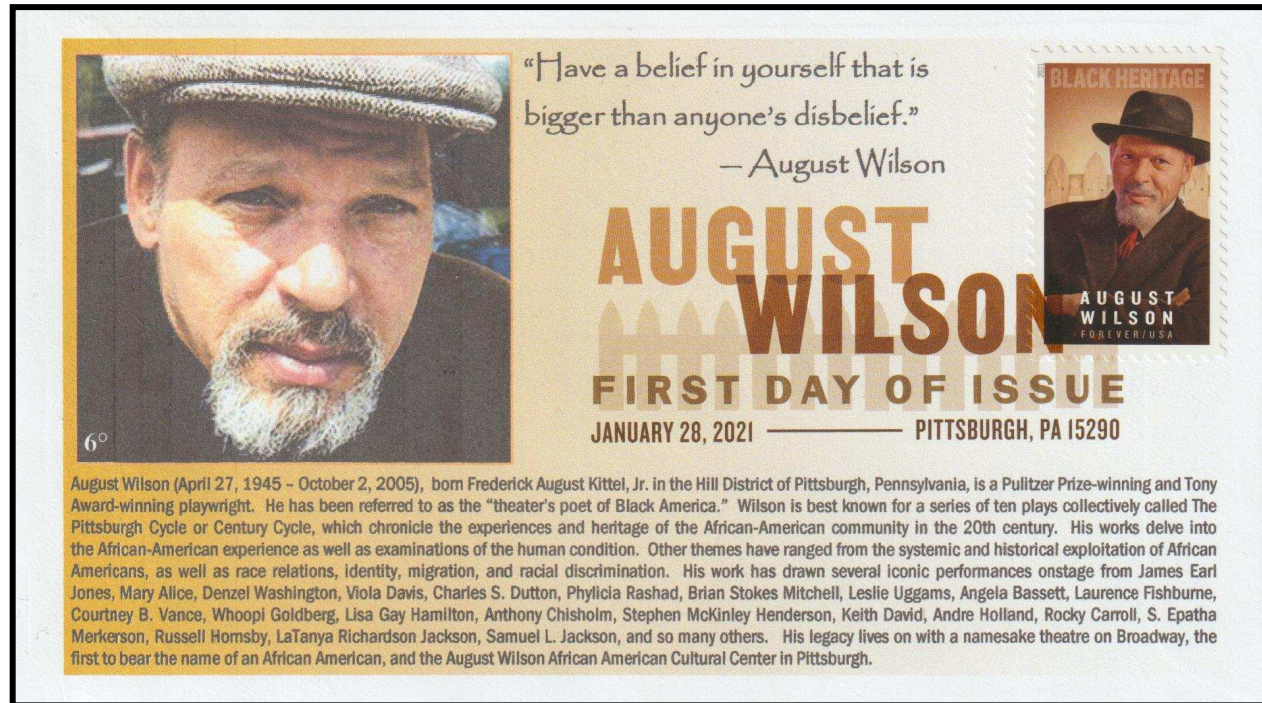


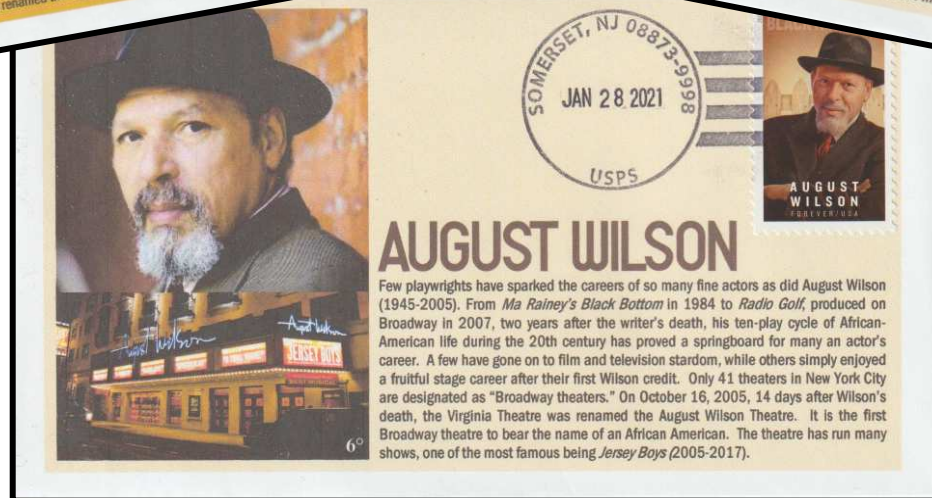
August Wilson



In just fifteen years, Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright August Wilson, considered America’s Shakespeare and referred to as the “theater’s poet of Black America,” became one of the most important voices in modern theater. He has won acclaim from literary and theater critics for his unprecedented 10-play Century Cycle — one play set in each decade of the 20th century — chronicling the joys, struggles, history, and culture of the Black experience in America.

Born Frederick August Kittel on April 27, 1945, he grew up in the ethnically diverse Hill District community of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania — a hub of creativity and commerce similar to New York City’s Harlem — the son of a Black American cleaning woman, Daisy Wilson (1920-1983), and a White German immigrant and baker, Frederick Kittel (1904-1965). In the Hill District, he was surrounded by the sounds, sights, and struggles of urban Black American life that would later fuel his creative efforts.

Wilson's father was mostly absent from his life and died in 1965. Wilson's mother raised him and his five siblings in a two-room, cold-water flat. He took his mother's last name in the early 1970s. A student at the predominantly White private Central Catholic High School, young Frederick was the victim of constant race-based bullying and abuse. He leaves Central Catholic for Connelly Trade School, where he feels unchallenged. He later transfers to Gladstone High School in the neighborhood of Hazelwood. As a tenth-grader, Wilson is assigned an essay on a historical figure. After being accused of plagiarizing his paper on Napoleon Bonaparte, the 15-year-old drops out of Gladstone High. He becomes a voracious reader and educates himself, spending his days at nearby Carnegie Library.



The covers here are an ESPER edition with a first day of issue pictorial postmark, a first-day-of-sale postmark from Rocky Hill, New Jersey, and an unofficial first day postmark from Somerset, New Jersey.

“When I first started writing plays, I couldn’t write good dialogue because I didn’t respect how Black people talked. I thought that in order to make art out of their dialogue, I had to change it, make it into something different. Once I learned to value and respect my characters, I could really hear them. I let them start talking.”

— August Wilson



August Wilson never formally studied theater. He often explained that he got his education from the four Bs: the blues, the art of painter Romare Bearden, a fellow Pittsburgher, and the writing of poet Amiri Baraka and writer/poet Jorge Luis Borges. “The foundation of my playwriting is poetry,” Wilson once said. He credited blues great Bessie Smith’s “Nobody in Town Can Bake a Sweet Jelly Roll Like Mine” as among the most influential songs in his work. He said hearing it the first time was a defining moment: it made him recognize the poetry in the everyday language of Black America and gave him the inspiration and freedom to use that language in his own writing.

Wilson began his artistic life as a poet at age 20. He sought out the poetry in everyday life. He spent time in restaurants, barbershops, and on the streets of “The Hill,” listening to the residents’ voices and stories. Wilson would later draw on these voices and histories to create unforgettable characters in his plays. He began writing plays because his ideas no longer fit in poems. “I needed a larger canvas,” Wilson said.

Wilson had a great impact on the careers of actors who got their start in his plays. As a playwright, he essentially became one of the greatest job creators for Black actors in the late 20th century. There’s an entire August Wilson family of thespians — referred to by some as Wilson’s Warriors — who have embodied and celebrated his works.

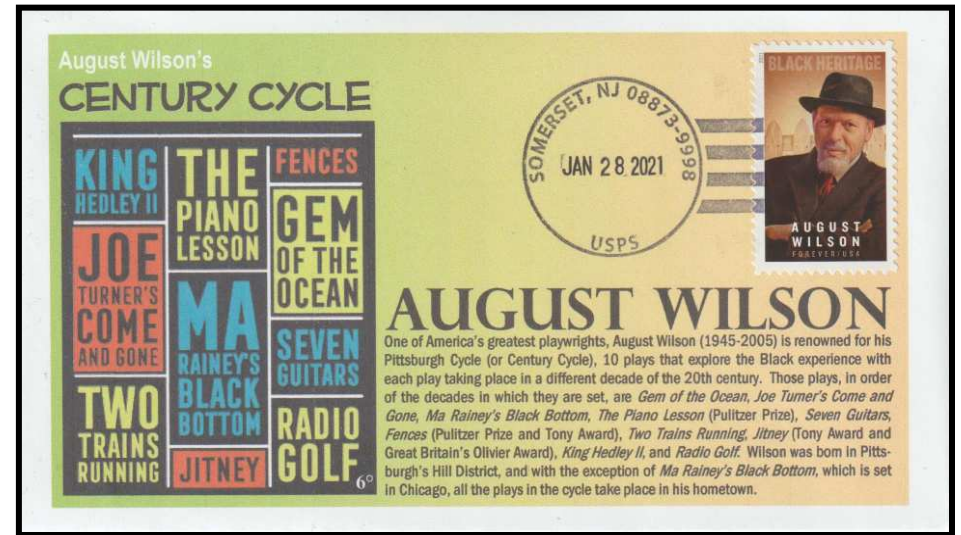
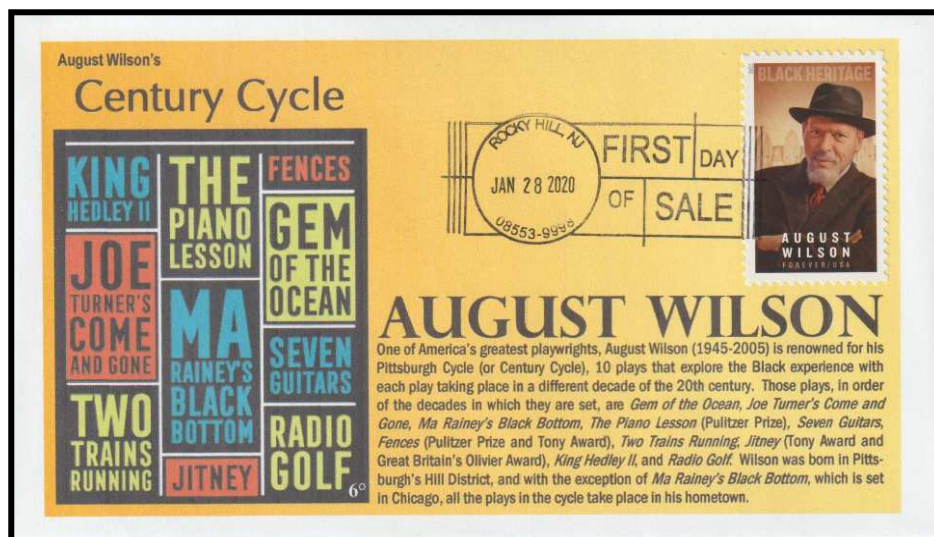
THE CENTURY CYCLE IN DECADE ORDER

1900s — GEM OF THE OCEAN: Aunt Ester carries nearly 300 years of memories for the people of the Hill District, and helps one man find himself within a turbulent history.

