



MAGAZINE



AUGUST WILSON'S

GEM OF THE OCEAN



Directed by TIM BOND

APRIL 6–MAY 1, 2022

TheatreWorks

SILICON VALLEY

ABOUT

Founded in 1970 by Robert Kelley (Artistic Director Emertius), TheatreWorks has grown from a truly original Silicon Valley start-up to become the peninsula's leading professional nonprofit theatre company. In 2019, TheatreWorks was honored to receive the Regional Theatre Tony Award.

Now under the leadership of Artistic Director Tim Bond, TheatreWorks presents a wide variety of contemporary plays and musicals, as well as revitalizing great works of the past. We are champions of new work, offering artists support and a creative home as they develop exciting new stories for the American theatre. Offstage, arts education programs in our schools and arts engagement programs in our neighborhoods uplift our audiences and strengthen community bonds.

Whether onstage or off, in everything that we do, TheatreWorks seeks to celebrate the human spirit and the wonderful diversity of our Silicon Valley community.

For more information, visit theatreworks.org.

To learn more about Season 51 go to page 4 and Let's Make Some Noise!

AFFILIATIONS

TheatreWorks Silicon Valley is a member of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT) and operates under agreement between LORT and Actors' Equity Association (AEA), the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States. TheatreWorks is a constituent member of Theatre Communications Group, Inc., the national organization for the nonprofit professional theatre. TheatreWorks is a member of the National Alliance for Musical Theatre, a national service organization for musical theatre. In addition, TheatreWorks is a member of Theatre Bay Area, the Palo Alto Chamber of Commerce, and the Mountain View Chamber of Commerce. TheatreWorks' 51st Season is presented in cooperation with the City of Mountain View and the City of Palo Alto, Community Services Department, Division of Arts and Sciences.



UNITED
SCENIC
ARTISTS



The director is a member of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, Inc., an independent national labor union. The scenic, costume, and lighting and sound designers in LORT Theatres are represented by United Scenic Artists, Local USA-829 of the IATSE.



This season is supported in part by an award from the California Arts Council, a state agency: www.arts.ca.gov



TheatreWorks Silicon Valley is a proud home company of the Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts.

Season Media Sponsor **San Francisco Chronicle**

The official wine of TheatreWorks



LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT



TheatreWorks' offices and theatre facilities sit on the traditional territory and unceded homeland of the Ramaytush Ohlone peoples who are the original inhabitants of the San Francisco Peninsula. As the indigenous stewards of this land and in accordance with their traditions, the Ramaytush Ohlone have never ceded, lost nor forgotten their responsibilities as the caretakers of this place, as well as for all peoples who reside in their traditional territory.

As uninvited guests, we recognize that we benefit from living and working on their traditional homeland. Indeed the nation-state itself was founded upon and continues to enact exclusions and erasures of Indigenous Peoples.

This acknowledgement demonstrates a commitment to beginning a process of working to dismantle ongoing legacies of settler colonialism, and to recognize the hundreds of Indigenous Nations who continue to resist, live, and uphold their sacred relations across their lands.

We wish to pay our respects by acknowledging the Ancestors, Elders, and Relatives of the Ramaytush community and by affirming their sovereign rights as First Peoples.



www.firstnations.org/california-tribal-fund

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MUSE

a muse ball

THE FUTURE IS NOW

May 21, 2022

6:00 – 10:00 PM

Fox Theatre – Redwood City

JOIN US FOR OUR NEWEST FUNDRAISING EXPERIENCE, A MUSE BALL!

This year, we are celebrating the future. The Fox Theatre will come alive with immersive art experiences, live music, and a local art market. Guests will be able to enjoy an open bar and delectable eats, all while raising money for the future of TheatreWorks.

Tickets, benefits, and FAQs are available via the QR code or at <https://one.bidpal.net/amuseball22/welcome>


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THEATREWORKS ACCESSIBILITY PROGRAMS



**THEATREWORKS STRIVES TO CREATE
AN ENVIRONMENT THAT IS ACCESSIBLE
FOR ALL MEMBERS OF OUR COMMUNITY.
AND OFFERS THE FOLLOWING SERVICES:**



AD)))

LIVE AUDIO DESCRIPTION

Audio Description provides access to the visual elements—action, costumes, settings, gestures, facial expressions, objects and other visually communicative elements of theater. Audio Description is usually a live audio track spoken by a Professional Audio Descriptor to patrons with visual impairments through a wireless headset system. Please pre-register for Audio Description services through our box office, which include a pre-show talk 30 minutes before the performance.

For *Gem of the Ocean*: Friday, April 29 and Saturday, April 30 @ 8pm / Sunday, May 1 @ 2pm

OUR PARTNER:

Gravity Access Services offers a range of services to make live performance more accessible to audience members with diverse sensory modalities and physicalities. These include live and recorded Audio Description services, pre-show Haptic Access Tours, ASL referral services, Site Visits, Media Assessments and General Accessibility consulting to assess and

advise artists, producers, venues and events on best practices for making their presentations as accessible as possible. jesscurtisgravity.org/access

Live Audio Description by Gravity Access Services is generously supported by the Walter and Elise Haas Fund, and The Kenneth Rainin Foundation.

OC

OPEN CAPTIONING

Open captioning is a text display of words and sounds heard during an event, and is provided for patrons with hearing loss. The display is positioned in such a way that is open for anyone to see in a particular seating area. It is considered passive assistance, a service that is there to use or ignore. No one is labeled as needing the captioning with special equipment required at their seat. Caption seating is available for best viewing of the screen.

For *Gem of the Ocean*: Sunday, April 24 @ 2pm and 7pm / Wednesday, April 27 @ 2pm

OUR PARTNER:

c2 Caption Coalition is the pioneer of Live Performance Captioning (sm) for Hard of Hearing and Deaf patrons at live theatrical and cultural events and is internationally recognized as the leading authority in the field. c2 continues its mission to expand services throughout the United States and is partnered with an impressive roster of prestigious venues now offering this vital access program.



ASSISTIVE LISTENING DEVICES

Our venues offers assistive listening devices in the lobby prior to performance. No advance reservations required.



WHEELCHAIR ACCESS

Our venues offers accessible parking and wheelchair ramps. Wheelchair spaces can be purchased with up to one companion seat. Patrons who purchase a wheelchair space must have their own wheelchair or walker to sit in for the duration of the performance. Companion seats may not be purchased without also purchasing a wheelchair space.



THEATREWORKS VOICES: STAFF PERSPECTIVES

The stories you see on TheatreWorks' stage are made possible by scores of thoughtful and dedicated staff and artists coming together to create and support the art. Each one of us brings a unique perspective. Whether we're working onstage, backstage, in the admin office, or in the shop, we all impact and are impacted by the stories we tell. This season we're shining a light on staff perspectives, sharing their insights with TheatreWorks' audiences.

For *Gem of the Ocean*, we're featuring Literary and Casting Assistant **Katherine Hamilton**.

A NOTE FROM KATHERINE HAMILTON

When I arrived at TheatreWorks in 2019, I could have never imagined that my time here would include a global pandemic, social justice revolution, and a reimagining of theatre as an institution. This time for me, now as Literary and Casting Assistant, has not only represented a burgeoning of ideas, but also a burgeoning of storytelling.

