

MONDAY, MAY 3, 2021 AT 7PM EST

AMPLIFYING THE VOICES OF THE NEXT GENERATION

National Participants

































I believe that August Wilson is the greatest playwright of our generation because he writes the truth, because he gives voices to those folks that have no voice, because he has an artistry to the honesty and I am humbled to have ever been in his company.

August shared insights about life; his wisdom almost flows from life directly to the plays. August Wilson wrote 10 plays about every decade that African Americans have been in America. And his plays are not just for African-Americans. He wrote specifically about that culture, but with that specificity comes an understanding about the universal man, about all of our families, all of our loves. With his words on the page, August humanized our history. He honored our mothers and our grandmothers and our great grandmothers by putting their rituals, their songs, their myths on stage so that we could hear them.

I believe that August's work is worthy of the Nobel Prize just in terms of his personal sacrifice. For 23 years he wrote and produced plays to talk about our history and our connection to each other. That's a long and great sacrifice for any man. But you know, he walked the walk and he talked the talk, and he dealt with truth as he knew it. And because of this, all of America heard August's voice. His work is much more than a play. His work is life. And August's life was about change and impact and there is none greater. There is not a tree that stands taller than August Wilson.

My promise to August is that he will not be a footnote in our history books. He deserves more than that. He deserves volumes because of the lives he's touched, the artists that he's touched, the people that he's touched; his plays have been done not just in America but all over the world.

My commitment is to make sure that our young boys and girls, our college students, black, white, Asian, Latin, that all of us know August Wilson and that we know what his contributions have been. I don't think we'll really understand August's impact for another ten or twenty years. He was a big man. And I loved him for that.

Kenny Leon

Artistic Director Emeritus True Colors Theatre Company Co-Founder of the August Wilson Monologue Competition On behalf of everyone on staff at True Colors Theatre, I'd like to welcome you to the 14th Annual August Wilson Monologue Competition! In an unprecedented year of challenges, we could not be more proud of the ways in which our young people have persevered. It is thanks to them that we are able to deliver tonight's Finals.

In 2007, Todd Kreidler, longtime dramaturg for Mr. Wilson and in his role as Artistic Associate at True Colors, had an idea- create an event in which students could learn about and celebrate the work and legacy of August Wilson. He shared that idea with Kenny Leon, True Colors' founder, and Dr. Shondrika Moss-Bouldin, former lead of the True Colors' Education program. Together, the three of them launched the competition with three partner schools in Atlanta. They all remarked at the immediate impact on the students. Throughout the competition's history, students have shared their stories of how participating in the program, making friends with their fellow competitors, and learning more about themselves through the work of a Black playwright has inspired them and buoyed their aspirations. While the pandemic has shifted or put an end to many dreams over the last 16 months, our partner organizations stood resolute-let's prioritize this experience for our students.

This past weekend, students had the opportunity to attend workshops and master classes taught by some of Theatre's leading practitioners. Seeing the students engage with and have their questions answered by Phylicia Rashad, Robert Barry Fleming, Ruben Santiago-Hudson, Weyni Mengesha, David Gallo, Dr. Sandra Shannon, amongst a host of others, remains a highlight. The smiles on their faces as they learned new performance techniques and the courage they exhibited as they debated and discussed the ways they can use their voices as artists to tackle some of the thorniest issues plaguing our society today gave me an even strong sense of hope in the power of this generation.

Our partner organizations, that represent cities in 16 regions of the country, worked tirelessly- shifting their programs online, countless hours of teaching artists conducting virtual workshops, and hosting their regional finals online. True Colors salutes our partners for their efforts this year and for their years of work in helping make this competition one of the most successful high school monologue competitions in the nation.

Now get ready to witness the hard work payoff! Our 16 finalists are ready to deliver and I know you are in for a treat. Just by being here, all of the students are winners- and by your attendance you are contributing to their success.

