothers and sisters are?**

Yeah. Because that's the way society defines success now. In other words, they have adopted the values of the dominant society and have in the process given up some of their cultural values, so in essence they have different cultural clothing. Some people make that choice; it's certainly not only black people—a lot of ethnic Europeans have made that choice completely. They have been so anxious to become Americans that they've changed their names, forgotten the old ways and don't want to be reminded of them. Other people go, “No, I want to go live in Little Italy. I'm Italian and I'm an American too.” You can be both. It's as simple as that.

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**Why do you think that in our society success is defined by how much you can leave behind while you climb the ladder?**

I think we're all trying to imitate the British to become lords and aristocrats, have a bunch of servants and a gardener, all that kind of stuff. We were founded as a British colony—that's a large part of it. We've managed to be immensely successful in pulling the energy and the brilliance of all those European immigrants that came here and worked hard. Their imagination—Carnegie coming up with the new way to make steel, all that stuff—and we've become the most powerful and the richest country in the world. So we've adopted those materialistic values at the expense of some more human values. There are ways to live life on this planet without being a consumer, without being concerned with acquiring hundreds of millions of dollars. I think, God, you have \$100 million; don't you think that's enough? But a guy that has \$100 million is trying to get \$200 million.

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**So, 1839 Wylie Avenue, is it always going to be standing?**

Probably not. Matter of fact, I'm not even sure what's going to happen with it by the end of the play. I think that the bulldozer might come and the police will come to move all the people that are painting the house and tear it down. That's usually the way it goes. It's sort of a

can't-win situation. Like the cat pissing on the sofa—he pisses on the sofa because he doesn't want you to sit there, but what happens is he gets snatched up and taken to the vet. Life goes on as usual, and the couch gets fumigated, and the cat has lost the battle. I figure it'll pretty much end up like that.

But, symbolically, 1839 will always be standing, as part of our repository of all our wisdom and knowledge that we as an African people have collected over the hundreds of years that we've been on the planet Earth. We haven't lost all of that stuff, because when we came here we did have a history, we did have customs, we did have a culture. And all that would have been lost, except they made a mistake by extending the slave trade over those hundreds of years. They were always bringing in fresh, new Africans who managed to keep that stuff alive.

Excerpted from *American Theater* magazine, November 2005

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## Educators Introduction

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Welcome to the McCarter Resource Guide Educator Edition for August Wilson's *Radio Golf*. This guide has been assembled to complement both your students' theater-going experience as well as your class curriculum by offering a variety of interesting and engaging activities for both pre-show and post-performance instruction and enjoyment.

*Radio Golf* is the final installment of Mr. Wilson's epic, ten-play Pittsburgh cycle, his closing reflection on a decade-by-decade history of the African-American experience and ode to his Hill District roots. This production follows last season's memorable production of Wilson's *Gem of the Ocean*, the ninth play in the cycle and his homage to the first decade of the twentieth century. Teaching-artists from the Education Department are well aware of the power of the latter production to touch both the hearts and intellects of the students who read the play and attended our student matinees. Time and again, area high school students with whom we work name *Gem of the Ocean* as one of their two favorite plays and note that the play in performance made them see themselves and their history in a new and deeper way. *Radio Golf* has the same power to touch, to teach students about the past and the present and to enlighten and inform their future.

This production of *Radio Golf* affords opportunities for enrichment in literature, history, sociology, civics, theater and media/visual arts. Students can explore national and local history and the African-American experience; debate the issues surrounding urban renewal/redevelopment and gentrification and their relationship to race and class; investigate their own neighborhood and consider the challenges of its future renewal, planning and development; ponder the themes of identity, integrity, honor and ambition in their own lives; as well as

creatively contemplate many of these topics and themes in imaginative, artistic activities.

Our student audiences are often our favorite audiences at McCarter, and we encourage you and your students to join us for a discussion with members of the cast after the performance. Our visiting artists are always impressed with the preparation and thoughtfulness of McCarter's young audiences, and the post-performance discussion offers a unique opportunity for students to engage intellectually with professional theater practitioners. We look forward to seeing all of you for a wonderful discussion about *Radio Golf* and August Wilson, a true genius of the American theater.

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## Core Curriculum Standards

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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 *Radio Golf* 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.
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Viewing *Radio Golf* 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.
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In addition, the production of *Radio Golf* as well as the 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.
- 6.6 All students will apply knowledge of spatial relationships and other geographic skills to understand human behavior in relation to the physical and cultural environment.