In this awakening of narrative and storytelling, I began making a greater attempt to learn my own story, and therefore, history. Such a history is not always easy to navigate, especially when some narratives are falsely recorded, if recorded at all. In August Wilson's *Gem of the Ocean*, those who did not survive the Middle Passage create a City of Bones. What would those bones have said, were their owners not denied the right of remembrance? While we may not get to hear history's silenced voices, *Gem of the Ocean* teaches us to own our stories in another way; by owning our values.

In some ways, the world Wilson describes isn't so different from the world we live in now. Wealth inequality, systemic racism, housing insecurity, and

power imbalance still determine our way of living, though they may look different than they did in 1904. Yet, in the face of these circumstances, Wilson’s characters find means of establishing agency on their own terms. They own their lives by owning and living by their values. As the character Aunt Ester puts it, “You live right, you die right.”

2022 has been a blessing in some ways—a re-emergence of art, life, and community. It’s been a return to a new form of normalcy. In other ways, it has felt more precarious than ever, with basic human rights on the line that we once thought inalienable. For women, members of the LGBTQ+ community, nations bearing the brunt of climate change, and so many others, the future may feel perilous. It does at times to me. I’m brought some amount of comfort by Wilson’s message that we are not altogether powerless. If broadscale change is to come about, why shouldn’t it start with ownership at the individual level, as it does for his characters?

We all share the capacity to think more intentionally about our values and how to live by them. While there are always competing forces at play, national surveys show we have much in common when it comes to perspectives on social, racial, and climate equity. I look forward to a time when those values become our driving forces—nationally, but first, individually. As Ruth Bader Ginsberg put it, “*Real change, enduring change, happens one step at a time.*”

KATHERINE HAMILTON,
Literary & Casting Assistant



AUGUST WILSON AND THE

Frederick August Kittel, Jr. was born in 1945 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania's Hill District, a vibrant, multi-ethnic neighborhood that would one day become the setting for the majority of his works. His father, a baker and a German immigrant, was largely absent. His mother, Daisy Wilson, was African American and supported the family by cleaning houses. Daisy eventually remarried, and the family moved to the predominantly white neighborhood of Hazelwood. Kittel, Jr. changed schools a number of times, ultimately dropping out of tenth grade after being accused of plagiarism. From then on he spent his days at the public library, where he immersed himself in the writings of Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright, Langston Hughes, and Arna Bontemps, among others. Though he never returned to the classroom, he was eventually awarded a high school diploma from the Carnegie Library as well as numerous honorary degrees from colleges and universities all over the country (see page 35 for full bio).

Following his father's death in 1965, Fredrick August Kittel, Jr. changed his name to August Wilson, to honor his mother. Wilson began his literary career as a poet, working on a typewriter that he'd pawn and buy back whenever he needed funds. In 1968, Wilson co-founded Black Horizon Theater and directed many of the company's early productions, despite having next to no prior exposure to theatre as an artform. Even after he began writing his own plays he avoided reading the work of other playwrights, wary of losing his own voice. Wilson's writing really took flight when he realized the inherent poetry in the spoken vernacular of his own community—that he need not “elevate” his characters' dialogue to create art.

Wilson's first major play was *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, set in 1927. His next was *Fences*, set in 1957,

followed by *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, set in 1911. At that point, upon realizing he'd written three plays in three different decades, Wilson made an ambitious goal for himself: he'd write a play for each decade of the twentieth century. Completed in 2005, Wilson's American Century Cycle is an unprecedented and unparalleled work of incredible depth and scope. Every one of Wilson's plays is brilliant in its own right. Taken as a group, they document and celebrate the lives of ordinary Black Americans as the twentieth century unfolds, charting the shifting waters of civil rights gained and the insidiousness of racism still endured. Though the plays are not serial in nature, all but one take place in the Hill District, and there are a number of characters that appear or are mentioned in multiple plays. Most notably, references to *Gem of the Ocean's* Aunt Ester, her home, and her legacy are made throughout the cycle.

Wilson was recognized in his lifetime as one of America's greatest dramatists. He won the Pulitzer Prize twice, a Tony Award, two Drama Desks, and countless other accolades. Following his death in 2005, the theatre at 245 W 52nd Street was renamed the August Wilson Theatre, the first Broadway house to be named for an African American. In 2007 he was posthumously inducted into the American Theatre Hall of Fame.

AMERICAN CENTURY CYCLE

TRIVIA:
AUGUST WILSON has
been awarded two pulitzer
prizes and a Tony.

PEACEFUL HOUSES

By Katie Dai

PRESERVING AUGUST WILSON'S LEGACY IN PITTSBURGH



“*This a peaceful house.*”

That is the first line spoken in *Gem of the Ocean*, and the opening for August Wilson’s entire American Century Cycle. The words refer to the dwelling at 1839 Wylie Avenue in Pittsburgh’s Hill District. It is the residence of Aunt Ester: a sanctuary for those weary souls who seek her guidance, and the spiritual epicenter of Wilson’s works. The home is also central to *Radio Golf*, the play that closes out the Cycle. Set in 1997, *Radio Golf* sees 1839 Wylie threatened with demolition, the casualty of a planned urban redevelopment project.

In truth, there is no house at 1839 Wylie Avenue. The location is real enough, but it was never a home. A church once stood adjacent to the property—a church Wilson himself attended in his childhood—but the significance of the address is as much historical as it is geographical. 1839 was the year of the Amistad Slave Revolt. It is also the year the phrase “underground railroad” first appeared in newspapers. Today, though, 1839 Wylie is the site of a public “Green Playce,” the open lot transformed into a community space where folks can “connect to their environment, discovering themselves and their place in the world.” The site includes many symbolic nods to Wilson’s body of work, including Aunt Ester’s iconic front door in a freestanding doorframe, and a tile mosaic depicting Wilson at his typewriter.

Just a few blocks away, at 1727 Bedford Avenue, sits Wilson’s real-life childhood home. Wilson lived at this address for the first thirteen years of his life, his mother and five siblings squeezed into just two rooms on the property. The home later fell into disrepair, derelict for years by the time of his death. Following his passing, Wilson’s nephew Paul Ellis formed the Daisy Wilson Artist Community, named for Wilson’s mother. The August Wilson House (AWH) was landmarked, and they began taking steps to restore the property. In 2018 Denzel Washington spearheaded a fundraising campaign and secured five million dollars in pledges from high profile donors including Oprah Winfrey and Tyler Perry, among others.

The plan was never to turn the house into a museum, though—Wilson specifically discouraged this during his lifetime, asking instead that the place be made “useful.” The two rooms occupied by Wilson’s family are being restored to their 1950s state and will include immersive, interactive displays. The rest of the building will become a center for artists and scholars to meet, create art, and exchange ideas. Though it is still under construction, AWH has been hosting annual block parties for years now celebrating Wilson’s birthday. In 2016, a production of *Seven Guitars* was staged in the back yard—the very same yard that inspired the setting for the play. When it is completed, AWH plans to offer “signature theatrical productions and events, art exhibitions and literary workshops, roundtable discussions and classes in the tradition of the Black Arts Movement.”