Thank you and enjoy. Positive vibrations,



Ju

Jamil Jude

Artistic Director True Colors Theatre Company

The 2021

August Wilson Monologue Competition

National Finals

May 3rd, 2021

Welcoming Remarks

Jamil Jude

Introduction of Judges

Chandra Stephens-Albright

Presentations by National Finalists

Dalencia Brown
Katherine Bruce
Kaylah Copeland
Shakyna Golphin
Jayla Gossett
Taylor Jackson
Marla Jordan
Juwan Lee

Arwen-Vira Marsh
Yexuanj Rivera Melendez
Taloria Merricks
Jola Olojede
Julius Shanks
Tyla Uzo
Bri'Yon Watts
Johnathan Westbrook

Video Musical Performances

Maiesha McQueen Rudy Currence

Presentation of Winners

Jamil Jude



Zayda Adams

Zayda Adams is a dancer and aspiring actress from Boston, Massachusetts. She is in 11th grade and attends Boston Arts

Academy as a theater major. She is very passionate and has a thirst for performance, especially when it comes to acting. She has loved learning about and performing August Wilson and his work. He was an amazing playwright and is still a true inspiration. Zayda is very grateful for this opportunity and is excited to see where this journey takes her.



Scott Allen

Scott Allen is a junior in Booker T. Washington High School's Academy of Visual and Performing Arts

program. He's an avid participant in the theatre program and is also a member of the football, wrestling, and baseball teams. In his free time Scott enjoys writing music, rapping, and inspires to become a song writer and producer.



Tayjairine Arrieta

Hello! This is Tayjairine Arrieta, but she goes by

the nickname Tay. She's an 11th grade theater major at Boston Arts Academy. She is 17 years old and her pronouns are she/her/hers.



Tiana Bailey

Tiana N. Bailey is a Junior at both Bloomfield and Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts High School where she studies Theater. She's performed

locally in community theater and professionally at Hartford Stage Company for five consecutive years. Her accomplishments include founding the organization Black, Beauty & Butterflies (a support group for girls of color living with Turners Syndrome). Since Tiana's freshman year, she has been awarded Most Improved Actor (freshman year) and Most Brave Actor (sophomore year) from GHAA.



Dalencia Brown

Dalencia Brown is a senior attending DRW College Prep on the Westside of Chicago. In

addition to poetry and acting, she is extremely creative and loves to express herself through multiple art forms. She competed In the August Wilson Monologue Competition in both 2019 and 2020, winning the Chicago regionals in 2020.



Katherine Bruce

Katherine Bruce is 16 years old and is currently in the 11th grade and she attends Taylor Allderdice high school. Her hobbies include writing,

singing, dancing, and acting. She has been performing for roughly 4 years and has been going to Alumni theater company for about 3 years. She also has currently been involved with writing songs at KRUNK pgh. After high school she plans to attend an HBCU and major in theater, afterwards she intends on pursuing an acting career.



Celia Castillo-Torres

Celia is so honored and overjoyed to be performing in the August Wilson Monologue Competition!
Celia is currently a junior at

Connections Academy and works full time at a daycare. Although, pre-COVID you may have seen her around Portland as Heather Duke in ACMA's Heathers, the Blue Dragon in Oregon Children's Theatre's Dragons Love Tacos, or as a Squirelle in Northwest Children's Theatres' Elephant and Piggie! She'd like to thank her mom for supporting her through this process and her friends for the encouragement.



Anthony Costello

Anthony Costello is currently completing his senior year in the high school drama program at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts. Some previous, favorite credits include

Beethoven in 33 Variations (Weaver Academy), The Nurse in Romeo & Juliet (Weaver Academy), Jason in Bare: a Pop Opera (NC All-State Musical), Scarecrow in The Wizard of Oz (Community Theatre of Greensboro), and Peter Cratchit/Child Scrooge in A Christmas Carol (Triad Stage). Although he is undecided as to where he will be studying within the next four years, he plans to receive a BFA in Acting. He is beyond grateful for the words that August Wilson wrote onto each page of his plays and he is appreciative as well for the opportunity to share some of these words and to be a part of something that he finds so remarkable.



Hazel Eko

Hazel Eko is a 17 year old actress and singer from Los Angeles, California. She attends

View Park High School and enjoys writing music, bike riding, and playing piano.



Kaylah Copeland

Kaylah Copeland is so grateful to be a part of this competition alongside so many other extremely talented artists. This is her first

time competing in the August Wilson Monologue Competition and she has learned so much already. Currently, Kaylah attends the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts. She plans to attend The Theatre School at DePaul University as an Acting BFA major in the fall. She would like to thank her family for their constant support and Ms. Nikki for her kindness and commitment to this competition.