1910s — JOE TURNER'S COME AND GONE: Herald Loomis arrives in the Hill District after working on Joe Turner's chain gang, and his journey becomes a search for the meaning of his past and the possibilities for his future.

1920s — MA RAINEY'S BLACK BOTTOM: Rich in cultural gifts, but poor in opportunities, four musicians share jokes, bitter barbs, mounting tension, and the blues as they wait for their lead singer in a Chicago recording studio. It is the only play of the cycle not set in the Hill District.

1930s — THE PIANO LESSON: A sister and brother wrestle over whether to sell or keep a piano that was acquired during slavery through the sale of two of their ancestors.



1940s — SEVEN GUITARS: As six friends try to make sense of a young blues musician's untimely murder, they celebrate their lives together while riffing on their hopes, dreams, and frustrations.

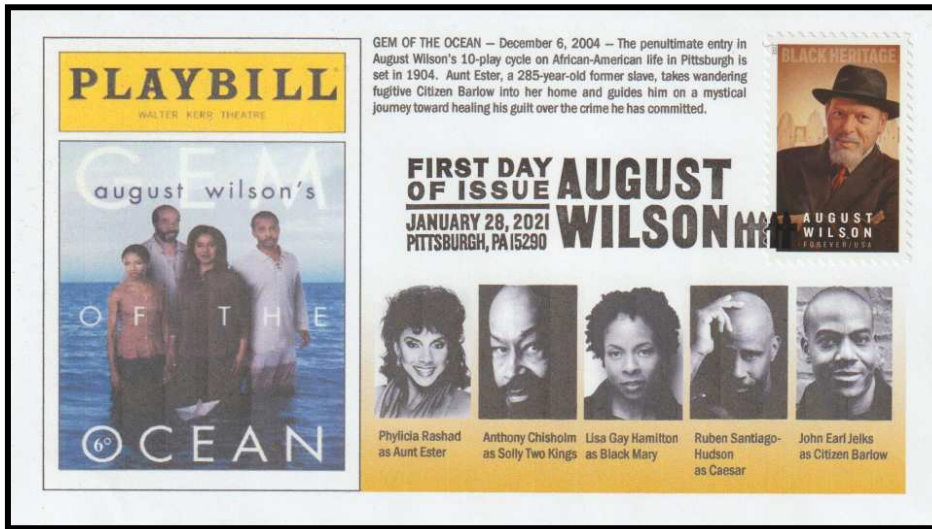
1950s — FENCES: Troy Maxson must reconcile his high aspirations with his personal disappointments and experience of discrimination.

1960s — TWO TRAINS RUNNING: Regular customers sit in a restaurant and discuss their views on work, faith, and race relations, wondering how much has really changed for them by the end of the decade.

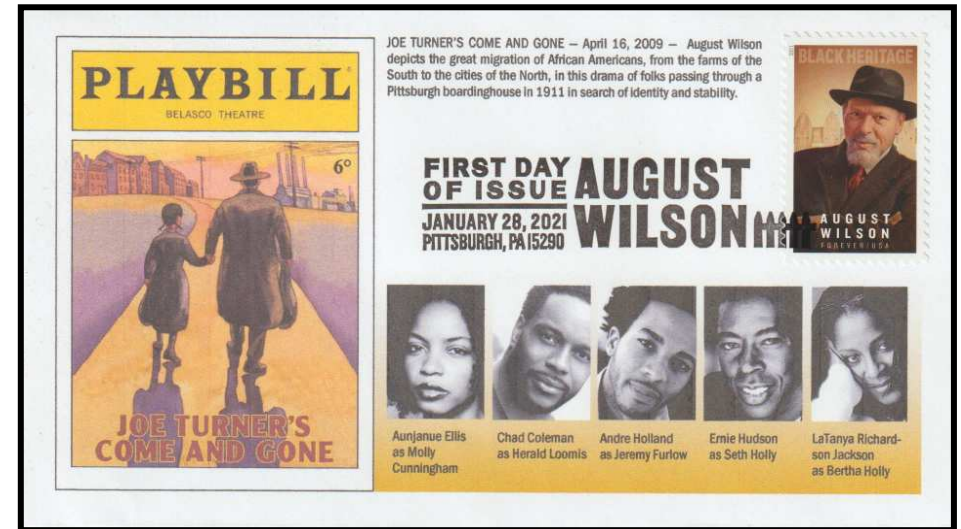
1970s — JITNEY: In an unofficial taxi station threatened with demolition, an assorted group of drivers tell stories, argue, and dream as they come and go, hustling to make a living.

1980s — KING HEDLEY II: An ex-convict tries to rebuild his life, family, and sense of self in a community plagued with violence and prejudice.

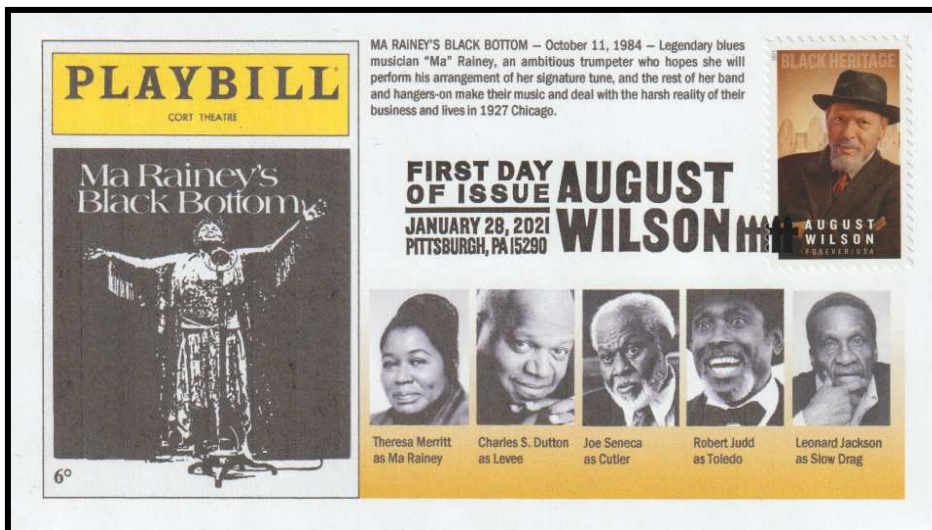
1990s — RADIO GOLF: Harmond Wilks has ambitious plans to redevelop the Hill District but clashes with his partner over whether to deny the past in the name of development, or to preserve the Hill's history.



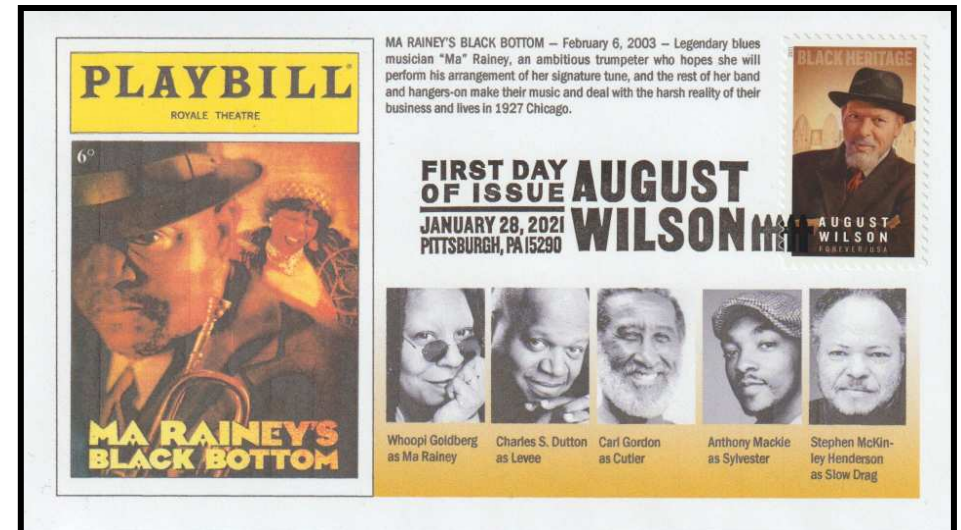
Although the ninth play produced, chronologically it is the first installment of the decade-by-decade, ten-play chronicle. The play ran at the Walter Kerr Theater on Broadway from December 6, 2004, to February 6, 2005, and received five Tony Award nominations: Best Play, Best Actress in a Play (Phylicia Rashad as Aunt Ester), Best Scenic Design in a Play (David Gallo), Best Costume Design in a Play (Constanza Romero), Best Lighting Design in a Play (Donald Holder).



The play opened on Broadway on March 27, 1988, at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre — running for 105 performances. Directed by Lloyd Richards, the cast included Delroy Lindo as Herald Loomis and television and movie star Angela Bassett, as his wife, Martha. A Broadway revival opened at the Belasco Theatre on March 19, 2009, in previews and officially on April 16, closing June 14 after 69 performances. That production had six Tony Award nominations and two wins.



The play's Broadway debut at the Cort Theatre in 1984 won a New York Drama Critics' Circle award and ran for 276 performances. It received a 1985 Tony Award nomination for Best Play; Dutton and Merritt were nominated for featured acting awards. In 2020, a film adaptation by screenwriter Ruben Santiago-Hudson and director George C. Wolfe, starring Viola Davis, Chadwick Boseman, Glynn Turman, Colman Domingo, and Michael Potts was released.



A Broadway revival opened on February 6, 2003, at the Royale Theatre, featuring Charles S. Dutton as Levee and Whoopi Goldberg as Ma. Directed by Marion McCClinton, the show ran for 68 performances. For his Broadway debut, Thomas Jefferson Byrd (June 25, 1950 – October 3, 2020) received a Tony Award nomination for Best Performance by a Featured Actor in a Play for his role as Toledo. It was the 2003 revival's only Tony nomination.

PLAYBILL
WALTER KERR THEATRE

THE PIANO LESSON

THE PIANO LESSON — April 16, 1990 — In 1936 Pittsburgh, Berniece Charles wants to sell the family piano to her daughter, while her brother, Boy Willie, wants to sell it to get money to buy the land their family once worked as slaves. A Romare Bearden painting, *The Piano Lesson*, inspired Wilson to write the play.

FIRST DAY OF ISSUE **AUGUST WILSON**
JANUARY 28, 2021
PITTSBURGH, PA 15290

BLACK HERITAGE
AUGUST WILSON
FOURVIRGINS

S. Epatha Merkerson as Berniece
Charles S. Dutton as Boy Willie
Carl Gordon as Doaker
Rocky Carroll as Lymon
Lou Myers as Wining Boy

The Piano Lesson received the 1990 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. A Romare Bearden painting, *The Piano Lesson*, inspired Wilson to write a play featuring a strong female character to confront Black history. This production received five Tony Award nominations, including Best Play and acting noms for Merkerson, Dutton, and Carroll. The play was adapted into a film with the same name in 1995. A 2022 revival of the play stars Samuel L. Jackson and John David Washington.