To learn more or to make
a contribution, visit
augustwilsonhouse.org

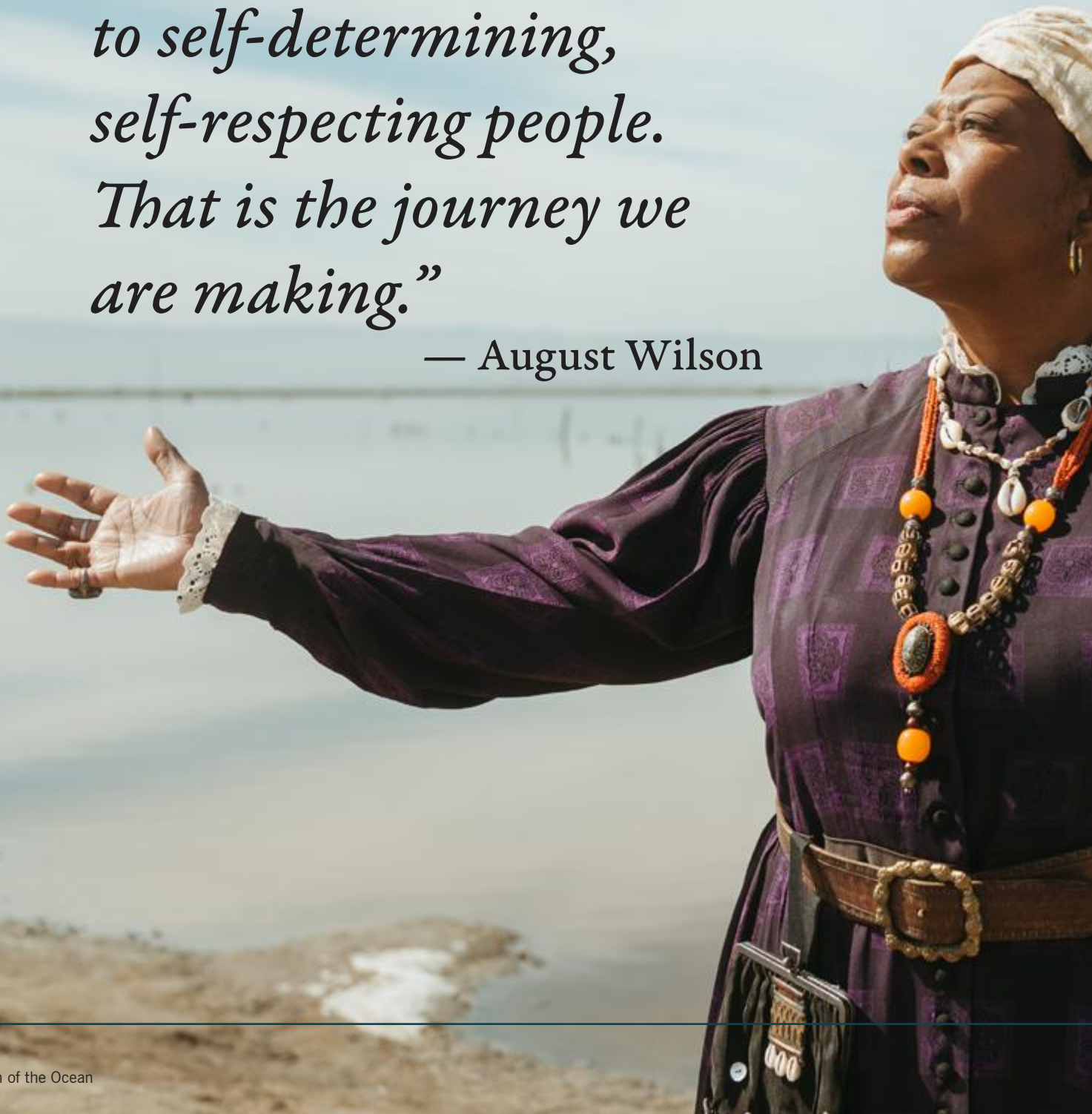


REDEMPTION

DIRECTOR'S NOTES FROM TIM BOND

*“From the hull of a ship
to self-determining,
self-respecting people.
That is the journey we
are making.”*

— August Wilson



SONG



Photo: Greta Oglseby, by Amira Maxwell.

REDEMPTION SONG:

DIRECTOR'S NOTES FROM TIM BOND

I am thrilled to share this production of August Wilson's *Gem of the Ocean* with you all as my first in-person production here at TheatreWorks. Having moved to the Bay Area two years ago in mid-April of 2020, this moment has been a long time coming! I believe that theatre can be a transformative experience that interconnects us across all differences by exploring great stories that celebrate the indomitability of the human spirit.

Though the setting, costumes, music, and dialogue are specific to the early twentieth century, the themes around freedom, justice, and redemption that are explored in *Gem of the Ocean* are eerily relevant and presage a number of pressing issues we still face today. In May

of 2020, just days before I officially took the reins as Artistic Director of TheatreWorks, the devastating images of the murder of George Floyd flooded our news cycle and our consciousness as a nation. I chose this searing and mystical play because of its redemptive and healing powers, at a moment when our nation is in a moral reckoning regarding our racialized history. As we witness the continued assault of voting rights, the manufactured controversy of "critical race theory," the censoring of The 1619 Project, and important referendums on our racially biased policing and justice systems, I knew in my heart that this play would humanize these issues in the transformative way that only the theatre can.



Photo: Edward Ewell, Greta Oglsey, by Amira Maxwell.

LEARN MORE:

1619 PROJECT: developed by Nikole Hannah-Jones, writers from *The New York Times*, and *The New York Times Magazine* which “aims to reframe the country’s history by placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of Black Americans at the center of the United States’ national narrative.”

Gem of the Ocean is the lyrical masterpiece that begins August Wilson's ten-play American Century Cycle, chronicling the African American experience, decade-by-decade, throughout the twentieth century. I have had the honor of directing six other plays in August Wilson's extraordinary American Century Cycle as well as an earlier production of this play, sixteen years ago at Oregon Shakespeare Festival in my final season there as Associate Artistic Director. I have witnessed in many different communities the inspirational and spiritual power that August Wilson's plays have on audiences, and am passionate about sharing this and other works from the cycle with you. These are plays that explore the twentieth century through the lens of the African American experience, and as we all should know by now, black history *is* American history. August said some years ago, "I am not a historian. I happen to think that my mother's life—her myths, her superstitions, her prayers, the contents of her pantry, the smell of her kitchen, the song that escaped her sometimes parched lips, her thoughtful repose and pregnant laughter—are all worthy of art." He was our American Bard.

In *Gem of the Ocean*, Wilson introduces us to the ancient, mystical matriarch of the whole cycle, the 285-year-old Aunt Ester. Mentioned in three other plays within the ten-play cycle, Aunt Ester is a sage healer whose age harkens to the day the first African in bondage stepped foot on what would become American soil in 1619. She holds the collective memories of black folks from 1619 to 1904 when the play takes place—a time when African-Americans were just forty years out of the crippling bondage of slavery,


and who were still denied equal opportunity, safety, or full citizenship after emancipation. Black Mary, Aunt Ester's housekeeper and protégé, is still in preparations to "take on the mantle" as the spiritual epicenter of the community. Into their lives comes a young man named Citizen, whose life and soul are in turmoil. He has been told that Aunt Ester can help "wash his soul." What ensues is a spiritual story of redemption and a healing journey of reclamation that provides the hope of wholeness and self determination for this young man, for all black Americans, and perhaps someday, the soul of a nation. In his seminal 1996 speech entitled "The Ground on Which I Stand" August Wilson said:

"From the hull of a ship to self-determining, self-respecting people. That is the journey we are making. We are robust in spirit, we are bright with laughter, and we are bold in imagination. Our blood is soaked into the soil and our bones lie scattered the whole way across the Atlantic Ocean, as Hansel's crumbs, to mark the way back home."