Kennedy Dawson

Kennedy Dawson, a senior at Holy Names Academy, is honored to compete in the August Wilson Monologue Competition this year. Kennedy is an active participant in her high school theatre department

performing in such productions as *She Kills Monsters*, *Radium Girls*, and as "Ti Moune" in *Once On This Island*. She has also been a part of many Seattle Children's Theatre productions including *Ragtime*, *RENT!*, and *Anon(ymous)*, as well as the 5th Ave Theatre's Rising Star Project -10 Minute Musicals. Kennedy considers herself a social activist and hopes to use her art as a platform to inspire younger kids of color to be unafraid to use their voices.



Bejunior Fallon

Bejunior Fallon is currently a senior at The Governor's Academy in Byfield, Massachusetts.

His main interests are acting, creative writing, and Black history. Next Fall, He will be attending New York University Tisch School of the Arts where he will study drama and creative writing.



Shakyna Golphin

Shakyna Golphin is 17 years old, a junior in Taylor Allderdice and UPrep high school.

Shakyna has been a performer for about 3 years, has been a member of Alumni theater company for all three and a member of The KRUNK Movement for one. After highschool shakyna wants to continue pursing performing arts as well as study digital media.



Taylor Jackson

Taylor Jackson is representing Alabama as an 18 year old senior at The Alabama School of Fine Arts specializing in Theater. Taylor is looking

forward to continuing her theatrical training at Pace University as a B.F.A Acting major in the fall of 2021. As a third year competitor in the August Wilson monologue competition, Taylor has found joy in connecting with young artists that share the same passion and drive for performance. Taylor is looking forward to yet another opportunity in participating in the New York virtual finals.



Marla Jordan

Marla Jordan is a 16 year-old sophomore attending De La Salle North Catholic High School in Portland, Oregon. She has been involved in

Theater Performing Arts since the 2nd grade and loves every bit of it. Marla sings, dances, and acts and has been in many performances and plays including a commercial for "Every Child" initiative. She has performed in Dinner Theaters, film acting, numerous plays of all genres and created choreography for dances in school assemblies. Marla is no stranger when it comes to performing. She wants to continue this line of work and hopes to make it on the big screen



Jayla Gossett

Jayla Gossett is a junior at Grand Prairie High school. She has always had a passion for theatre since she was 3 years old. Throughout high school, she has

been a part of numerous shows including her latest Uil program *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds*. Jayla Gossett's hope is to continue to learn how to grow and develop her acting range. Her dream is to inspire and teach others through her art form. Some of the people she looks up to include: her mother, Jennifer Hudson, Viola Davis, and Cynthia Erivo.



Kasandra Jimenez

Kasandra Jimenez is a junior in Booker T. Washington High School's Academy of Visual and Performing Arts

program. She is an active participant in the theatre program and is a student representative of the NPS School Board. She enjoys performing in plays, music, crafts, and learning. She inspires to become a therapist or adolescent psychiatrist and is passionate about mental health.



Zu-Zu Kandilige

ZuZu is 17 years old and from Bothell, WA. Her love for the arts started after taking improv classes and participating in school productions. She loves

acting because of the storytelling aspect and hopes to pursue screen acting and one day direct an on screen production. She has appeared in the short film "Slice of Life" (Gina), productions of *The Lion King* (Pumbaa), *Game of Tiaras* (Smeagol), and more. She would like to thank her drama teacher Diana Henderson, her family, and the amazing coaches at Seattle Rep for supporting her through her journey.



Juwan Lee

Juwan Lee was born and raised in New Haven, CT. He currently attends Cooperative

Arts and Humanities Magnet High School, Majoring in Theatre. Juwan will continue his studies in the fall at Morehouse College In Altana, GA. This is Juwan's third year competing in the August Wilson Competition and his second Year being a finalist.



Taloria Merricks

Taloria Merricks is a 4 year August Wilson Competitor with her last year being a high school senior. She is attending Howard University

in the fall majoring in Musical Theater. Her past roles have included, Ensemble, in a production of *Bright Star* and *Anything Goes*, Follies Girl in the production of *The Drowsy Chaperone*, and Leading Player in the production of *Pippin*. Taloria continues to pursue her passion in all forms of the performing arts with the help and of God and her family.