PLAYBILL
WALTER KERR THEATRE

SEVEN GUITARS

SEVEN GUITARS — March 28, 1996 — In Pittsburgh's Hill District in 1948, an aspiring blues musician returns home for the woman he loves, an ailing old man hopes for an heir to carry on his name, and three women cope with betrayal and disappointment.

FIRST DAY OF ISSUE **AUGUST WILSON**
JANUARY 28, 2021
PITTSBURGH, PA 15290

BLACK HERITAGE
AUGUST WILSON
FOURVIRGINS

Keith David as Floyd Barton
Rosalyn Coleman as Ruby
Viola Davis as Vera
Ruben Santiago-Hudson as Canewell
Roger Robinson as Hedley

The play was nominated for the 1995 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. The Broadway production ran from March 28, 1996, through September 8, 1996, at the Walter Kerr Theatre. The play received eight Tony Award nominations including a win for Ruben Santiago-Hudson for Best Performance by an Actor in a Featured Role in a Play. He was nominated for the Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Director of a Play for the Off-Broadway production of Wilson's *The Piano Lesson*.

PLAYBILL
46th STREET THEATRE

FENCES

FENCES — March 26, 1987 — Troy Maxson, a former baseball player in the Negro Leagues now reduced to collecting trash, must deal with his headstrong football-player son and his wife, who reevaluates their marriage when Troy comes home with the baby he fathered with another woman. The play has won the Pulitzer Prize and Tony Awards.

FIRST DAY OF ISSUE **AUGUST WILSON**
JANUARY 28, 2021
PITTSBURGH, PA 15290

BLACK HERITAGE
AUGUST WILSON
FOURVIRGINS

James Earl Jones as Troy Maxson
Mary Alice as Rose
Courtney B. Vance as Cory
Charles Brown as Lyons
Ray Aranha as Jim Bono

Fences opened at the 46th Street Theatre and closed on June 26, 1988, after 525 performances. It won the 1987 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and Tony Awards for Best Play, Best Performance by a Leading Actor in a Play (James Earl Jones), Best Performance by a Featured Actress in a Play (Mary Alice), and Best Direction of a Play (Lloyd Richards). Courtney B. Vance and Frankie Faison (as Gabriel Maxson) both were nominated for Best Performance by a Featured Actor in a Play.

PLAYBILL
CORT THEATRE

FENCES

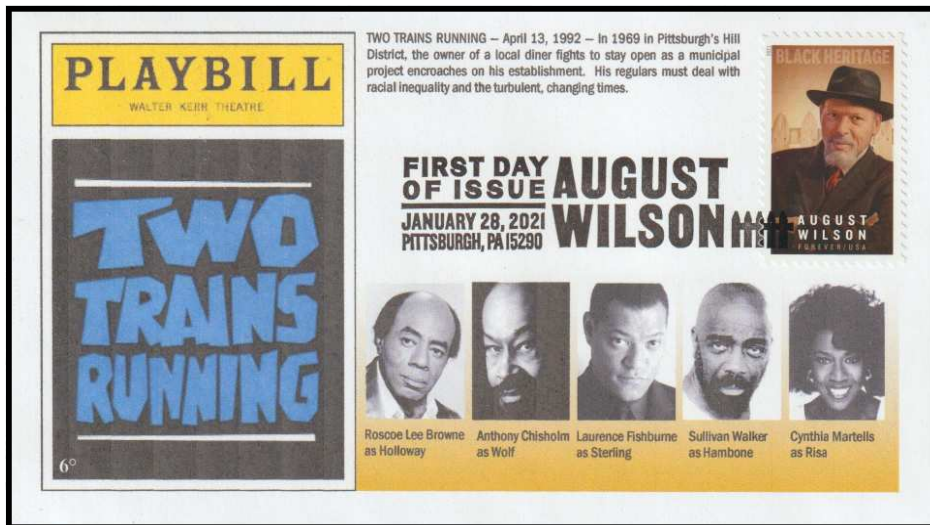
FENCES — April 26, 2010 — Troy Maxson, a former baseball player in the Negro Leagues now reduced to collecting trash, must deal with his headstrong football-player son and his wife, who reevaluates their marriage when Troy comes home with the baby he fathered with another woman. The play has won the Pulitzer Prize and Tony Awards.

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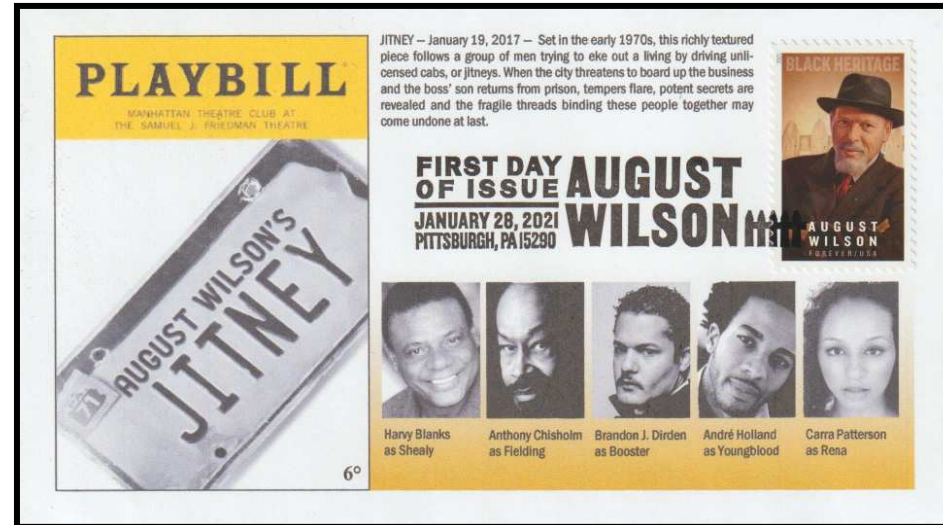
BLACK HERITAGE
AUGUST WILSON
FOURVIRGINS

Denzel Washington as Troy Maxson
Viola Davis as Rose
Chris Chalk as Cory
Russell Hornsby as Lyons
Stephen McKinley Henderson as Jim Bono

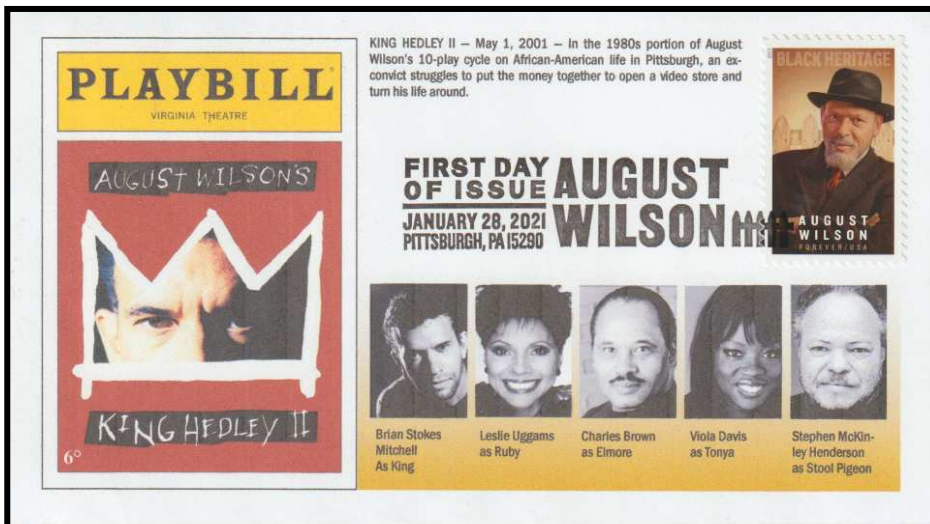
The first Broadway revival of the play opened at the Cort Theatre on April 26, 2010, with a limited 13-week engagement. Directed by Kenny Leon, the production starred Denzel Washington (Troy Maxson) and Viola Davis (Rose) as the married couple struggling with changing U. S. race relations. The revival was nominated for ten Tony Awards, winning three for Best Revival of a Play, Best Actor in a Play (Denzel Washington), and Best Actress in a Play (Viola Davis).



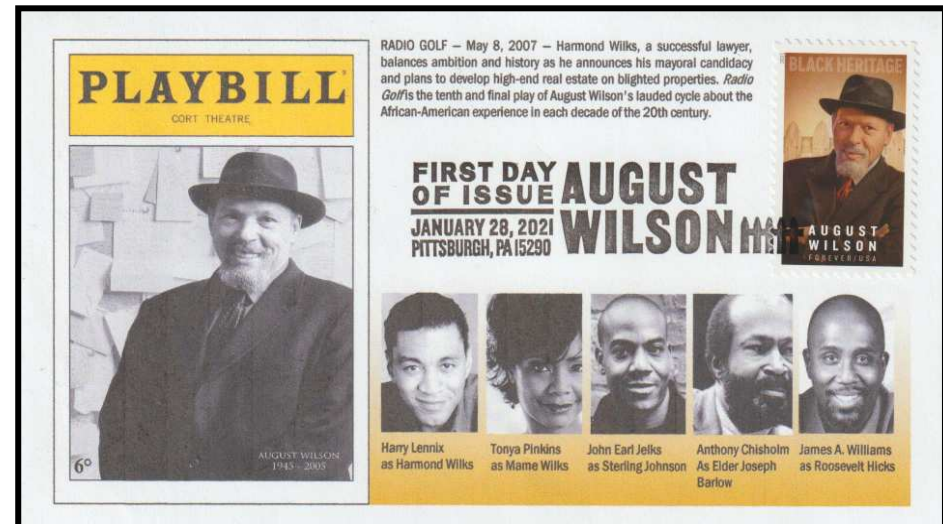
The play was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Drama and premiered on Broadway at the Walter Kerr Theatre on April 13, 1992. It closed there on August 30, 1992, after 160 performances. The play received Tony Award nominations for Best Play, Best Featured Actor in a Play (Roscoe Lee Browne), Best Featured Actress in a Play (Cynthia Martells), and a win for Best Featured Actor in a Play (Laurence Fishburne).



Jitney opened on January 19, 2017, at the Samuel J. Friedman Theatre. The limited engagement closed on March 12. The production, directed by Ruben Santiago-Hudson and co-produced by EGO winner John Legend, won the 2017 Tony Award for Best Revival of a Play. John Douglas Thompson was nominated for Best Performance by an Actor in a Featured Role in a Play. Other noms included Best Scenic Design, Best Costume Design, Best Lighting Design, and Direction.



The play, a 2000 Pulitzer Prize for Drama finalist, opened on Broadway at the Virginia Theatre on May 1, 2001, and closed on July 1, 2001, after 72 performances. The play, which garnered six Tony Award noms including a win for Viola Davis, has been described as one of Wilson's darkest, telling the tale of a man trying to save \$10,000 by selling stolen refrigerators so that he can buy a video store, as well as revisiting stories of other characters initially presented in *Seven Guitars*.