At one point during the play Aunt Ester tells us that "It's all an adventure. That's all life is. But you got to trust that adventure."

I look forward to the adventure with all of you.

So live,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Bond". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Tim Bond

TIM BOND (Artistic Director)

joined TheatreWorks as Artistic Director in July 2020. He is a nationally-known director and educator with past leadership roles as Producing Artistic Director at Syracuse Stage, Associate Artistic Director at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Artistic Director at Seattle Group Theatre, and tenured full Professor and Head of the Professional Actor Training Program at the University of Washington School of Drama. Over the last 37 years Tim has directed at many theatres including the Market Theatre, Baxter Theatre Centre, Guthrie Theater, Seattle Rep, Milwaukee Rep, The Wilma Theater, Arena Stage, GEVA Theatre Center, Cleveland Play House, Indiana Rep, Actors Theatre of Louisville, PCPA, Arizona Theatre Co., Portland Center Stage, Dallas Theater Center, A Contemporary Theatre, Empty Space Theatre, Paul Robeson Theatre, and Seattle Children's Theatre. He is the recipient two Backstage West Garland Awards, two Syracuse Area Live Theatre (SALT) Awards, and a Dallas-Fort Worth Critics Forum Award.





Pronounced Uh-My-Ruh

Amira Maxwell is a photographer known for her peaceful, warm, and authentic portraiture. Her work is pushed forward by her interest in people and her desire to integrate and communicate her deepest values and desires. She currently resides in Berkeley, California where she enjoys a slow-paced daily life filled with neighborhood walks and the things that make her laugh.

www.AmiraMaxwell.com





Our publicity shoot was shot on location at Don Edwards Wildlife Reserve. The Refuge headquarters are located in the Baylands district of Fremont, next to Coyote Hills Regional Park, in Alameda County. It is a wildlife oasis in an urban sea with 30,000 acres of habitat for millions of migratory birds and endangered species. Today it provides not only critical habitat for threatened and endangered species, but opportunities for people to enjoy the Bay Area nature.

www.fws.gov/refuge/don-edwards-san-francisco-bay





Photos: featuring Greta Oblesby, Edward Newell, Amira Maxwell, by den legaspi.





TIM BOND Artistic Director

PHIL SANTORA Executive Director present

AUGUST WILSON'S

GEM OF THE OCEAN

Directed by TIM BOND

Scenic Design: WILLIAM BLOODGOOD
Costume Design: LYDIA TANJI
Lighting Design: LONNIE RAFAEL ALCAREZ
Original Music and Musical Direction: MICHAEL KECK
Hair, Wig, and Makeup Design: CHERELLE GUYTON, MBA
Fight Director: JONATHAN RIDER
Intimacy Coordinator: MAYA HERBSMAN
Artist Counselor: JUDITH NIHEI
Movement Consultant: KENDRA BARNES
Casting Director: JEFFREY LO
Stage Manager: TAYLOR MCQUESTEN*
Assistant Stage Manager: CHLOE ROSE SCHWEIZER*

*Members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States

The scenic, costume, and lighting designers in LORT Theatres are represented by United Scenic Artists, Local USA-829 of the IATSE

August Wilson's *Gem of the Ocean* is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc. www.concordtheatricals.com

Originally produced on Broadway by Carole Shorenstein Hays • Jujamcyn Theatres
Originally presented at National Playwrights' Conference of The Eugene O'Neill Theater Center.

Gem of the Ocean will be performed with one 15-minute intermission.

VISIONARY PRODUCERS

Patricia Bresee & Bruce Bess
Cindi Sears

PRODUCERS

Brigid Barton & Orrin Robinson
Gordon & Carolyn Davidson
Peggy Woodford Forbes & Harry Bremond
Larry Horton & George Wilson
Edward Hunter & Michelle Garcia
Charlotte Jacobs & Roderick Young
Leigh & Roy Johnson
Yvonne & Mike Nevens
Harriet & Frank Weiss

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TIME AND PLACE

THE PLAY IS SET IN 1904. THE HILL DISTRICT, PITTSBURGH,
PENNSYLVANIA. IN THE PARLOR OF ELI. AUNT ESTER.
AND BLACK MARY'S HOME AT 1839 WYLIE AVENUE.



Historical photo of Hill District, Pittsburgh, PA



A woman with her arms raised in a dramatic pose, wearing a long, patterned, light blue dress. The scene is lit with blue light, creating a theatrical atmosphere. The woman is the central focus, with her hands reaching towards the top of the frame. The background is dark, and the lighting highlights the texture of her dress and the contours of her body.

SYNOPSIS

GEM OF THE OCEAN

In 1904 Pittsburgh, 285-year-old **AUNT ESTER** is a spiritual advisor and former slave living with her protégé **BLACK MARY** and gatekeeper **ELI**. Late one night, a man named **CITIZEN BARLOW** arrives seeking guidance from Aunt Ester. Though he is told to come back Tuesday, Citizen remains standing across from Aunt Ester's home through the early morning hours.

RUTHERFORD SELIG, a traveling peddler, arrives and asks Eli why there's a crowd gathering near the church. Eli explains that a funeral is being held for a mill worker named Garret Brown. After being accused of stealing a bucket of nails, Brown jumped into the river and drowned to escape **CAESAR**, the constable and self-proclaimed "boss man" who blamed him for the theft. Caesar also happens to be Black Mary's sister, though the siblings' relationship is strained.

SOLLY TWO KINGS, a former Underground Railroad conductor and suitor of Aunt Ester's, shares a letter from his sister in Alabama. She is increasingly concerned about the racist violence and lynching there. Solly makes plans to travel south and rescue her.

Impatient to be seen by Aunt Ester, Citizen sneaks into the house through the window. He tells Aunt Ester about his troubles. Aunt Ester comforts Citizen and allows him to stay and work at her home.

Meanwhile, the mill employees are rioting and refusing to work, making Caesar furious.

Eventually, Citizen confesses the secret to Aunt Ester. She agrees to help Citizen redeem himself by leading him to "the City of Bones," but first, he needs to go upriver and find two pennies lying side-by-side.

When Citizen returns with the two pennies, Aunt Ester shows him a map of the City of Bones, which she says is the home of millions of enslaved Africans who did not survive the voyage to America. Aunt Ester folds a sheet of paper into the shape of a boat and tells Citizen he will sail on it to the City of Bones, where his soul will be washed. Citizen doesn't understand how he can possibly sail on a small piece of paper, but Aunt Ester insists that if Citizen believes the boat will take him there, it will.

Eli, Black Mary, Aunt Ester, and Citizen all prepare for the journey to the City of Bones. Solly stops in to say goodbye before he leaves for Alabama, but Aunt Ester asks him to stay and help Citizen first. Aunt Ester describes the boat, the Gem of the Ocean, while Black Mary, Eli, and Solly begin singing. Citizen becomes terrified and throws away the paper boat. Suddenly a "storm" comes up and Citizen is symbolically branded, whipped, and left with no water. Alone, Citizen "remembers" and sings an African Lullaby his mother used to sing to comfort him.