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# Pre-Show Preparation, Questions for Discussion, and Activities

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*Note to Educators: Use the following assignments, questions, and activities to introduce your students to Radio Golf and its origins, context, and themes, as well as to engage their imaginations and creativity before they see the production.*

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1. **“Tuning in” to *Radio Golf*’s Themes.** Have your students read August Wilson’s *Radio Golf* and then explore the various avenues of thematic reflection below through discussion or essay writing.
    - Ask your students to discuss the central themes of the play, which include: a) the individual’s challenge to discern and do what is right over what is wrong; b) the struggle to hold onto one’s identity and integrity in a changing world; c) the call to honor the past over personal ambition or, more specifically, the test of the upwardly mobile black middle class to honor their history; d) the conflicting demands of honorable leadership over personal success; and e) the notion that true virtue comes with understanding the sacrifices of one’s ancestors and then paying them homage accordingly. Ask your students if any of these themes seem more important to them than others. Urge them to explain their responses. Can they identify any other themes?
    - Discuss other plays or works of literature your students have read or studied with similar themes.
    - Ask your students if they have encountered a situation in which they were challenged to distinguish between right and wrong and then act on their decision. What were the circumstances of the situation? What did they decide and what lead them to their decision? What was the outcome of their decision? Would they make the same decision again if they found themselves in a similar situation?
    - If your students have read or seen any other play in August Wilson’s Pittsburgh cycle (i.e., *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*, or *King Hedley II*) ask them to compare it with *Radio Golf* in terms of theme, character, and mood.
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1. **The Chains that Bind: Store Chain Recognition and Connotation.** List the following chain stores and restaurants on the chalkboard in your classrooms: Whole Foods, Starbucks, Barnes & Noble, McDonald’s, Old Navy, Target, Famous Footwear and Macy’s. Ask your

students to respond (either via discussion or as a free-writing exercise) to the following questions for each of these establishments:

- What product or service does the establishment provide?
- What type of people shop at or use this establishment?
- Do you have one in your neighborhood?
- Would you like one of these stores in your neighborhood? Why or why not?
- Do you think your area should have more or less of this chain store/restaurant?
- Would you rather shop at this establishment or at one which is locally owned and provides the same goods or services? Why?

Have your students discuss their responses and feelings in class. Why do students feel the way they do? What do they think of Harmond Wilks and Roosevelt Hicks' desire to bring big chain stores into the Hill District in *Radio Golf*? Would these types of stores be good for the neighborhood? Ask your students to explain their responses.

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3. **Urban Planning: Past, Present, and Future.** August Wilson's *Radio Golf* and other plays in his Pittsburgh cycle deal intimately with the complex history and heritage of Pittsburgh's Hill District where the playwright grew up. *Radio Golf* is specifically centered around the urban renewal of the Hill District. The following activities are intended to engage your students in thinking about community planning/development and to personalize the issues involved in urban renewal projects.

- **Past: The Hill.** Working individually or in groups, have your students research in depth the rich history of Pittsburgh's Hill District. Research topics could include Thomas Mellon, The Crawford Grill, "Little Harlem," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, the Pittsburgh Crawfords, Gus Greenlee/Greenlee Field, Charles "Teenie" Harris, Dr. Edna Chappelle McKenzie, the Civil Rights Movement in Pittsburgh, Freedom Corner (the intersection of Centre Avenue and Crawford Street), et al. Have each student or group present their research to the class. If your students have already read *Radio Golf* in preparation for the performance, ask them how their newfound knowledge of the Hill District influences their appreciation and understanding of the play. Does it change their viewpoints on any specific character or issue? Ask them to explain why or why not. Ask them if they think it is important to know about the Hill's history when reading or seeing Wilson's plays. Have them explain their responses.
- **Present:** Your hometown, NJ. Help your students learn about their own community's recent development by asking them to interview their teachers, parents, relatives or community leaders. Have them ask their subjects the following questions:
  - i. How has the community has changed in the past decade?
  - ii. Where have development projects occurred within the community?

- iii. How has the community has been affected by these projects?
- iv. How have businesses changed?
- v. Have families had to relocate due to economic shifts?

Have students take notes when interviewing their subjects, or, if possible record or videotape the interviews. They can present their findings to their classmates by reporting on their subjects themselves, by creating transcripts of their interviews which can be read aloud to the class or by introducing and sharing excerpts of recorded moments from their interviews.