The final installment in The Century Cycle had its Broadway premiere at the Cort Theatre. It is Wilson's final work. The play opened on May 8, 2007, and closed on July 1, 2007, after 64 performances. The Cort Theatre also was the venue where Wilson's first Broadway play, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, opened in 1984. *Radio Golf* received three Tony nominations, for Best Play and for Best Featured Actor in a Play for both Anthony Chisholm and for John Earl Jelks.

ROYALE THEATRE 242 W. 45TH ST. NYC MA RAINEY'S BLACK BOTTOM 2:00 PM SAT APR 5, 2003 MAROY1153 0405 H168Q *INCLUDES \$1.25 FACILITIES FEE	AROYMRO40503D RUSH \$21.25 * CASH CA ORCHO B 2	SUBJECT TO TERMS AND CONDITIONS ON REVERSE SIDE.
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Seeing a Broadway production of any of August Wilson's plays is both a cultural and a historical experience because of the professional talent involved and the legacy of the playwright. Tickets aren't always easy to come by but worth it whenever and wherever you are able to get a seat. I was lucky to get an "up close and personal" rush ticket on the day before *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* closed on April 6, 2003! Rush tickets are tickets that are typically sold on the morning of the performance at a fraction of their usual cost. You'll either have to pay an in-person visit to the theatre's box office (which I did) or (these days) join a virtual rush queue online to purchase them. The name of the game with rush tickets is speed. They are sold on a first-come, first-served basis.

ACRTRG 053007D DMAIL \$41.25 TM 032907 MEZZO A 2	CORT THEATRE 138 WEST 48TH STREET AUGUST WILSON'S RADIO GOLF 2:00 PM WED MAY 30, 2007 NEAL, DONALD E *INCLUDES \$1.25 FACILITY FEE XAWEB1197 0329 A67V	ACRTRG053007D 961194630524 DMAIL \$41.25 * TAMSTR TM ZONE#220 MEZZO A 2
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WALTER KERR THEATRE 219 WEST 48TH STREET GEM OF THE OCEAN 3:00 PM SUN FEB 6, 2005 XAWEB1486 0205 H201B *INCL \$1 RESTORATION CHG NEAL JR, DONALD E	AKERG0020605D \$86.00 * TAMSTR TM ORCHO K 6	NO REFUNDS NO EXCHANGES JUCAMCYN THEATERS
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ABELJT 041909D OFFER \$26.50 TM 040309 BALCO A 2	BELASCO THEATRE 111 WEST 44TH ST. NYC JOE TURNER'S COME AND GONE 3:00 PM SUN APR 19, 2009 NEAL JR, DONALD E *INCLUDES \$1.50 FACILITY FEE TANYS2681-0403-G228E	ABELJT041909D 968699551949 OFFER \$26.50 * TAMSTR TM BALCO ZONE320 A 2
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ACRTFE 052610D \$86.50 TM 040710 MEZZ G 102	CORT THEATRE 138 W. 48TH ST. (BTWN B'WAY & 6TH) FENCES 2:00 PM WED MAY 26, 2010 NEAL JR, DONALD E *INCLUDES \$1.50 FACILITY FEE XAWEB1803 0407 W87J	ACRTFE052610D 905398639245 \$86.50 * TAMSTR TM ZONE#260 MEZZ G 102
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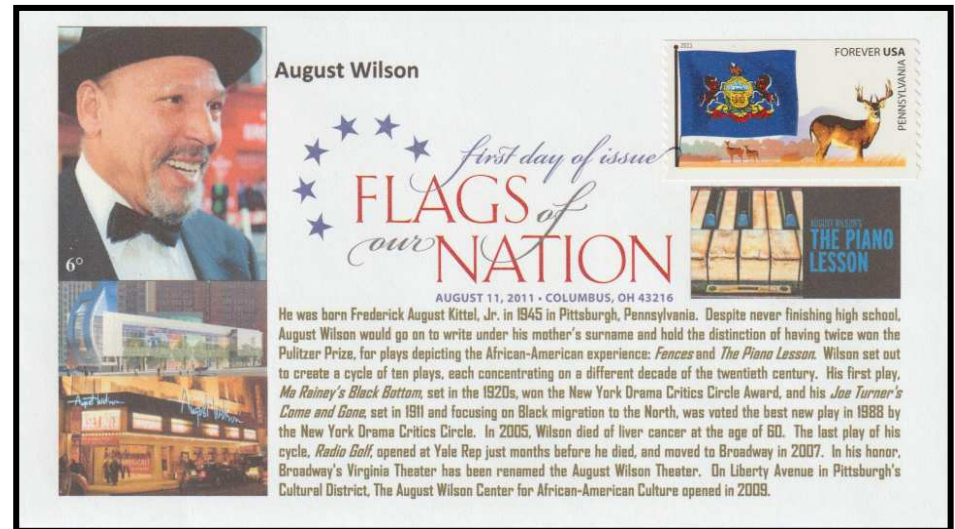
Fences is by playwright August Wilson (1945-2005). Set in the 1950s, the play explores the evolving African-American experience and examines race relations and domestic dynamics, among other themes. The play earned Wilson the 1987 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. *Fences* premiered on Broadway in 1987 and won four Tony Awards including Best Play, Best Actor in a Play for James Earl Jones (Troy Maxson), and Best Featured Actress in a Play for Mary Alice (Rose). The first Broadway revival of the play opened in April 2010 and received ten Tony Award nominations and won three Tony Awards: Best Revival of a Play, Best Performance by an Actor in a Play for Denzel Washington (Troy Maxson), and Best Performance by an Actress in a Play for Viola Davis (Rose). The 2010 Tony Award was Washington's first and Davis' second. Davis won her first Tony for Best Performance by a Featured Actress in a Play for her role in another August Wilson play, *King Hedley II*, in 2001. Davis and Washington both appeared in the 2002 motion picture, *Antwone Fisher*.

One of the first "entertainment" covers I did was for August Wilson's play *Fences*. At the 64th Tony Awards held at Radio City Music hall in New York City on June 13, 2010, *Fences* won for Best Revival of a Play. Denzel Washington (Troy Maxson) won Best Performance by an Actor in a Play, and Viola Davis (Rose Maxson) won Best Performance by an Actress in a Play. I saw that production, and all I can say is "WOW!"



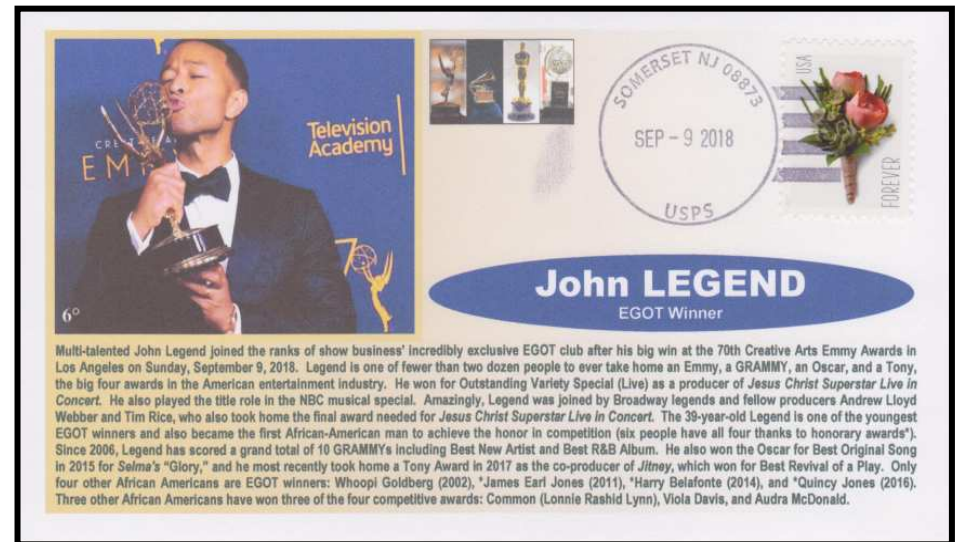
Only one of the plays in August Wilson's masterful American Century Cycle had never been seen on Broadway—until *Jitney's* run at the Samuel J. Friedman Theatre from January 19, 2017 to March 12, 2017. Set in the early 1970s, *Jitney* is a richly textured piece that follows a group of men trying to eke out a living by driving unlicensed cabs, or jitneys. When the city threatens to board up the business and the boss' son returns from prison, tempers flare, potent secrets are revealed, and the fragile threads binding these people together may come undone at last. On June 11, 2017, *Jitney* won the Tony Award for Best Revival of a Play. The play had a total of six Tony Award nominations including Best Performance by an Actor in a Featured Role in a Play: John Douglas Thompson, Best Scenic Design of a Play: David Gallo, Best Costume Design of a Play: Toni-Leslie James, Best Lighting Design of a Play: Jane Cox, and Best Direction of a Play: Ruben Santiago-Hudson, who was instrumental in bringing the revival to the Great White Way. Grammy and Oscar winner John Legend won a Tony as co-producer of *Jitney* and now is one award away from achieving EGOT status, a.k.a. winning all four major American entertainment awards.

This cover for *Jitney's* 2017 Tony win has several special connections. Ruben Santiago-Hudson directed this production and was instrumental in bringing it to the Great White Way. He previously won a Tony for his performance in another Wilson play, *Seven Guitars*. John Legend was on his way to achieving EGOT status when he won a Tony for co-producing this revival which also featured talented actors Brandon J. Dirden and André Holland (look them up!).



He was born Frederick August Kittel, Jr. in 1945 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Despite never finishing high school, August Wilson would go on to write under his mother's surname and hold the distinction of having twice won the Pulitzer Prize, for plays depicting the African-American experience: *Fences* and *The Piano Lesson*. Wilson set out to create a cycle of ten plays, each concentrating on a different decade of the twentieth century. His first play, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, set in the 1920s, won the New York Drama Critics Circle Award, and his *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, set in 1911 and focusing on Black migration to the North, was voted the best new play in 1988 by the New York Drama Critics Circle. In 2005, Wilson died of liver cancer at the age of 60. The last play of his cycle, *Radio Golf*, opened at Yale Rep just months before he died, and moved to Broadway in 2007. In his honor, Broadway's Virginia Theater has been renamed the August Wilson Theater. On Liberty Avenue in Pittsburgh's Cultural District, The August Wilson Center for African-American Culture opened in 2009.

The Flags of Our Nation stamp series which commemorated all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U. S. territories was a real challenge having to come up with two covers, honoring a Black female and a Black male, for each stamp issued. But I knew from the very beginning that I wanted to do August Wilson for the Pennsylvania stamp. And this cover has the digital color postmark.