Stephen Moran

Stephen Moran is an actor/student from Los Angeles, CA. He

has been acting for five years and will be bringing his passion for the craft with him to study in college in hopes of someday making it into a professional career.



Arwen-Vira Marsh

Arwen-Vira Marsh is excited to be back home with the rest of her August Wilson brothers and sisters! She is currently a Drama Major at Laguardia High School

of Performing Arts in NYC and will be joining the Northwestern University class of 2025 as a Theater Major in the fall. In addition to acting, Arwen-Vira is also striving to create a career in directing and producing theater and film. She also loves to take black and white film photography and read... A LOT! She wants to thank her mentor Marcus D. Harvey for showing her the power in her veins she had inside all along.



Yexuanj Rivera Melendez

Yexuanj Rivera is a proud Puerto Rican who has been living in the U.S for 3 years. He is a junior at Milwaukee highschool of the arts where

he majors in Theater. In his last performance, he played the role of Jack in the musical *Newsies*. To him, theater is a safe zone, the zone where he can just express his emotions without any concerns. Yexuanj loves enlightening others through theater, which is why he is more than honored to participate in the 2021 August Wilson Monologue competition.



Jola Olojede

Jola Olojede is a Junior Acting major at Ovation Academy of Performing Arts in McKinney, TX. He has been seen onstage as Oliver Warbucks in *Annie*.

Walter n *Elf*, Carlos in *Descendants*, and Mal Beineke in The *Addams Family* among others. Jola was a 2020 Regional finalist in the AWMC and is proud to represent our Region this year in the National competition. Jola aspires to work as a stage and screen actor after completing his Conservatory training at Ovation Academy and a collegiate program. Jola is also a songwriter and rapper. His music can be found on all streaming platforms.



Leandra Persaud

Leandra is a sophomore from Juan Morel Campos Secondary School. She likes to sing,

do makeup, hang out with her friends, and take care of her kitties. She also prefers to play antagonistic roles in anything she performs in, and a fun fact is that she likes to experiment with her style a lot.



Fatima Saidysall

Fatima Saidysall is a freshman at Repertory Company High School. This is her first year participating

in the August Wilson Monologue Competition, it has been an exciting and thrilling experience. She loves art, It is her way of expression. Art helps her heal and grow as a person. She is so grateful to be able to work with August Wilson's extraordinary writings.



Isabella Seery

Isabella Seery (age 15 from Bristol CT) is thrilled to be a part of this competition

and to be able to celebrate August Wilson's work! Isabella enjoys drawing, singing, dancing, and writing music in her free time aside from acting. She hopes you all enjoy the competition and wishes her other competitors the best of luck!



Julius Shanks

Julius Shanks II is an eighteen-yearold Senior. A native of Montgomery Alabama, he currently resides in Birmingham to attend the Alabama School of Fine Arts, where he is concentrating on theatre. Julius has

been acting in plays since 1st grade; ever since then he has had a passion for uplifting and putting a smile on the faces around him through his acting. While in his freshman year of high school he started teaching in a bible study at school every Thursday called "NEXT". Now every week he splits his time between teaching and concentration on theatre. After high school, his dream is to not only act but write, direct, and produce films as well that will give encouragement and inspire the youth in a positive light. Julius plans on attending an HBCU next year in order to help broaden his knowledge and love for the arts.



Fardowso Shidad

Fardowso Shidad is a senior at Rufus King International High School where she is involved in

theatre and takes theatre classes. Her love of theatre was inspired by seeing her older sister perform. Fardowso loves discovering new ways to grow as a performer which is why she is excited to be participating in the 2021 August Wilson Monologue Competition.



Owusu Takyi

Owusu Takyi is a Senior member of the Southeast Theatre Company who has earned numerous credits over the last four years at Southeast

Raleigh Magnet High School. One of his credits is *Metamorphoses*. He was preparing to be a lead in *Sister Act, The Musical* when the global pandemic hit. He has performed in several digital showcases and original online works since that time and is grateful for the opportunity to perform in the August Wilson Monologue Competition this year!