- **Future: Do-it-Yourself Urban Planning Project.** Working as a class, explore what you and your students would do as leaders of the redevelopment of 10 city blocks in the downtown area of your city (or you might choose to redevelop the 10 blocks surrounding your school). Divide your class into 10 groups and assign each group to one square block. Half of the groups should focus on rehabilitating or repurposing existing structures, while the other half should start from scratch, imagining that everything will be razed on their square block.
  - i. Begin by setting a budget for each group and establishing costs for buildings, other physical places and community services. You may wish to have students do some research on the actual cost of building or renovation, or you can set more arbitrary standards for all groups. For example, each group may begin with \$50 million, and know that a school will cost \$3 million to build from scratch and \$1.5 million if they renovate an existing structure; they may consider that if they save \$1 million on building costs they can use that money to upgrade social programming. Have students think about the social and historical costs of rebuilding vs. renovation as well. For example, are there any historically relevant buildings in your 10 blocks that should be preserved? Why? Is there anything that simply does not work in these 10 blocks (e.g., roads that seem difficult too navigate or too many buildings in too small an area)? Do these elements affect groups which must begin from scratch or those which must renovate based upon which block they've been assigned?
  - ii. Next, have students establish a list of everything these 10 block must contain, such as plenty of affordable housing, schools, parks, a post office, community center, fire and police stations, grocery stores, retail stores, a coffee shop—anything that students feel is needed to provide a strong and functional community. Students should work together to make sure that not only their block is well-planned, but that it works in the context of the larger project as well. This means that an organization for communication between the 10 block planning groups should be established early on in the project.
  - iii. Each group should design their block on a uniform square of paper, piece of fabric or whatever materials are decided upon by

the class. Students can even decide to construct scale models. Once completed, all blocks should be pieced together to make a sort of two- or three-dimensional quilt out of their 10 city blocks. Ask the students to evaluate their project. Does it look like it would be a nice place to live? To work? To go to school? Is it a better or worse than what currently stands on the 10 blocks? Why? How difficult was it to consider so many different perspectives, requirements and limitations all at once? Ask your students to describe the most difficult decisions their groups had to make. Is urban planning something that any of them might consider as a career? Have them explain their responses.

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4. **Project: Visual and Sound Character Collage.** Theatrical designers, such as those who create a play production's scenery, costumes, makeup, lights and sound must find ways to communicate their preliminary design ideas to the director with whom they collaborate. One form of visual communication is collage, in which cutout images and text, material/fabric and other small things are glued to a piece of paper to symbolize the world of the play, its inhabitants and/or its themes. A sound collage can likewise aurally communicate and generate ideas and feelings about the world of the play, its characters and its themes through a montage of songs, musical compositions, samples, sound objects and effects and recorded/spoken text. Have your students chose one of the five characters from August Wilson's *Radio Golf* for which to create a visual and/or sound collage.

- For visual collages students will need 8½" x 11" sheets of paper (either colored paper or paper that can be painted), scissors, magazines and newspapers (for both visual images/photographs and text), additional color paper for cutouts, fabric pieces, old puzzle pieces, colored pencils or paint for a background and glue.
- They should think about how they might use color, texture, images and text to symbolize their character and what happens to him or her during the course of the play.
- Educators might also opt for their students to create electronic visual collages by utilizing PowerPoint technology and images gleaned from the internet.
- For sound collages students, will need access to sound recording devices, such as a tape recorder or digital recorder. Note that iTunes and Windows Media Player both have digital montage creation capability. Free sound effects are available online through sound libraries such as The Free Sound Project (<http://freesound.iaa.upf.edu/index.php>).
- Students should be given time to show/play their finished collages to their classmates. Have them refrain from naming the character and instead have the class guess which character is being communicated to them visually and/or sonically/aurally.

5. **Radio Golf: The Review—A Theater Reviewer Prepares.** A theater critic or reviewer is essentially a “professional audience member,” whose job is to report the news, in detail, of a play’s production and performance through active and descriptive language for a target audience of readers (e.g., their peers, their community or those interested in the arts). To prepare your students to write an accurate, insightful and compelling theater review following their attendance at *Radio Golf*, prime them for the task by discussing the three basic elements of a theatrical review: reportage, analysis and judgment.

- Reportage is concerned with the basic information of the production, or the journalist’s “four w’s” (i.e., who, what, where, when), as well as the elements of production, which include the text, setting, costumes, lighting, sound, acting and directing (see the attached Theater Reviewer’s Checklist). When reporting upon these observable phenomena of production, the reviewer’s approach should be factual, descriptive and objective. Any reference to quality or effectiveness should be reserved for the analysis section of the review.
- With analysis the theater reviewer segues into the realm of the subjective and attempts to interpret the artistic choices made by the director and designers and their effectiveness. Specific moments, ideas and images from the production are considered in the analysis.
- Judgment involves the reviewer’s opinion as to whether the director’s and designers’ intentions were realized, and if their collaborative, artistic endeavor was ultimately a worthwhile one. Theater reviewers should always back up their opinions with reasons, evidence and details.