Miraculously, Citizen arrives at the City of Bones. He approaches one of the Twelve Gates and realizes that the gatekeeper is Garret Brown, the mill worker who drowned. Citizen finally confronts the truth of his actions, and his soul is washed. When it's over, he finds himself back in Aunt Ester's house.

Just as the group celebrates Citizen's journey, Caesar arrives and blames Solly for a fire at the mill. Soon after, a confession is made, a life is lost, and the lives of everyone at Aunt Ester's house are forever changed...

AUNT ESTER TYLER

CHARACTER STUDY

Aunt Ester is the spiritual epicenter of her community, a sage advisor and “washer of souls.” It is no coincidence that her name, when spoken aloud, bears a striking resemblance to the word “ancestor.” Aunt Ester is said to be 285 years old in 1904, which would mean she was born in 1619, the year the first enslaved Africans were brought to American soil. She carries the collective memories of her people—from centuries of enslavement into a new era free from bondage, but in many ways not truly free. Aunt Ester possesses the wisdom of the ages, and helps guide folks so that they can be “right” with themselves.



GRETA OGLESBY is an esteemed veteran of the American theater community. Her performances have been described as “ravishing,” “indelible,” “powerful,” “magnificent,” “heartbreaking,” and “brilliant.” Credits include *Thunder Knocking on the Door*, *Once on This Island*, *King Lear*, and *The Furies* at Ten Thousand Things Theater; *The Wiz*, *The Piano Lesson*, *Amen Corner*, and *A Love Song for Miss Lydia* at Penumbra Theater; *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner*, *The Crucible*, *Caroline*, or *Change*, and *Burial at Thebes* at Guthrie Theater; *Beggar’s Strike*, *Five Fingers of Funk*, and *Last Stop on Market Street* at Children’s Theater. She is author of the book *Mama ‘N ‘Nem*, *Handprints On My Life* and its companion play, *Handprints*, which was produced as a film by Ten Thousand Things Theater and Free Style films.



Photo: Greta Ogiseby, by Annita Maxwell.





EDWARD EWELL hails from Detroit, Michigan. He began acting in the Bay and recently completed his MFA at American Conservatory Theater. He has been blessed to work on some wonderful projects, including *Ti Jean and His Brothers* (Mi Jean), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Oberon/Demetrius), and *Wintertime* (Francois) at A.C.T.; *We Are Proud to Present...* (Actor 2) at San Jose Stage; *Kill Move Paradise* (Isa) at Shotgun Players; *The Welkin* (Frederick Poppy) and *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* (Matthias of Galilee) with ARC/ Remote Theater; *To Saints and Stars* (Ken) with Playwrights Foundation; *VS.* (Tye) with TheatreFirst; *Jitney* (Youngblood) at African-American Shakespeare Co.; and most recently *Pass Over* (Moses) at Marin Theater Co.

CITIZEN BARLOW

CHARACTER STUDY

Citizen Barlow arrives at Aunt Ester's doorstep wracked with guilt, yearning to have his soul washed. Having arrived in Pittsburgh just four weeks ago from Alabama, Citizen quickly found himself exploited by dishonest employers, his wages insufficient to cover room and board. A desperate act with terrible consequences weighs heavily on his soul, leading him to Aunt Ester to atone for his sins.

ELI

CHARACTER STUDY

Eli is the gatekeeper of 1839 Wylie, a caretaker and protector for Aunt Ester and the rest of the house's inhabitants. He is a longtime friend of Solly Two Kings, having served on the Underground Railroad together some forty years ago. During the play, Eli is constructing a wall around the house to keep unwanted elements on the other side.



JEROME PRESTON BATES

appeared on Broadway in *American Son*, *Jitney*, *Stick Fly*, and *Seven Guitars*. Off-Broadway credits include Playwrights Horizons, Roundabout Theatre Co., Public Theater, Classical Theatre of Harlem, Negro Ensemble Co., and Billie Holiday Theatre, among others. Select regional credits include Yale Rep, Hartford Stage, Arena Stage, The Old Globe, and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. TV credits: *Law and Order*, *All My Children*, and HBO's *OZ*, among others. Selected film credits: *Peebles*, *Musical Chairs*, *Tio Papi*. As a writer: *Augusta Brown*, *Electric Lady*, and *The Jimi Hendrix Experiment*. As a director: August Wilson's entire American Century Cycle for the Lucy Craft Laney Museum of Black History, *The Man in Room 306* and *Seven Guitars* at Triad Stage, and *A Salute to August Wilson* and *Religion* for Billie Holiday Theatre.

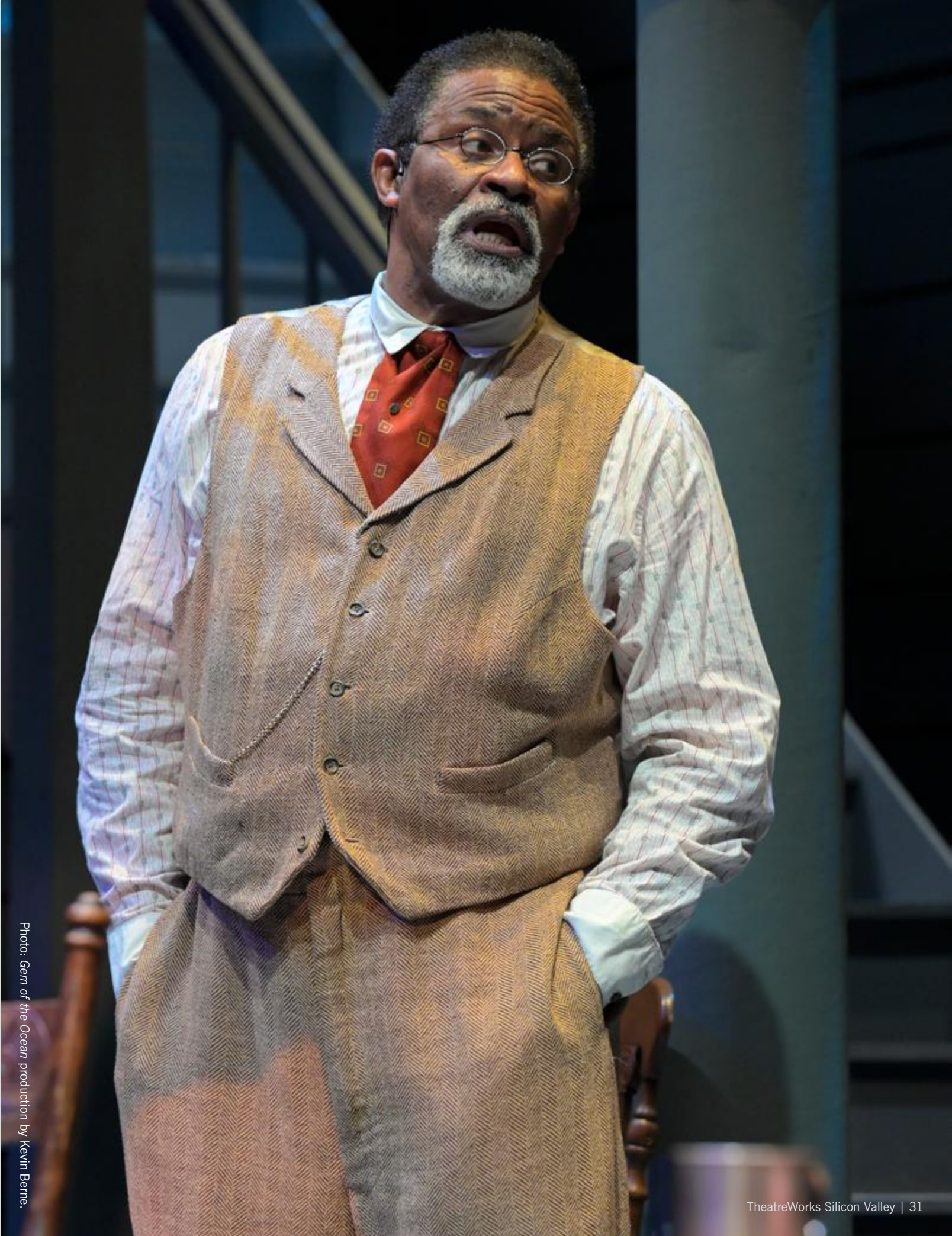


Photo: Gem of the Ocean production by Kevin Berne.