Multi-talented John Legend joined the ranks of show business' incredibly exclusive EGOT club after his big win at the 70th Creative Arts Emmy Awards in Los Angeles on Sunday, September 9, 2018. Legend is one of fewer than two dozen people to ever take home an Emmy, a GRAMMY, an Oscar, and a Tony, the big four awards in the American entertainment industry. He won for Outstanding Variety Special (Live) as a producer of *Jesus Christ Superstar Live in Concert*. He also played the title role in the NBC musical special. Amazingly, Legend was joined by Broadway legends and fellow producers Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice, who also took home the final award needed for *Jesus Christ Superstar Live in Concert*. The 39-year-old Legend is one of the youngest EGOT winners and also became the first African-American man to achieve the honor in competition (six people have all four thanks to honorary awards). Since 2006, Legend has scored a grand total of 10 GRAMMYs including Best New Artist and Best R&B Album. He also won the Oscar for Best Original Song in 2015 for *Selma's* "Glory," and he most recently took home a Tony Award in 2017 as the co-producer of *Jitney*, which won for Best Revival of a Play. Only four other African Americans are EGOT winners: Whoopi Goldberg (2002), James Earl Jones (2011), Harry Belafonte (2014), and Quincy Jones (2016). Three other African Americans have won three of the four competitive awards: Common (Lonnique Rashid Lynn), Viola Davis, and Audra McDonald.

John Legend was the first Black male to achieve (competitive) EGOT status for winning all four Major American entertainment awards: Emmy, Grammy, Oscar, and Tony. James Earl Jones, Harry Belafonte, and Quincy Jones also have EGOT status, but at least one of their awards was non-competitive (i.e., honorary). And since this cover was made, Viola Davis, certainly no stranger to an August Wilson play, also has achieved EGOT status.

Big Bird and James Earl Jones

FIRST DAY 123 OF ISSUE
SESAME STREET
 DETROIT, MI 48233
 JUNE 22, 2019

Big Bird, an 8'2" yellow bird who lives on *Sesame Street*, has been a central character for the program's run, debuting in the first episode. He makes friends easily and can roller skate, ice skate, dance, sing, write poetry, draw, and even ride a unicycle – pretty talented for a character described in the TV show's writer's guide as a 6-year-old. But despite this wide array of talents, he's prone to frequent misunderstandings, like thinking that the alphabet is one long word. James Earl Jones (b. 1931), noted for his work on stage, film, and television, and providing the voices of Darth Vader in the *Star Wars* series and Mufasa in Disney's *The Lion King*, is considered by Sesame Workshop to be the first celebrity guest on *Sesame Street*, since pedagogical inserts of the actor reciting the alphabet and counting numbers appeared in first season episodes, beginning with episode 0002.

James Earl Jones has been described as “one of America’s most distinguished and versatile” actors for his performances on screen and stage, including his Tony Award-winning role as Troy Maxon in *Fences*. One of Jones’ lesser known distinctions is that he is considered by Sesame Workshop to be the first celebrity guest on *Sesame Street*, since pedagogical inserts of the actor reciting the alphabet and counting numbers appeared in first season episodes.

James Earl Jones
 Actor Extraordinaire

On June 11, 2017, James Earl Jones received the Special Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Theatre. Mark Hamill, who played Luke Skywalker in the 1977 *Star Wars* movie, reunited with Jones, who voiced Luke's father Darth Vader, at the annual fete celebrating the best in Broadway. The 85-year-old Jedi master congratulated the 86-year-old revered thespian for being honored. Jones made his Broadway debut in the late 1950s in *Sunrise at Campobello*. Since that time, he has performed on stage, television, and in films and continues to receive accolades from every corner of the entertainment industry. In addition to having won two Tony Awards for his work on Broadway in *The Great White Hope* and *Fences*, Jones has garnered much praise for more recent stage roles including those in the Broadway productions of *On Golden Pond*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Driving Miss Daisy*, *The Best Man*, and *You Can't Take It With You*. He most recently starred opposite Cicely Tyson in a revival of *The Gin Game*. Among his numerous and distinguished awards, Jones has received the National Medal of Arts, The John F. Kennedy Center Honor, and in 2011, The Board of Governors of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences presented him with an honorary Oscar.

James Earl Jones received the Special Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Theatre in 2017. He made his Broadway debut in the late 1950s in *Sunrise at Campobello*. He won two Tony Awards for his work in *The Great White Hope* (1968) and *Fences* (1987) and has garnered much praise for several other Broadway roles including those in *On Golden Pond*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Driving Miss Daisy*, *The Best Man*, *You Can't Take It with You*, and *The Gin Game*.

...on Broadway... James Earl Jones Theater

When you've been Darth Vader and arguably the best father Disney has ever created in an animated film, your ticket to cultural immortality has been punched. However, James Earl Jones is also a legend of the stage as well as screen, and now he's got a theater named in his honor, too. The Cort Theatre on Broadway in New York City has now been renamed in honor of the 91-year-old entertainer. The James Earl Jones Theater's marquee was revealed on September 12, 2022, to mark the completion of the theater's \$47 million renovation and expansion. The original theater was built in 1912 for impresario John Cort. An annex to the west of the theater was built between 2021 and 2022. The new Jones has 1,092 seats across three levels and is operated by the Shubert Organization. Both the facade and interior of the theater are New York City designated landmarks. Jones, who was mute for much of his early years and had to overcome a stutter, spoke his first line ever on Broadway in 1958 as Edward the butler in Dore Schary's *Sunrise at Campobello* in the theater that now bears his name. His first and only line was "Mrs. Roosevelt, supper is served." Jones is just the second Black American (alongside August Wilson) to have his name on a Broadway theater. Additionally, the Brooks Atkinson Theatre is to be renamed for singer and actress Lena Horne later in 2022. *Ohio State Murders* will open in December 2022 as the first production in the restored James Earl Jones Theater. The play, written by Adrienne Kennedy, directed by Kenny Leon, and starring Audra McDonald, will mark the playwright's Broadway debut at the age of 91.

The Cort Theatre on Broadway in New York City was renamed the James Earl Jones Theater on September 12, 2022. Jones spoke his first line ever on Broadway in 1958 as Edward the butler in Dore Schary's *Sunrise at Campobello* in the very theater that now bears his name. His first and only line was “Mrs. Roosevelt, supper is served.” Jones is just the second Black American (alongside August Wilson) to have his name on a Broadway theater.

...on Broadway... Lena Horne Theater

As a female actor, singer, and civil rights activist of the 20th century, Lena Horne shattered glass ceilings for a living. Now, she's the first Black woman in American history and the third Black American (along with August Wilson and James Earl Jones) to have a Broadway theater named in her honor. Many of Horne's peers and those she influenced gathered at the former Mansfield Theatre (which was renamed the Brooks Atkinson Theatre in 1960 after the former *New York Times* theater critic) at 256 West 47th Street now bearing her name for the ceremony on November 1, 2022. Born in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn in 1917, Lena Horne started singing at Harlem's renowned Cotton Club when she was 16. Her Broadway debut the following year in *Dance With Your Gods* led to Hollywood – where she signed a seven-year contract with MGM in 1942, the first Black American to have a major movie studio contract, where her films included *Panama Hattie*, *Cabin in the Sky*, and *Till the Clouds Roll By*. Horne performed the title song of *Stormy Weather* for 20th Century Fox, while on loan from MGM. Horne marched in Washington, D.C., in 1963 and performed all over America for the National Council for Negro Women. She won Grammys, Emmys, and Tony Awards, and an NAACP Image Award, before dying of heart failure at 92 years old in 2010. In 2018, Horne became the 41st honoree in the Black Heritage stamp series. The Tony Award-winning *SIX: The Musical* about the six wives of Henry VIII is the current production at the Lena Horne Theatre which has 1,069 seats across two levels.

In 1958, Lena Horne became the first Black woman to be nominated for a Tony Award. She is the first Black woman in American history and third Black American (along with August Wilson and James Earl Jones) to have a Broadway theater named in her honor. Since November 1, 2022, the former Mansfield Theatre (renamed the Brooks Atkinson Theatre in 1960 after the former *New York Times* theater critic) at 256 West 47th Street now bears her name.

DENZEL WASHINGTON

CELEBRATING LUNAR NEW YEAR
YEAR OF THE HORSE
JANUARY 15, 2014 • SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94199

People born in the year of the horse have ingenious communicating techniques, and in their community they always want to be in the limelight. They are clever, kind to others, and like to join in a venture career. Denzel Hayes Washington, Jr. was born on December 28, 1954 in Mount Vernon, New York. He holds the record (six so far) for most Oscar nominations and most wins (two so far) by an actor or actress of African descent and has starred on Broadway in *Julius Caesar*, August Wilson's *Fences* (Tony Award), and Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*.

August Wilson and his plays are connected to so many Black actors who themselves are connected to the theater. Denzel Washington certainly is known for his movie career, and he holds the record for most-nominated Black actor in Oscars history. But he also has starred on Broadway in *Checkmates* (1988, debut), *Julius Caesar* (2005), August Wilson's *Fences* (2010, Tony Award), Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (2014), and *The Iceman Cometh* (2018).

2013 Tony Award Winners

The 67th annual Tony Awards were presented at New York's Radio City Music Hall on June 9, 2013. Among the winners were (l-r) PATINA MILLER — Best Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role in a Musical for her portrayal of Leading Player, the storyteller of a young prince on his search for meaning and significance, in *PIPPIN*; CICELY TYSON — Best Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role in a Play for her portrayal of Carrie Watts, a widow in 1953 whose only desire is to revisit her old home and recapture purpose, in *THE TRIP TO BOUNTIFUL*; BILLY PORTER — Best Performance by an Actor in a Leading Role in a Musical for his portrayal of Lola, a fierce drag queen who helps a struggling shoe factory, in *KINKY BOOTS*; and COURTNEY B. VANCE — Best Performance by an Actor in a Featured Role in a Play for his portrayal of Hap Hairston, one of the editors of a Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist who exposes police brutality against Haitian immigrant Abner Louima, in *LUCKY GUY*.

Courtney B. Vance started his career on stage before moving to film and television. He starred in the original productions of August Wilson's *Fences*, earning his first Tony Award nomination (as Cory Maxson) for Best Performance by a Featured Actor in a Play. He continued acting on Broadway in John Guare's *Six Degrees of Separation* in 1990 and Nora Ephron's *Lucky Guy* for which he won a Tony as Hap Hairston who helped expose police brutality against Abner Louima.

Roscoe Lee Browne

Roscoe Lee Browne (May 2, 1922 – April 11, 2007) was an American actor — stage, film, and TV — and director, known for his rich voice and dignified bearing. Black people appeared as stereotyped, one-dimensional characters in Alfred Hitchcock's films, except in *Topaz*, where Roscoe Lee Browne plays Philippe Dubois, who is both intelligent and clever. *Topaz* is a 1969 American espionage thriller directed by Hitchcock. Based on the 1967 Cold War novel *Topaz* by Leon Uris, the film is about a French intelligence agent who becomes entangled in the Cold War politics of the events leading up to the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis and entrusts a familiar contact, Philippe Dubois (Roscoe Lee Browne) to get hold of some seriously damaging papers concerning Soviet plans in Cuba from the visiting Cuban official Rico Parra (John Vernon). Parra is in New York to appear at the United Nations and stays at the Hotel Theresa in Harlem to show solidarity with the African American community, which the Cuban Communists and their Soviet masters frequently propagandize as "the masses." Dubois, taking the identity of a Black journalist from *Ebony* magazine, sneaks into the hotel, which is seething with visitors and surrounded by an enthusiastic mob. He bribes Parra's secretary into taking the documents from Parra's office to photograph, but Parra realizes the plans are gone and catches Dubois photographing the documents. While being chased by and shot at by Cuban revolutionaries, Dubois purposefully bumps into Devereaux — who was watching events from the other side of the street — and slips the camera into his hand. A Cuban guard helps Devereaux to get up, stares at him, and lets him go. Dubois' photos confirm that the Soviets are secretly transporting and placing missiles in Cuba.