Remind your students that the goal of a theater reviewer is “to see accurately, describe fully, think clearly, and then (and only then) to judge fairly the merits of the work” (Thaiss and Davis, *Writing for the Theatre*, 1999). Proper analytical preparation before the show and active listening and viewing during the performance will result in the effective writing and crafting of their reviews.

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# Post-Show Questions for Discussion and Activities

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*Note to Educators: Use the following assignments, questions, and activities to have students evaluate their experience of the performance of Radio Golf, as well as to encourage their own imaginative and artistic projects through further exploration of the play in production.*

*Note that some of the pre-show activities might also enhance your students' experience following the performance.*

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1. **Radio Golf: A Discussion.** Following their attendance at the performance of *Radio Golf*, ask your students to reflect on the questions below. (You might choose to have them answer each individually or you could divide students into groups for round-table discussions. Have them consider each question, record their answers and then share their responses with the rest of the class.)

## Questions to Ask Your Students About the Play in Production

- a. What was your overall reaction to *Radio Golf*? Did you find the production compelling? Stimulating? Intriguing? Challenging? Memorable? Confusing? Evocative? Unique? Delightful? Meaningful? Explain your reactions.
- b. Did experiencing the play heighten your awareness or understanding of the play's themes? [e.g., the individual's challenge to discern and do what is right over what is wrong; the struggle to hold onto one's identity and integrity in a changing world; the call to honor the past over personal ambition or, more specifically, the test of the upwardly mobile black middle-class to honor the history of black America and Americans over their own personal success and ambition; the conflicting demands of honorable leadership over personal success; and the knowledge that true virtue comes with understanding the sacrifices of one's ancestors and then paying them homage accordingly.] What themes were made even more apparent in performance? Explain your responses.
- c. Do you think that the pace and tempo of the production were effective and appropriate? Explain your opinion.

## Questions to Ask Your Students About the Characters

- a. Did you personally identify with any of the characters in the play? Who? Why?

- b. What qualities were revealed by the action and speech of the characters? Explain your ideas.
- c. Did any characters develop or undergo a transformation during the course of the play? Who? How? Why?
- d. In what ways did the characters reveal the themes of the play? Explain your responses.

#### Questions to Ask Your Students About the Style and Design of the Production

- a. Was there a moment in the play that was so compelling or intriguing that it remains with you in your mind's eye? Can you write a vivid description of that moment? As you write your description, pretend that you are writing about the moment for someone who was unable to experience the performance.
- b. Did the style and design elements of the production enhance the performance? Did anything specifically stand out to you? Explain your reaction.
- c. How did the production style and design reflect the themes of the play?
- d. What mood or atmosphere did the lighting design establish or achieve? Explain your experience.
- e. How did the sound design enhance your overall experience?
- f. Did the design of the costumes and makeup serve to illuminate the characters, themes, and style of the play? How?

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2. **Radio Golf: The Review.** Have your students take on the role of theater critic by writing a review of McCarter Theatre's production of August Wilson's *Radio Golf*. A theater critic or reviewer is essentially a "professional audience member," whose job is to provide reportage of a play's production and performance through active and descriptive language for a target audience of readers (e.g., their peers, their community or those interested in the arts). Critics/reviewers provide analysis of the theatrical event to provide clearer understanding of the artistic ambitions and intentions of a play and its production; reviewers often ask themselves, "What is the playwright and this production attempting to do?" And, finally, the critic offers personal judgment as to whether the artistic intentions of a production were achieved, effective and worthwhile. [See "Pre-Show Preparation, Questions for Discussion, and Activities," activity #3, for information on how to prepare students for effective theater reviewing.] Things to consider before writing:

- Theater critics/reviewers always back up their opinions with reasons, evidence and details.
  - The elements of production that can be discussed in a theatrical review are the play text or script (and its themes, plot, characters, etc.), scenic elements, costumes, lighting, sound, music, acting and direction (i.e., how all of these elements are put together). [[See the Theater Reviewer's Checklist.](#)]
  - Educators may want to provide their students with sample theater reviews from a variety of newspapers.
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3. **Debating the Issues.** Brainstorm a list of topics from *Radio Golf* that would make for interesting and lively impromptu debate, for example, the demolition of 1839 Wylie, the gentrification of the Hill District or the larger issues of race and politics inherent in the play. Choose one or two issues that are the most appropriate and of interest to your students. Divide your students up into teams, assign them sides for each topic and then give them between fifteen and twenty minutes to prepare their position before the debate starts. The format for the debates should be as follows:

- Each team member for each side speaks for two minutes, alternating sides.
- Seven minute discussion or open cross-examination period.
- Five minute break for teams to regroup and discuss in private.
- One minute rebuttal for each team member, alternating sides.