RUTHERFORD SELIG

CHARACTER STUDY



DAN HIATT (Rutherford Selig) recently performed as Harvey Cobb in TheatreWorks' *They Promised Her the Moon*. Other TheatreWorks favorites: *Mark Twain's River of Song*, *The 39 Steps*, *Upright/Grand*, *The Pitman Painters*, *Twentieth Century*, and *Ambition Facing West*. Bay Area credits include *Vanity Fair*, *Father Comes Home from the Wars*, and *The Birthday Party* at American Conservatory Theater; *Shoot Me When* at SF Playhouse; *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Hamlet*, *Pastures of Heaven*, and *Arms and the Man* at California Shakespeare Theater; *Wittenberg* at Aurora Theatre; *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* and *Dinner With Friends* at Berkeley Rep; and *Anne Boleyn* at Marin Theatre Co. Regional credits include Yale Rep, Theatre Calgary, Seattle Rep, Arizona Theatre Co., Pasadena Playhouse, Huntington Theatre, Ford's Theatre, and Shakespeare Theatre Co. in Washington, D.C.

Rutherford Selig is a traveling peddler who frequently stops in at 1839 Wylie. His travels keep him well informed—when he visits he brings not only goods for sale, but also news and gossip from the surrounding communities.

CAESAR

CHARACTER STUDY

Caesar Wilks is a constable in Pittsburgh's third ward. During a stint in prison he proved his mettle to white authorities by breaking up a riot, earning himself a gun and a badge upon release. Caesar wields his power over the inhabitants of the Hill District—he is a harsh enforcer, holding the law above all else, regardless of circumstances. He is Black Mary's brother, and cannot understand why she's chosen to live with Aunt Ester, and resents that her associations reflect poorly on him.



RODNEY HICKS was last seen on Broadway in *Come From Away*, where he originated the role(s) of Bob & others. Previous Broadway credits include the 2000 revival of *Jesus Christ Suerstar*; *The Scottsboro Boys*; and the Original and Closing casts of *RENT*. He is grateful to have over 25 years of regional theatre credits. Film credits include Paramount Pictures' *Mighty Oak* (DB, Apple TV/Amazon); *RENT: Live on Broadway* (Benjamin Coffin III, Apple TV/Amazon); *django*. Television credits include *Leverage*; *Grimm*; *Hope & Faith*; *Law and Order: Criminal Intent*; *Student Affairs* (pilot); *NYPD Blue*. He is the playwright of *1968*, *The Flawed Play*, *Flame Broiled. or the ugly play* (Local Theater Company); *Just Press Save* (2020 Pride Plays directed by Michael Greif); *Ms. Pearl's Cabaret*. rodneyhicks.net



Photo: *Germ of the Ocean* production by Kevin Berne.



BLACK MARY

CHARACTER STUDY



PORSCHA SHAW recently appeared as Belle in *Beauty and the Beast* at 5th Avenue Theatre. Other credits include *Shout Sister Shout* and *Nina Simone: Four Women* for Seattle Rep; *Richard III* with Seattle Shakespeare Co. and the upstart crew collective; *Saint Joan* and *The Last World Octopus Wrestling Champion* for ArtsWest; *Marisol* with The Williams Project; and *Hoodoo Love* at Sound Theatre Co. Shaw is a graduate of the Professional Actor Training Program at the University of Washington. She is a native of Richmond, Texas and a graduate of Santa Fe University of Art and Design, where she majored in Drama under the training of Jon Jory.

Black Mary is Aunt Ester's housekeeper and protégé. She keeps the house clean and its inhabitants fed. Aunt Ester shares her wisdom with Black Mary, preparing Black Mary to take up the mantle when Aunt Ester's time finally comes. Black Mary also happens to be Caesar's sister, but an incident years ago led to a falling out between the siblings.

SOLLY TWO KINGS

CHARACTER STUDY

Solly Two Kings is a friend of Eli, a suitor of Aunt Ester, and a former conductor on the Underground Railroad. After escaping enslavement as a young man he felt compelled to return to free others—he couldn't stand being free knowing that others were still in bondage. During the play, though it's decades after emancipation, he is called on to help his sister escape dangerous conditions in Alabama. Despite his age, he plans to answer the call.



KIM SULLIVAN (Solly Two Kings) is just back from France, Switzerland and Portugal, where he performed in *Silence and Fear* by David Geselon. He has performed in all ten of August Wilson's plays, including Winning Boy in *The Piano Lesson*, Cane Well in *Seven Guitars*, Bono and Lyons in *Fences*, and Stool Pigeon in *King Hedley II*. Mr. Sullivan received a Helen Hayes award for his role in *Familiar* at the Woolly Mammoth theatre in Washington, DC, and an Audelco award for his portrayal of Imamu Baraka aka Leroi Jones in *Looking for Leroy* at New Federal Theatre in New York City. Television credits include *The Blacklist*, *Law and Order*, *Trial by Jury* and *One Life To Live*. Mr. Sullivan is honored to revisit Solly Two Kings. Thanks Tim.



Photo: Gem of the Ocean production by Kevin Berne.



AUGUST WILSON (Playwright) (April 27, 1945-October 2, 2005) authored *Gem of the Ocean*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *The Piano Lesson*, *Seven Guitars*, *Fences*, *Two Trains Running*, *Jitney*, *King Hedley II* and *Radio Golf*. These works explore the heritage and experience of African-Americans, decade-by-decade, over the course of the twentieth century. His plays have been produced at regional theatres across the country and all over the world, as well as on Broadway. In 2003, Mr. Wilson made his professional stage debut in his one-man show, *How I Learned What I Learned*. Mr. Wilson's work garnered many awards including Pulitzer Prizes for *Fences* (1987); and for *The Piano Lesson* (1990); a Tony Award for *Fences*; Great Britain's Olivier Award for *Jitney*; as well as eight New York Drama Critics Circle Awards for *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *Fences*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, *The Piano Lesson*, *Two Trains Running*, *Seven Guitars*, *Jitney*, and *Radio Golf*. Additionally, the cast recording of *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* received a 1985 Grammy Award, and Mr. Wilson received a 1995 Emmy Award nomination for his screenplay adaptation of *The Piano Lesson*.