Tyla Uzo

Tyla Uzo is a senior attending Ramon C. Cortines School of Visual and Performing

Arts. She placed last year as a Los Angeles Finalist and is excited to compete Nationally. She was also the 2020 Grand Prize Finalist for The Music Centers Spotlight Competition. She is so excited to embark on her new journey as she transitions into the real world.



Bri'Yon Watts

Bri'Yon Watts comes from the south suburbs of Chicago, Illinois. This year was his third year

competing and making it to the Chicago Regional Finals and he will be portraying the character known as Youngblood from Jitney.



Johnathan Westbrook Johnathan Westbrook is a charismatic and gifted 15 year old, he attends school at the

Chicago high school for the arts (Chiarts). His hobbies include acting, singing, listening to music, and producing it as well.

Regional Partners

Bill Nunn Theatre Outreach Project- Pittsburgh, PA

Demeatria Boccella, Managing Director

Center Theatre Group- Los Angeles, CA Traci Kwon, *Arts Initiative Director* Camille Schenkkan, *Interim Dept. Director, Education and Community Partnerships* Andi Chapman, *Program Advisor*

The Goodman Theatre/University of Illinois at Chicago- Chicago, IL

Derrick Sanders, *Producing Director*Christian Helem, *Associate Director*Neal McCollam, *Coordinator, Theatre Operations,*Dept. of Performing Arts UIC

The Huntington Theatre Company- Boston, MA Meg O'Brien, *Director of Education*Regine Vital, *Manager of Curriculum and Instruction*

Kenny Leon's True Colors Theatre Company-

Atlanta, GA Nikki Toombs, *Director of Education* Efrem Whitaker, *Education Assistant*

LEAP- New York City, NY Kathy Harrison, *Director, Program Excellence* Taylor Valentine, *Manager, Program Excellence*

Long Wharf Theatre Company- New Haven, CT
Cheyenne Barboza, Community Partnerships and
Literary Associate
Azaria Samuels, Audience Development and
Corporate Partnership Coordinator
Briana Williams, Americorps Public Ally and
Learning and Community Organizing Assistant
Aleta Staton, Director of Community Partnerships
and Learning

Milwaukee Repertory Theatre- Milwaukee, WI Jeffrey Mosser, Associate Director of Education Jenny Toutant, Chief Education and Engagement Officer

Norfolk State University- Hampton Roads, VA Anthony Stockard, *Producing Artistic Director*

Seattle Rep- Seattle, WA Alex Lee Reed, Associate Director of Arts Engagement Nabra Nelson, Director of Arts Engagement

Southern Methodist University, Meadows School of

the Arts- Dallas, TX

Benard Cummings, Assistant Professor, Theatre Division

Sasha Davis, Program Co-Coordinator

Triad Stage- Greensboro, NC Sarah Hankins, *Interim Artistic and Learning Director* Miller Lucky, *North Carolina A&T State University*

World Stage Theatre- Portland, OR Shalanda Sims, *Founder/Director* Elijah Sims, *Program Coordinator* Julana Torres, *Arts Education Coordinator*

Michigan State University- Detroit/East Lansing, MI Philip Effiong, Associate Professor, Department of Theatre Bert Goldstein, Director of the Wharton Center Institute for Arts & Creativity

Deric McNish, Assistant Professor, Department of Theatre Rob Roznowski, Professor, Department of Theatre

Maryland- College Park, MD Leayne Dempsey

Dose Foundation- Urbana-Champaign, IL Kevin T. Hobbs

The August Wilson Monologue Competition

The August Wilson Monologue Competition was founded in 2007 by two collaborators of Wilson's, Kenny Leon and Todd Kreidler. Leon, who directed many of Wilson's plays, and Kreidler, who was Wilson's dramaturg and who directed his one-man show, *The Ground on Which I Stand*, were, at the time, the Artistic Director and Associate Artistic Director, respectively, of True Colors Theatre Company in Atlanta, Georgia. What started in one Atlanta high school has since



grown to be a national phenomenon. As of 2021, the August Wilson Monologue Competition has a presence in nineteen regions across the United States and serves thousands of students every year. Says Kreidler, "The goal of the competition is to help garner partnerships with communities, schools, and theaters across the United States, and to create educational materials about August Wilson that allow students, of all races, to connect these important theatre works with educational curricula like history, social studies, and literature."