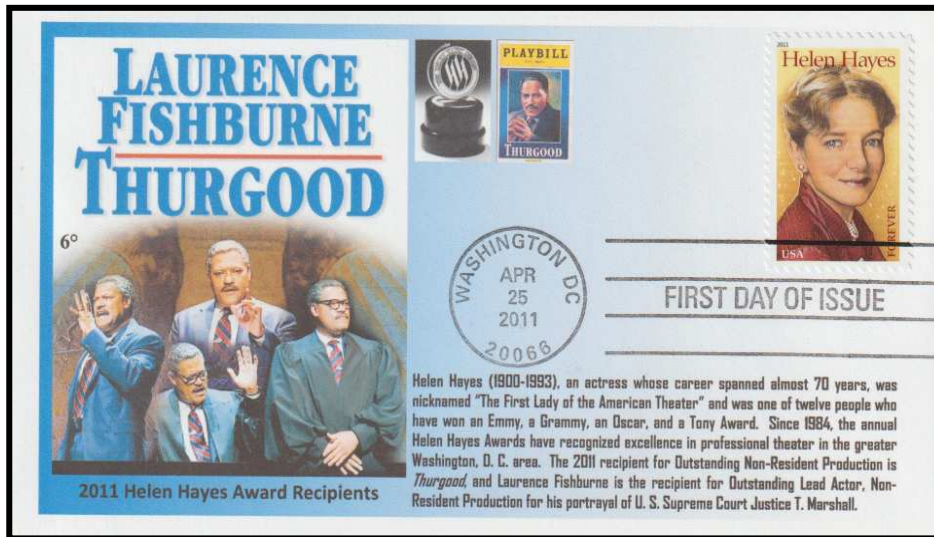
Roscoe Lee Browne, known for his rich voice and dignified bearing, is one of the few Black actors to have a significant role in a Hitchcock movie. As a stage actor, Browne performed in several productions with New York City's Shakespeare Festival Theater. He also was in August Wilson's *Two Trains Running* and received a Tony Award nomination for Best Featured Actor in a Play for his performance as "Holloway." The play also was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

Courtney B. Vance

Wins 2016 Emmy

At the 68th Emmy Awards on Sunday, September 18, 2016, Courtney B. Vance walked away with the Emmy award (his first) for Lead Actor in a Limited Series or Movie for *The People v. O.J. Simpson: American Crime Story* on FX. The Tony Award-winning actor has been in the game for decades, but this time he had the opportunity to shine in a role he was born to play, as the charismatic Johnnie Cochran, the head defense attorney in the O.J. Simpson murder trial.

In 1985, Courtney B. Vance started his acting career on the stage as Cory Maxson in the Yale Repertory Theatre production of August Wilson's Pulitzer Prize-winning and Tony Award for Best Play-winning play *Fences*. From 1987 to 1988, Vance continued the role on Broadway opposite James Earl Jones where he won a Clarence Derwent Award for his performance. He also was nominated for the Tony Award for Best Featured Actor in a Play for his role.



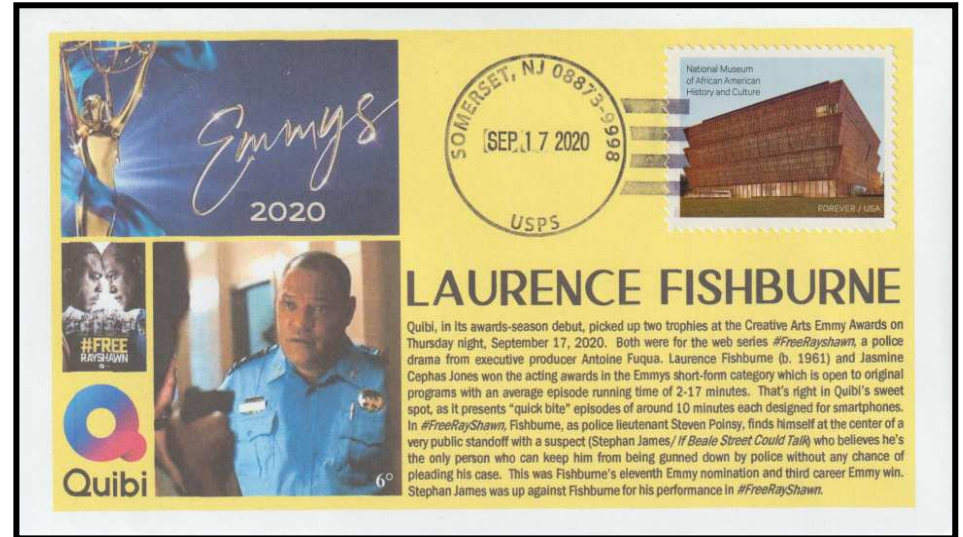
Helen Hayes (1900-1993), an actress whose career spanned almost 70 years, was nicknamed "The First Lady of the American Theater" and was one of twelve people who have won an Emmy, a Grammy, an Oscar, and a Tony Award. Since 1984, the annual Helen Hayes Awards have recognized excellence in professional theater in the greater Washington, D. C. area. The 2011 recipient for Outstanding Non-Resident Production is *Thurgood*, and Laurence Fishburne is the recipient for Outstanding Lead Actor, Non-Resident Production for his portrayal of U. S. Supreme Court Justice T. Marshall.

Laurence Fishburne won a Tony Award for Best Featured Actor in a Play for his role as "Sterling" in August Wilson's *Two Trains Running*. The play was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. Fishburne also was nominated for a Tony Award for Best Actor in a Play for his one-person show *Thurgood*. Fishburne's other Broadway performances include *Short Eyes* (1985), *The Lion in Winter* (1999), *Fences* (2006), and *American Buffalo* (2022).



On September 4, 2022, during the Creative Arts Emmy Ceremony, Colman Domingo was awarded the 2022 Creative Arts Emmy for Outstanding Guest Actor in a Drama Series for his work on HBO's *Euphoria*. This is the 52-year-old performer's first Emmy nomination and win following a quarter century's worth of small screen credits. *The Walking Dead* alum, who also is an accomplished playwright, was given this honor based on his brief yet powerful performance in the second-season *Euphoria* episode "Ruminations: Big and Little Bulls." In the installment, his recovering addict character All Muhammad clashes with his Narcotics Anonymous sponsor, Rue Bennett (Zendaya), who rebuffs his friendship by bringing up sensitive details about his checkered past. After Billy Porter (Best Drama Actor, *Pose*, 2019), Domingo is only the second openly gay Black man to ever win an acting Emmy. He also is the ninth Black recipient of the Best Drama Guest Actor award, after Laurence Fishburne (*TriBeCa*, 1993), Paul Winfield (*Picket Fences*, 1995), Charles S. Dutton (*The Practice*, 2002; *Without a Trace*, 2003), Glynn Turman (*In Treatment*, 2008), Joe Morton (*Scandal*, 2014), Reg E. Cathey (*House of Cards*, 2015), Ron Cephas Jones (*This Is Us*, 2018 and 2020), and Courtney B. Vance (*Lovecraft Country*, 2021). Zendaya won an Emmy for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Drama, her second for playing Rue Bennett. Additionally, *Euphoria* won four other Creative Arts Emmys for choreography, cinematography, makeup, and editing.

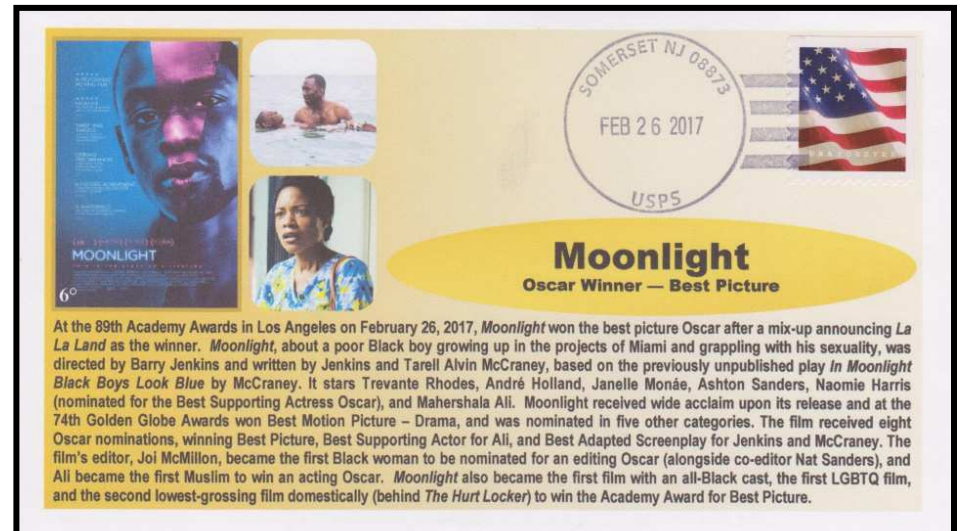
In 2020, Colman Domingo received acclaim for his role as "Cutler" in the Netflix adaptation of August Wilson's play *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* starring Viola Davis (an August Wilson alum) and Chadwick Boseman. Domingo is the ninth Black recipient of the Emmy Award for Best Drama Guest Actor after other August Wilson alums Laurence Fishburne, Charles S. Dutton, Glynn Turman, and Courtney B. Vance. Domingo also has directed a production of *Seven Guitars*.



LAURENCE FISHBURNE

Quibi, in its awards-season debut, picked up two trophies at the Creative Arts Emmy Awards on Thursday night, September 17, 2020. Both were for the web series *#FreeRayShawn*, a police drama from executive producer Antoine Fuqua. Laurence Fishburne (b. 1961) and Jasmine Cephas Jones won the acting awards in the Emmys short-form category which is open to original programs with an average episode running time of 2-17 minutes. That's right in Quibi's sweet spot, as it presents "quick bite" episodes of around 10 minutes each designed for smartphones. In *#FreeRayShawn*, Fishburne, as police lieutenant Steven Polins, finds himself at the center of a very public standoff with a suspect (Stephan James, *If Beale Street Could Talk*) who believes he's the only person who can keep him from being gunned down by police without any chance of pleading his case. This was Fishburne's eleventh Emmy nomination and third career Emmy win. Stephan James was up against Fishburne for his performance in *#FreeRayShawn*.

Laurence Fishburne's many other roles have ranged from Cowboy Curtis on *Pee-wee's Playhouse* to Morpheus, the hacker-mentor of Neo, in the science fiction film series *The Matrix*. His filmography includes *Combread*, *Earl, and Me*, *Apocalypse Now*, *The Color Purple*, *School Daze*, *Boyz n the Hood*, *What's Love Got to Do with It*, *Othello*, *Akeelah and the Bee*, *Ride Along*, *John Wick*, *The Tuskegee Airmen*; *Miss Evers' Boys*; *Black-ish*, and *#FreeRayShawn*.