Mr. Wilson's early works included the one-act plays *The Janitor*, *Recycle*, *The Coldest Day of the Year*, *Malcolm X*, *The Homecoming*, and the musical satire *Black Bart and the Sacred Hills*. Mr. Wilson received many fellowships and awards, including Rockefeller and Guggenheim Fellowships in Playwriting, the Whiting Writer's Award, 2003 Heinz Award, was awarded a 1999 National Humanities Medal by the President of the United States, and received numerous honorary degrees from colleges and universities, as well as the only high school diploma ever issued by the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. He was an alumnus of New Dramatists, a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, a 1995 inductee into the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and on October 16, 2005, Broadway renamed the theatre located at 245 West 52nd Street - The August Wilson Theatre. Additionally, Mr. Wilson was posthumously inducted into the Theater Hall of Fame in 2007. Mr. Wilson was born and raised in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and lived in Seattle, Washington at the time of his death. He is immediately survived by his two daughters, Sakina Ansari and Azula Carmen Wilson, and wife, costume designer Costanza Romero.

WHO'S WHO

TIM BOND (Director) See bio on pg 17.

LONNIE RAFAEL ALCARAZ

(Lighting Design) is a professor at the University of California, Irvine, where he is the head of the lighting program. Recent designs include *Curie Curie* for Transversal Theatre Co. in Irvine, CA and Warsaw, Poland; *A Christmas Carol* at the Denver Center; *American Mariachi* and *A Shot Rang Out* at South Coast Rep; *All is Calm* at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival; *Mojada* at Oregon Shakespeare Festival and Portland Center Stage. He is an associate artist at South Coast Repertory and Cornerstone Theater Co. and is the Resident Lighting Designer at South Coast Rep, Great River Shakespeare Festival, and Ballet Repertory Theatre. He is a member of the United Scenic Artists, Local 829/International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees. His complete design portfolio can be found at lradesigns.com.

KENDRA BARNES (Movement

Consultant) is a Bay Area native, Contemporary and African Diasporic choreographer, and instructor who recently choreographed California Shakespeare Theater's *Winter's Tale*, and as co-choreographer of *Black Odyssey* was a finalist for TBA's Best Choreography Award. As Choreographer for the African-American Shakespeare Company she received a Broadway World award for best choreography and was a TBA Finalist for Outstanding Ensemble of a Play (*For Colored Girls*). She is founder of K*STAR*PRODUCTIONS, a dance space inside of Flax Art & Design downtown Oakland and the presenting organization for KSP Studios, the Kendra Kimbrough Dance Ensemble (KKDE), & co-presenter of the Black Choreographers Festival: Here & Now. She currently teaches dance at UC Berkeley and is an Adjunct Professor at St. Mary's College of CA's LEAP Program.

WILLIAM BLOODGOOD (Scenic Designer)

is pleased to design his first production for TheatreWorks. Well known in American regional theatres, he has worked in many, including Arena Stage in Washington, DC, Arizona Theatre Co., Berkeley Rep, the Alley Theatre in Houston, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Denver Center Theatre Company, Indiana Repertory Theatre, Intiman Theatre in Seattle, the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego, Portland Center Stage, Seattle Rep, Syracuse Stage, and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival where he has designed the scenery for 150 productions. In 2011 he was honored to design the United States national exhibit for the Prague Quadrennial of Performance and Space Design. He is the recipient of many awards for his designs, including the Oregon Governor's Award for the Arts in 2002.

CHERELLE GUYTON, MBA (Hair, Wig, and Makeup Designer)

served as Wig/Hair Designer for regional productions of *Beauty and the Beast* (The 5th Avenue Theatre); *Mother Road*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *How to Catch Creation*, *Romeo and Juliet* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival); *Citrus* (Northern Stage); *In the Heights*, *Penny Candy* (Dallas Theatre Center); *School Girls...* (Kansas City Repertory); *A Wonder in My Soul* (Baltimore Center Stage); *Twelfth Night* (Shakespeare in Detroit). Guyton was also Wig Master for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Copper Children*, *Destiny of Desire*, *Disney's Beauty and the Beast*, *UniSon* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival) and Wig/Hair Designer for *Beauty and the Beast* (Ohio Northern University). ED&I Hair Master Class: Hair/Wig and Makeup Inclusive Design Training (Carnegie Mellon University). ED&I Consulting: *The Lion King*, *Aladdin*, *Frozen* (Disney Theatrical Group). ED&I Texture Consultant: *The Wiz*, *Head Over Heels*, *Into the Woods* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival).

MAYA HERBSMAN (Intimacy

Coordinator) is a Middle Eastern Ohlone Land based intimacy director,

director, arts administrator, and educator. Maya has been the first intimacy professional at theaters across Northern California including Berkeley Rep, TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, San Francisco Playhouse, Shotgun Players, Golden Thread Productions, Z Space, Cutting Ball Theater, Crowded Fire Theater, and more. Her work has been featured in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *J. Magazine*, and *HowlRound*. She is currently on faculty at Berkeley Rep, American Conservatory Theater, The Urban School of San Francisco, and is a recurring guest lecturer at the University of California, Berkeley, and Stanford University. She holds a BA from Wesleyan University in Theater, with the Rachel Henderson Memorial Prize in Directing.

MICHAEL KECK (Original Music and Musical Direction)

is a composer whose work has been heard across the country and internationally. Regional credits include Indiana Rep, Dallas Theatre Center, Seattle Rep, Pacific Conservatory for the Arts, Westport Country Playhouse, Seattle Children's Theatre, Bristol Riverside Theatre, Syracuse Stage/Wilma Theatre, Milwaukee Rep, Portland Center Stage, Arena Stage, Idaho Shakespeare Festival, Great Lakes Theatre Festival, Prince Music Theatre, People's Light and Theatre Co., Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Guthrie Theatre, Mark Taper Forum, Cincinnati Playhouse, and Alliance Theater. International credits include Market Theatre in Johannesburg and Baxter Theatre Center in Cape Town, South Africa, The National Theater of Croatia, Barbican Theatre Centre in London and Bristol Old Vic in the UK. He is a member of AEA, SAG-AFTRA, ASCAP, PEN, and The Dramatists Guild.

JEFFREY LO (Casting Director)

directed TheatreWorks' productions of *The Language Archive* and *The Santaland Diaries*. A Filipino-American director and playwright, his additional directing credits include

Vietgone and *The Great Leap* at Capital Stage, *Hold These Truths* at San Francisco Playhouse, and *Between Riverside and Crazy* at San Jose Stage Co. He is the recipient of the Leigh Weimers Emerging Artist Award, the Arts Council Silicon Valley Emerging Artist Laureate, and Theatre Bay Area Director's TITAN Award. In addition to his work on stage, Mr. Lo does work nationally promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion in the arts. He is a graduate of the multicultural Arts Leadership Institute and a proud alumnus of the UC Irvine Drama Department. JeffreyWritesAPlay.com

TAYLOR MCQUESTEN (Production Stage Manager, she/her) works internationally as a stage and tour manager, electrician, and stuntwoman. Select credits include ten seasons at Tony Award-winning TheatreWorks Silicon Valley (resident stage manager), tour manager for Evan Rachel Wood and Zane Carney's band EVAN+ZANE, SF Sketchfest (assistant technical director), California Shakespeare Theater (production electrician), Legion A/V (head of lighting), Playfaire Productions (swordswoman), The Independent SF (lighting designer), Highlander Films (production assistant), American Conservatory Theater, Center REP, Cabrillo Stage, Hillbarn Theatre, and Magic Theatre. She also trains historic mêlée weapons at Davenriche European Martial Arts School under master swordsman, Sir Steaphen Fick. In June 2022, she will join *Lizard Boy* (production stage manager), last seen on the TheatreWorks stage in Mountain View, for its world tour to the United Kingdom, South Korea, and Australia!