Artistic Director

Jamil Jude

Managing Director

Chandra Stephens-Albright

AWMC National Coordinator

Larsen Kennedy

Director of Education

Nikki Toombs

Production Manager

Lisa Watson

Development Director

LaTeshia Ellerson

Sales Director

Kristen Parker

Connectivity Director

Brandall C. Jones

Finance Manager

Radames Williams

Leadership Assistant

Tyra Watkins

Founder and Artistic Director Emeritus

Kenny Leon

Co-Founder

Jane Bishop



Constanza Romero and the August Wilson Legacy LLC

Theatre Communications Group

Stage Manager

Alexis McKay

Semifinals Judges

Valerie Curtis-Newton, Leayne Dempsey, Ken-Matt Martin, Marion Friedman Young,
Maya Lawrence

Finals Judges

Jason Dirden, Joaquina Kalukango, Seret Scott, Tonya Pinkins, James A. Williams, Hershey Vazquez Millner

Teaching Artists

Allyson Brown, Sasha Maya Ada Davis, Naheem Garcia, Christian Helem, Nikki Toombs

Lindsay Allbaugh, Dwight Andrews, Jhanaë Bonnick, Tyler Bey, Trajan Clayton, Leayne Dempsey, Robert Barry Fleming, David Gallo, Gethsemane Herron-Coward, Ruben Santiago-Hudson, Cassidy Huff, Allen Lee Hughes, Todd Kreidler, Miller Lucky, Weyni Mengesha, Addae Moon, Dominique Morrisseau, Dr. Shondrika Moss-Bouldin, Sydney Oshuna, Suzy Petcheam and the Stella Adler Studio of Acting, Xavier Pierce, Amelia Powell, Clint Ramos, Phylicia Rashad, Steven Sapp, Dr. Sandra Shannon and the August Wilson Society, Deborah Wagnon

Rudy Currence and Maiesha McQueen

Cat Tate Starmer, Marion Friedman Young, Jenn Dwyer McEwen

Jeaux II LLC

Rebekah Wortman

TYDEF Studios

August Wilson



"Theatre can do that. It can disseminate ideas, it can educate even the miseducated, because it is art—and all art reaches across that divide that makes order out of chaos, and embraces the truth that overwhelms with its presence, and connects man to something larger than himself and his imagination."

-August Wilson, The Ground on Which I Stand

August Wilson was born Frederick August Kittle on April 27th, 1945 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The son of a Black mother and a German immigrant father, from an early age Wilson was forced to find his way in a world that was not always accommodating to him. Raised in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, where nine of the ten plays in The American Century Cycle are set, Wilson was a bright young man with a passion for language who nevertheless struggled in school. At the age of fifteen, after being accused of plagiarizing a paper, he dropped out of high school. In the following years, he would spend much of his time in the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, reading everything he could get his hands on and writing poetry.

At twenty, he changed his name to August Wilson, in honor of his mother, Daisy Wilson. After finding little professional success as a poet, Wilson co-founded the Black Horizon Theater in Pittsburgh, where he served as company director. It was through this work that he first explored playwriting. In 1978, Wilson left Pittsburgh for St. Paul, Minnesota. He would go on to write the first of his major works, Jitney, in 1979, which would be first staged in Pittsburgh in 1982. That same year, Ma Rainey's Black Bottom was accepted by the National Playwrights Conference at the O'Neill Theater Center in Connecticut, where he would meet director Lloyd Richards, who would become a professional partner and personal friend.

In 1984, Ma Rainey's Black Bottom would be the first of Wilson's plays to be produced on Broadway. It certainly, however, would not be his last. Most recently, Jitney, had its Broadway premiere in 2017, meaning all ten of The American Century Cycle plays have been produced on Broadway. Many productions of Wilson's plays were, and indeed are, award winning; this includes Fences, which won the 1987 Tony Award for Best Play.

August Wilson passed away at the age of sixty on October 2, 2005, after a battle with liver cancer. He is survived by two daughters, his wife, costume designer Constanza Romero, and his incredible collection of works. Undoubtedly, his legacy is a prodigious one.