At the 89th Academy Awards in Los Angeles on February 26, 2017, *Moonlight* won the best picture Oscar after a mix-up announcing *La La Land* as the winner. *Moonlight*, about a poor Black boy growing up in the projects of Miami and grappling with his sexuality, was directed by Barry Jenkins and written by Jenkins and Tarell Alvin McCraney, based on the previously unpublished play *Moonlight Black Boys Look Blue* by McCraney. It stars Trevante Rhodes, André Holland, Janelle Monáe, Ashton Sanders, Naomie Harris (nominated for the Best Supporting Actress Oscar), and Mahershala Ali. *Moonlight* received wide acclaim upon its release and at the 74th Golden Globe Awards won Best Motion Picture - Drama, and was nominated in five other categories. The film received eight Oscar nominations, winning Best Picture, Best Supporting Actor for Ali, and Best Adapted Screenplay for Jenkins and McCraney. The film's editor, Joi McMillon, became the first Black woman to be nominated for an editing Oscar (alongside co-editor Nat Sanders), and Ali became the first Muslim to win an acting Oscar. *Moonlight* also became the first film with an all-Black cast, the first LGBTQ film, and the second lowest-grossing film domestically (behind *The Hurt Locker*) to win the Academy Award for Best Picture.

André Holland portrayed Kevin Jones in *Moonlight* which won the best picture Oscar at the 89th Academy Awards in 2017. Holland also was "Youngblood" in August Wilson's *Jitney* which won the 2017 Tony Award for Best Revival of a Play. Holland also has performed in other stage productions including *Blue Door*, *Wig Out!*, *The Brother/Sister Plays*, and *Othello*. McCraney also wrote the screenplay for the 2019 American sports drama, *High Flying Bird*, starring Holland.

Guinan (played by Whoopi Goldberg) was a mysterious bartender who ran Ten Forward, the lounge aboard the U.S.S. Enterprise-D. She was well known for her wise counsel, which proved invaluable many times. Guinan was an El-Aurian, a race of "listeners" who were scattered by the Borg. The subsequent diaspora and reintegration of her people, and even their traditional clothing, that Guinan still wears, are interpreted as a reference to questions about race and colonization. The character first appears in *ST: The Next Generation's* second-season opening episode "The Child" and several times over the next four seasons; she does not appear at all in the seventh season. She is said to have the closest relationship with Captain Jean-Luc Picard.

Whoopi Goldberg starred in the title role in the 2003 Broadway revival of August Wilson's *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*. Goldberg, an EGOT (recipient of Emmy, Grammy, Oscar, and Tony Awards), is no stranger to Broadway. She began her career on stage in 1983 with her one-woman show, *Spook Show*, which transferred to Broadway under the title *Whoopi Goldberg*, running from 1984 to 1985. She has starred in the Broadway revival of the musical *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*. She won a Tony Award as a producer of the musical *Thoroughly Modern Millie*. In 2011, she received her third Tony Award nomination for the stage adaptation of *Sister Act*.

Phylicia Rashad most recently returned to Broadway as Faye in the premiere of *Skeleton Crew*, directed by Tony Award® winner (and August Wilson alum) Ruben Santiago-Hudson. Rashad's Broadway credits include *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Jelly's Last Jam*, *Into the Woods*, *The Wiz*, and *Dreamgirls*. She won a Tony for lead actress in a play as Lena Younger in *A Raisin in the Sun* (2004) and was nominated for the same award the following year for August Wilson's *Gem of the Ocean*. Her *Skeleton Crew* co-star, Brandon J. Dirden, also was in the 2017 Tony Award-winning revival of *Jitney*.

Viola Davis is one of four Black performers to have won competitive awards to achieve EGOT status – Emmy, Grammy, Oscar, and Tony awards. Whoopi Goldberg, John Legend, and Jennifer Hudson are the other Black EGOTs. Davis was nominated for the Tony Award for Best Featured Actress in a Play for her role as Vera in the 1996 Broadway production of August Wilson's *Seven Guitars*. She won the same Tony Award for her role as Tonya in the 2001 Broadway production of August Wilson's *King Hedley II*. Davis won the 2010 Tony Award for Best Leading Actress in a Play for her role as Rose Maxson in the Broadway revival of August Wilson's *Fences*.

Viola Davis is the sole Black American to achieve the Triple Crown of Acting – a competitive Academy Award (Oscar), Emmy Award, and Tony Award in the acting categories, the highest accolades recognized in American film, television, and theater, respectively. Davis has won two Tony Awards from three nominations, all for performances in plays by August Wilson. She later won an Oscar for the movie adaptation for *Fences* in 2016.

Female Black Playwrights

Female Black Playwrights

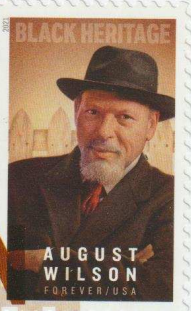
ADRIENNE KENNEDY
 – *Funnyhouse of a Negro*
SUZAN-LORI PARKS
 – *Topdog/Underdog*
LYNN NOTTAGE
 – *Ruined, Sweat*
NTOZAKE SHANGE
 – *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/*
When the Rainbow Is Enuf
ALICE CHILDRESS
 – *Wedding Band: A Love/Hate Story in Black and White*
ANNA DEEVERE SMITH
 – *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*
JACKIE SIBBLIES DRURY
 – *Fairview*
DANAI GURIRA
 – *Eclipsed*
PEARL CLEAGE
 – *Blues for an Alabama Sky*
KATARI HALL
 – *The Mountaintop*

♀ Black Playwrights

AUGUST WILSON
FIRST DAY OF ISSUE
 JANUARY 28, 2021 — PITTSBURGH, PA 15290

African-American playwrights have a long tradition of being at the forefront of pushing the art form of the American theater into new artistic, political, and popular territory with plays that are doggedly realistic, bitingly satirical, starkly allegorical, or wildly expressionistic, telling unconventionally theatrical stories about characters with evocative names and symbolic resonance, and all of them reflect the Black Experience.

6°








LORRAINE HANSBERRY

6°

CELEBRATING LUNAR NEW YEAR
YEAR OF THE HORSE
 JANUARY 15, 2014 • SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94188

People born in the year of the horse have ingenious communicating techniques, and in their community they always want to be in the limelight. They are clever, kind to others, and like to join in a venture career. She was born Lorraine Vivian Hansberry 3rd on May 19, 1930, in Chicago, Illinois. In 1959, *A Raisin in the Sun*, which was inspired by her family's battle against housing segregation laws in 1930s Chicago, opened at the Barrymore Theater, the first Broadway play written by an African American woman. Hansberry went on to write *Les Blancs* and *The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window*. Her other works include the screenplay *Drinking Gourd* and the autobiographical piece *To Be Young, Gifted, and Black*.








For nearly 40 years, Lorraine Hansberry's reputation has rested on *A Raisin in the Sun*, a poignant work about a Black family struggling to move into the middle class. Dead at 35, Hansberry completed only one other play, *The Sign In Sidney Brustein's Window*, about a man and his pitfalls in life and struggles in Bohemian culture. It encompasses themes of marriage, Judaism, race, suicide, homosexuality, political corruption, interracial love, and prostitution.

“Oh, what I think I must tell this world...so many truths.”
 – Lorraine Hansberry

AUGUST WILSON
FIRST DAY OF ISSUE
 JANUARY 28, 2021 — PITTSBURGH, PA 15290

Lorraine Vivian Hansberry (May 19, 1930 – January 12, 1965) was the first African-American female author to have a play performed on Broadway. Her best known work, the play *A Raisin in the Sun*, highlights the lives of Black Americans living under racial segregation in Chicago. The title was taken from the poem “Harlem” by Langston Hughes: “What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun?” At 29, Hansberry won the New York Drama Critics’ Circle Award – the first African-American dramatist, the fifth woman, and the youngest playwright to do so. She also was nominated for the Tony Award for Best Play, among the four Tony Awards that the play was nominated for in 1960. A 1973 Broadway musical based on *A Raisin in the Sun*, entitled *Raisin*, won two Tony Awards, including Best Musical. In 2004, *A Raisin in the Sun* was revived on Broadway and won two Tony Awards for actresses Phylicia Rashad and Audra McDonald. In 2014, the play was revived on Broadway again in a production starring Denzel Washington and directed by Kenny Leon; it won three Tony Awards, for Best Revival of a Play, Best Featured Actress in a Play for Sophie Okonedo, and Best Direction of a Play. Hansberry inspired the song by Nina Simone entitled “To Be Young, Gifted, and Black,” which also was the title of Hansberry’s autobiographical play. Her only other play given a Broadway production was *The Sign in Sidney Brustein’s Window*.



The play premiered October 15, 1964, and received mixed reviews. Hansberry who was ill at the time died before the end of its run. The play's original production starred Gabriel Dell and Rita Moreno as Sidney and Iris Brustein respectively. It was revived on Broadway only once in 1972 before the 2023 revival starring Oscar Isaac and Rachel Brosnahan which received a nomination for the Tony Award for Best Revival of a Play.

Lynn Nottage
2009 Pulitzer Prize Winner for Drama

Lynn Nottage (b. 1964) won the 2009 Pulitzer Prize for drama for her play *Ruined*, a hard-hitting tale of survival set among the denizens of a Congolese bar and bordello. The play, based on interviews Nottage conducted in Africa, revolves around young women who have been raped and brutalized, casualties of the decades-long war in Democratic Republic of the Congo. Nottage was born in Brooklyn and is a graduate of Brown University and the Yale School of Drama. Her plays include *Crumbs From the Table of Joy*, *Las Meninas*, *Fabulation*, *Por'Knockers*, and *Intimate Apparel* which starred Tony Award-winner Viola Davis in the lead. Davis received a 2008 Academy Award nomination for her role in the film *Doubt*.

A rain forest bar and brothel in the brutally war-torn Congo is the setting for Lynn Nottage's extraordinary play, which won the 2009 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, inspired by real interviews. The establishment's shrewd matriarch, Mama Nadi, keeps peace between customers from both sides of the civil war, as government soldiers and rebel forces alike choose from her inventory of women, many already "ruined" by rape and torture when they were pressed into prostitution.

Lynn Nottage
2017 Pulitzer Prize for Drama

Lynn Nottage's (b. 1964) *Sweat*, which won the 2017 Pulitzer Prize for drama, explores how the shutdown of a Pennsylvania factory leads to the breakdown of friendship and family, and a devastating cycle of violence, prejudice, poverty, and drugs. The Pulitzer committee lauded *Sweat* for a nuanced yet powerful drama that reminds audiences of the stacked deck still facing workers searching for the American dream. The play premiered Off Broadway at the Public Theatre on November 3, 2016, and had its official Broadway debut at Studio 54 on March 26, 2017. Nottage makes history as the first female playwright to win the prestigious award twice. She is the writer of *Intimate Apparel*, *By The Way*, *Meet Vera Stark*, and *Ruined*, which also won the Pulitzer in 2009. The drama award includes a \$15,000 prize. Previous playwrights honored include August Wilson, Eugene O'Neill, Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, and recent winners Suzan-Lori Parks for *Topdog/Underdog*, the first Black woman to win for drama, and Lin-Manuel Miranda for *Hamilton*.