JUDITH NIHEI (Artist Counselor) is a San Francisco Japantown native, and has spent many years in theatre as a director, dramaturg, writer, and administrator. A founding member of Seattle's Northwest Asian American Theatre, she returned to work with San Francisco's Asian American Theatre Co. and joined the historic

improv group, The Committee. A licensed psychotherapist in private practice, Judi consults for schools and community-based organizations, facilitating the incorporation of stress-reduction and cultural humility as an integral part of trauma-informed services. In 2021 her worlds converged, when she was one of four healers invited to support the Theatre Communications Group Rising Stars of Color.

JONATHAN RIDER (Fight Director) has been choreographing fights nationally and internationally for over 30 years, with 13 productions at TheatreWorks, including *Archduke*, *Cyrano*, *Of Mice and Men*, *The Prince of Egypt*, *The Four Immigrants*, *Water by the Spoonful*, and *Superior Donuts*. His 30 credits for American Conservatory Theater include *Hamlet*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, and *The Orphan of Zhao*, for which he received a Critics Circle award. He was the Resident Fight Director for the San Francisco Opera for 12 years. He has also directed fights for Gran Teatro Del Liceu in Barcelona, Spain (*Tristan and Isolde*); Teatro Massimo in Palermo, Italy (*Fanciulla Del West*); and Sante Fe Opera (including *Maometto II*, *Wozzeck*, *Tosca*). Mr. Rider holds a BA from Santa Clara University.

CHLOE ROSE SCHWEIZER (Assistant Stage Manager, she/her) is looking forward to her third season at TheatreWorks, where her credits include Assistant Stage Manager for *Lizard Boy*, Production Assistant for *The 39 Steps* and *They Promised Her The Moon*, and Stage Management Intern for *Frost/Nixon* and *Archduke*. Other recent credits include *A Christmas Carol* presented by BroadwaySF (Assistant Stage Manager), *Rock of Ages* at Theatre Aspen (Assistant Stage Manager), and *Cymbeline* and *Intimate Apparel* at Utah Shakespeare Festival (Production Assistant). In addition, Ms. Schweizer works as an electrician throughout the SF Bay and Chicago

at companies including Berkeley Rep, Smuin Ballet, Opera San José, Steppenwolf Theatre, Court Theatre, and others. She holds a BA in Theatre Arts, Summa Cum Laude from UC Santa Cruz.

LYDIA TANJI (Costume Designer) is delighted to work at TheatreWorks for the first time. Regional theater credits include Berkeley Rep, American Conservatory Theater, Magic Theatre, California Shakespeare Festival, Public Theater, Manhattan Theatre Club, Arena Stage, Geva Theatre, Syracuse Stage, Indiana Rep, Children's Theatre Co., Guthrie Theater, Court Theatre, Dallas Theater Group, Seattle Rep, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Mark Taper Forum, and South Coast Rep. She has been awarded six Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Awards and two Drama-Logue Awards. Film credits include *The Joy Luck Club* and *Hot Summer Winds*. Recently, she co-produced *Vanishing Chinatown: The World of The May's Photo Studio* which was aired on KQED, KVIE, and screened in six film festivals.

PHIL SANTORA (Executive Director) joined TheatreWorks in 2007. He has served as Managing Director of Northlight Theatre (Chicago) and Georgia Shakespeare Festival (Atlanta), as well as Development Director for Great Lakes Theatre Festival (Cleveland) and George Street Playhouse (New Brunswick). He holds an MFA in Theatre Administration from the Yale School of Drama and a BA in Drama from Duke University. He has served as Vice President of the National Alliance for Musical Theatre Board. Prior board service includes the League of Chicago Theatres, Atlanta Coalition of Theatres, and the executive committee of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT). He was named 2000's Best Arts Administrator by Atlanta Magazine and received the Atlanta Arts and Business Council's 1998 ABBY Award for Arts Administrator.

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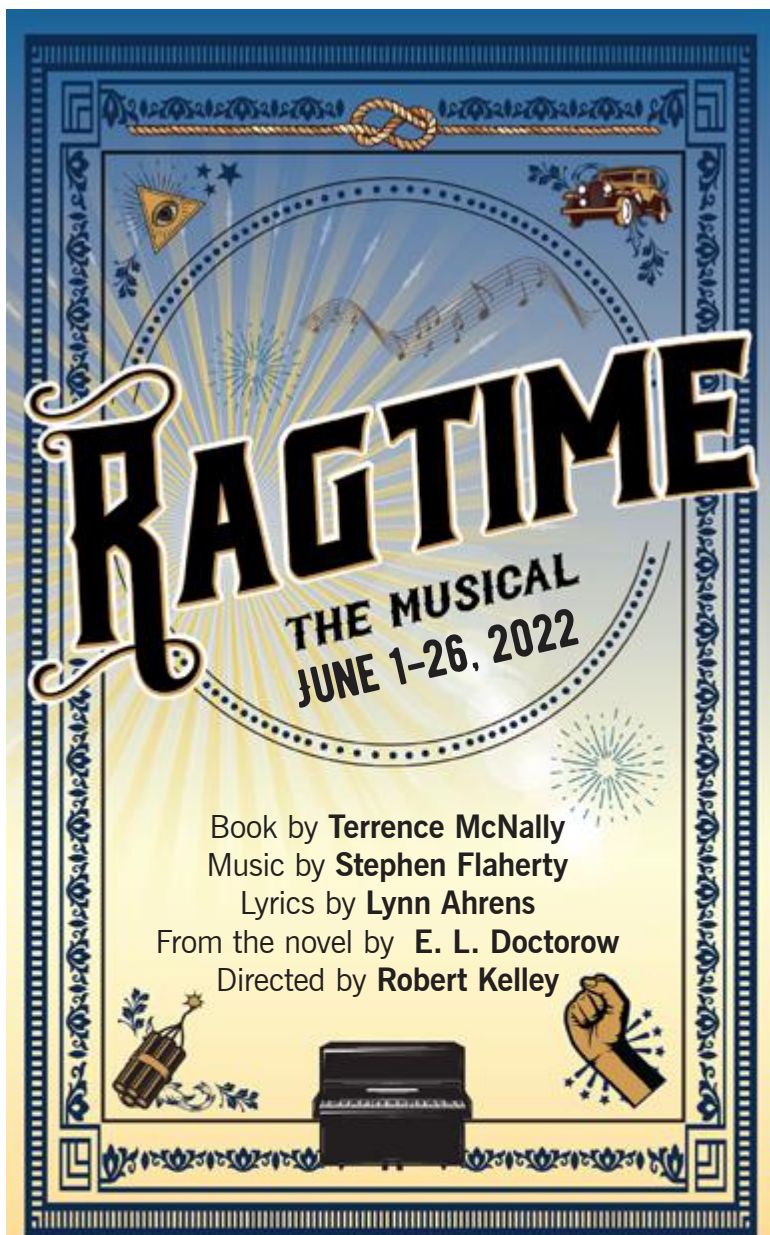
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