The American Gentury Cycle

1900s: Gem of the Ocean

World Premiere: 2003

1910s: Joe Turner's Come and Gone

World Premiere: 1986

1920s: Ma Rainey's Black Bottom

World Premiere: 1984

1930s: The Piano Lesson

World Premiere: 1987

1940s: Seven Guitars

World Premiere: 1995

1950s: Fences

World Premiere: 1985

1960s: Two Trains Running

World Premiere: 1990

1970s: Jitney

World Premiere: 1982

1980s: King Hedley II

World Premiere: 1999

1990s: Radio Golf

World Premiere: 2005

Highlights of Awards and Honors

Pulitzer Prizes: Fences (1987) and The Piano

Lesson (1990)

Tony Award: Fences (1987)

American Theatre Critics Awards: Fences (1986) and Two Trains Running (1992)

New York Drama Critics Circle Awards: Ma Rainey's Black Bottom (1985), Fences (1987), Joe Turner's Come and Gone (1988), The Piano Lesson (1990), Two Trains Running (1992), Seven Guitars (1996) and Jitney (2000)

Rockefeller and Guggenheim Fellowships in Playwriting, Whiting Writers Award: Ma Rainey's Black Bottom (1986)

Heinz Award in Arts and Humanities (2004) National Humanities Medal awarded by the President of the United States of America (1999)

Member of both the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Honored in 1999 at the 100th Anniversary of the Hill District Branch of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh with the first high school diploma awarded by the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh

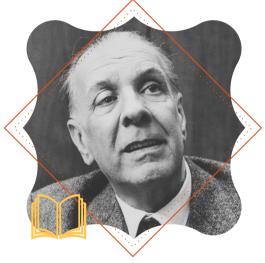
Honored in 2021 with a Forever Stamp from the United States Postal Service

The 4 B's the influences of August Wilson



Amiri Baraka was a poet and playwright. A leading force in the Black Arts movement, Baraka's voice was one of quick wit and strong beliefs. His work is stylistically diverse, changing with Baraka's personal ideologies. From Baraka, Wilson understood that art is inherently political.

Jorge Luis Borges was an Argentine author of poetry, essays, and short stories. A founder of postmodernist literature, his work is fantastic and, at times, surreal. Wilson learned from Borges that literature can be specific in its context and still universal in its themes.





Romare Bearden was a painter and artist, known for his distinctive use of collage and his highly stylized work. Two of Wilson's plays, The Piano Lesson and Joe Turner's Come and Gone, were directly inspired by pieces by Bearden. Wilson was struck by the "richness and fullness," as he put it, of Bearden's depiction of Black life.

The Blues, Wilson's primary influence, has its origins in the Black musicians of the Deep South in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Wilson's characteristic rhythm is highly reminiscent of Blues music. Pictured is Bessie Smith, "The Empress of the Blues," whom Wilson first heard at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh.

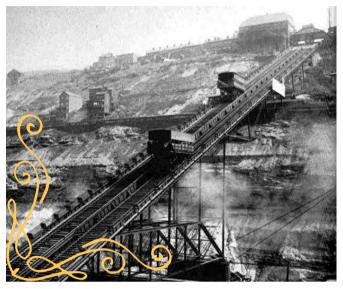




Nine out of ten plays in *The American Century Cycle*, the exception being *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, are set in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where August Wilson was born and raised. One of Pittsburgh's oldest and largest neighborhoods, the Hill, as it is known, was first inhabited largely by Jewish and Italian immigrants seeking the American dream in the late 1800s. During the Great Migration, the Hill would become home primarily to Black migrants from the South.



Crawford Grill – c. 1945 copyright Charlie Teenie Harris



The Penn Avenue Incline

In the years before World War I, the industrial economy offered those escaping segregation a way to make a living. Known as the "crossroads of the world" and "Little Harlem," the Hill was a center of culture- a hub for music, specifically jazz, art, and literature throughout the mid 1900s. After World War II and amidst the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s the Hill district underwent redevelopment, a process which displaced thousands of residents and hundreds of businesses. By the 1990s, many families who had called the Hill home for decades left the neighborhood for greener pastures. Today, the Hill district is undergoing a series of renovation and preservation efforts in the hopes of returning it to its former glory.

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKfQNO66GPk

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=shS7Avs5Iwg