**Variation:** Students can debate the issues “in character” by assuming the personas (gender, age, attitude and character voice) of characters in *Radio Golf*. Allow students to “tap in” (silently enter the debate scene by gently tapping the “actor” classmate they wish to replace and resuming the action) to take over the character and character’s argument from their classmate.

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4. ***Radio Golf* Act III, Scene 1.** The final scene of August Wilson’s *Radio Golf* concludes with its characters resolute in their own opinions of what should happen to the house at 1839 Wylie— Roosevelt Hicks leaves the Bedford Hills Redevelopment office to attend the

demolition of the property after threatening to force Harmond Wilks out of Wilks Realty through a contracted buy-out, while Harmond hopes that his temporary injunction will stay the demolition and that his new plan for Bedford Hills, which includes the preservation of Old Joe's home, will prevail—but Wilson doesn't resolve the narrative for his audience. Have your students write the next scene in the saga of 1839 Wylie. They get to decide all details of the scenario: when the scene takes place (e.g., immediately following Act II, scene 4?; later that day?; the next day, week or month?), where (e.g., back at the office?; at 1839 Wylie?; at Roosevelt's WBTZ office?; at the Crawford Grill?), and who appears in the scene (they might even choose to introduce a new character or two). Have them script the scenes and in a subsequent class meeting have them stage and perform them for their classmates. Follow up this activity by discussing their resolutions to this major conflict at the center of Wilson's *Radio Golf*.

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5. **Gentrification Up-Close and Personal.** If your school lies in or near a neighborhood that has been gentrified, or is in the process of being gentrified, take your students on a walking or bus tour of the area. If possible before your tour, have your students research the history of the neighborhood and find as many historical pictures as possible; then, on your tour, you'll be able to compare the visual differences of intersections or certain blocks then and now. During and after the tour discuss with your students any changes that have been made in the neighborhood and any differences in the character of the neighborhood. How do they feel about the changes?

*Some of this material was adapted with permission of Goodman Theatre Education Department.*

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## Additional Resources

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### On Black Culture and History

- Salzman, Jack, David Lionel Smith and Cornel West. *Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History*. New York: Simon and Schuster Macmillan, 1996.
- Graham, Lawrence Otis. *Our Kind of People: Inside America's Black Upper Class*. New York: HarperCollins, 1999.
- *Africans in America*. Directors Susan Bellows and Noland Walker. WGBH Boston Video, 2000. A six-hour television miniseries about the history of African Americans.

## On Redevelopment and Urban Renewal

- Jones, E. Michael. *The Slaughter of Cities: Urban Renewal as Ethnic Cleansing*. South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2004. An examination of the motives behind the housing policies, social engineering and other factors that devastated whole communities beginning in the 1930s.
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## On the Hill District

- Bauman, John F. and Edward K. Muller. *Before Renaissance: Planning in Pittsburgh, 1889-1943*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006.
- Michael A. Fuoco, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, April 11-14, 1999.

"Return to Glory; Hill District Determined to Regain Lost Greatness"

"Future Investment; Crawford Square as One of Many Vibrant New Hill Projects"

"Heroin on the Hill; Rampant Drug Trade is Biggest Obstacle to Neighborhood Growth"

"Keeping the Faith; Residents Working Hard to Make Most of Community's Momentum"

- Lubove, Roy. *Twentieth Century Pittsburgh: Government, Business, and Environmental Change*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995.
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## On Golf

Owen, David. *The Chosen One: Tiger Woods and the Dilemma of Greatness* New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001. A study of the social, economic and athletic impact of Tiger Wood's remarkable accomplishments as a golfer.

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## Web Resources

<http://images.library.pitt.edu/cgi-bin/i/image/image-idx> Historic Pittsburgh Image Collections from the website of the University of Pittsburgh

<http://www.nypl.org/research/sc/sc.html> Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture

<http://www.academicinfo.net/africanamlibrary.html> African American Digital Library

<http://www.cmoa.org/teenie/info@asp> Photographs by Teenie Harris, one of the Hill's premier photographers, from Pittsburgh's Carnegie Museum of Art

<http://www.carnegielibrary.org/exhibit/neighborhoods/hill> A brief history of Pittsburgh's Hill District.



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