In one of the poorest cities in America, Reading, Pennsylvania, a group of down-and-out factory workers struggle to keep their present lives in balance, ignorant of the financial devastation looming in their near future. Based on Nottage's extensive research and interviews with residents of Reading, *Sweat* – which won the 2017 Pulitzer Prize for drama – is a topical reflection of the present and poignant outcome of America's economic decline.

Ntozake Shange
1948 - 2018

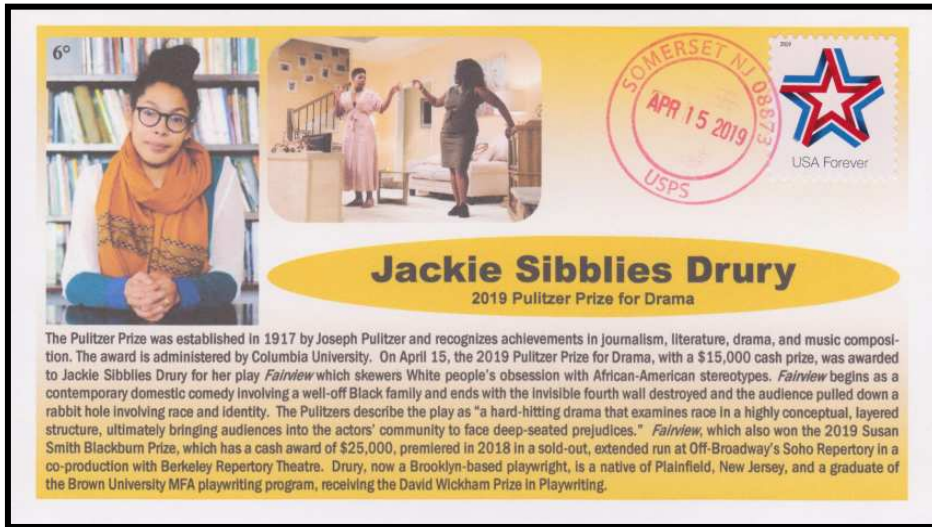
Renowned poet and playwright Ntozake Shange was born Paulette L. Williams in Trenton, New Jersey, in 1948. In 1966, Shange enrolled at Barnard College in New York City. She married during her first year in college, but the marriage did not last long. Depressed over her separation and with a strong sense of bitterness and alienation, she attempted suicide. In 1971, having come to terms with her depression and alienation, Shange changed her name. In Xhosa, *Ntozake* means "she who has her own things" (literally "things that belong to her") and *Shange* means "he/she who walks/lives with lions" (meaning "the lion's pride" in Zulu). Shange presented her groundbreaking choreopoem, "For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow Is Enuf," in 1975; it became an off-Broadway play in 1976, and Tyler Perry wrote, produced, and directed a film adaptation in 2010. Shange coined *choreopoem* to describe her work in "For Colored Girls," a dramatic expression blending poetry, dance, music, and song. In addition to her Obie Award-winning choreopoem, Shange wrote novels including *Sassafras*, *Cypress* & *Indigo* and poetry collections like *Nappy Edges*. Shange died October 27, 2018.

Though her first play – the Obie Award-winning *for colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf* – was her greatest success, Ntozake Shange continued to weave Black and feminist themes into poetic, often non-narrative pieces. Her 15 plays include *spell #7*, *from okra to greens*, *Mother Courage and Her Children* (Winner of a 1981 Obie Award), *Whitewash*, and *Savannahland*.

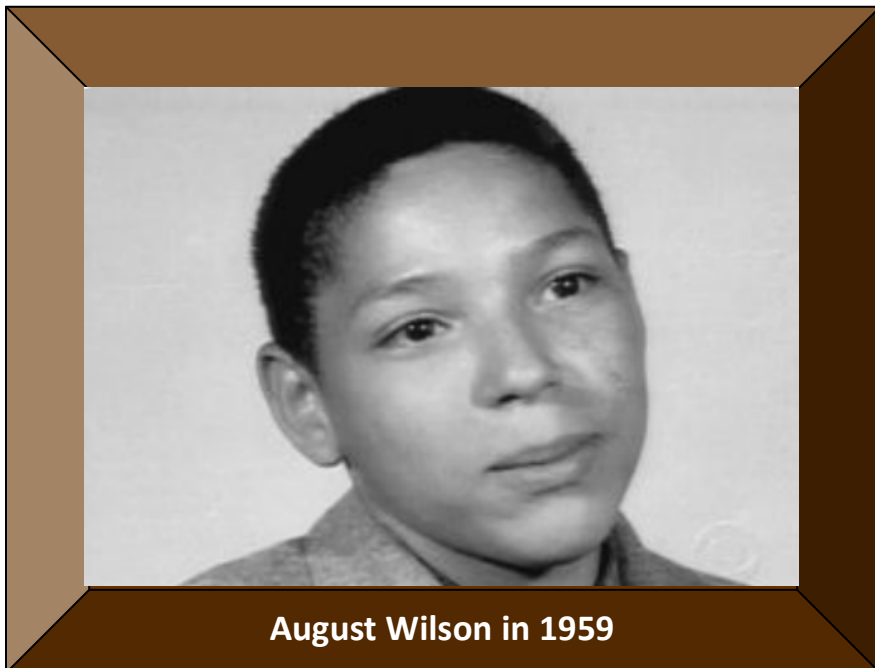
Katori Hall
2021 Pulitzer Prize for Drama

On June 11, 2021, the Pulitzer Prize for a distinguished play by an American author, preferably original in its source and dealing with American life, was awarded to Katori Hall's *The Hot Wing King*, a funny, deeply felt consideration of Black masculinity and how it is perceived, filtered through the experiences of a loving gay couple and their extended family as they prepare for a culinary competition. Ready, set, fry! It's time for the annual "Hot Wing Festival" in Memphis, Tennessee, and Cordell Crutchfield knows he has the wings that'll make him king. Supported by his beau Dwayne and their culinary clique, the New Wing Order, Cordell is marinating and firing up his frying pan in a bid to reclaim the crispy crown. When Dwayne takes in his troubled nephew however, it becomes a recipe for disaster. Suddenly, a first place trophy isn't the only thing Cordell risks losing. Two-time Tony-nominated Memphis-native Katori Hall, an alumna of Columbia University, ART at Harvard University, and Juilliard, is the writer and co-producer of the West End and Broadway hit, *Tina: The Tina Turner Musical*. She's also the executive producer and showrunner of *P-VALLEY*, the breakout Starz drama based on her play *Pussy Valley*. Hall is, perhaps, best known for *The Mountaintop* which fictionalizes the last night in Martin Luther King's life and won the Olivier Award for Best New Play in 2010 before opening on Broadway in October 2011 to critical acclaim.

Katori Hall gained mainstream prominence after her play *The Mountaintop*, about Martin Luther King Jr.'s last night before his assassination, premiered in London in 2009 to critical acclaim. In September 2011, *The Mountaintop* opened on Broadway starring Samuel L. Jackson as MLK and Angela Bassett as a mysterious maid. Hall's play *Hurt Village* premiered in 2012 off-Broadway, starring Tony Award winner Tonya Pinkins, who starred in August Wilson's *Radio Golf*.



In Jackie Sibblies Drury's *Fairview*, Grandma's birthday approaches. Beverly is organizing the perfect dinner, but everything seems doomed from the start: the silverware is all wrong, the carrots need chopping, and the radio is on the fritz. What at first appears to be a family comedy takes a sharp, sly turn into a startling examination of deep-seated paradigms about race in America.



August Wilson has been nominated for the Pulitzer Prize for Drama six times, more than any other playwright.

Fences winner (1987)

Joe Turner's Come and Gone nominated (1989)

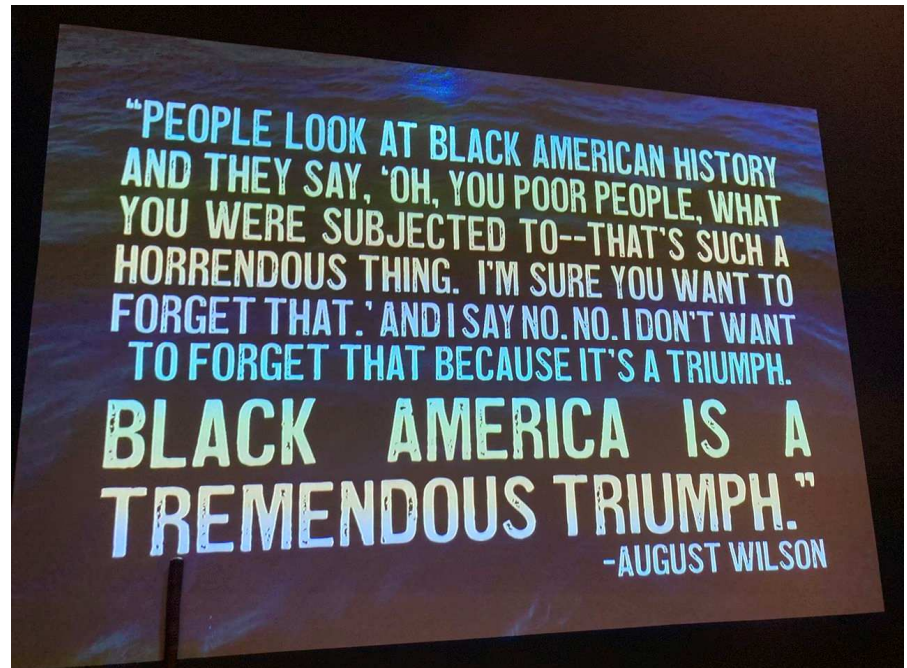
The Piano Lesson winner (1990)

Two Trains Running nominated (1992)

Seven Guitars nominated (1995)

King Hedley II nominated (2000)

Lynn Nottage is the only female playwright to **win** the Pulitzer Prize for Drama **twice**. She and Wilson are the only playwrights of color to accomplish this feat.



FUNNYHOUSE OF A NEGRO - ADRIENNE KENNEDY

In *Funnyhouse of a Negro*, a Black woman awakens in a phantasmagoric rooming house where she is visited by the Duchess of Hapsburg, Queen Victoria, Patrice Lumumba, and Jesus Christ. Only she and Lumumba are not dressed in white; she has a White fixation and wants to become Whiter and Whiter. She harangues against her father who gave her a jungle strain and then sold out to White harlotry, dreams of returning to Africa to save the continent, and hangs herself amid swirling conflicts and desires, a victim of a nightmare world. The play opened off-Broadway in 1964 and won the Obie Award for Distinguished Play. The play shared this award with Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman*.

TOPDOG/UNDERDOG - SUZAN-LORI PARKS

Topdog/Underdog is a darkly comic fable of brotherly love and family identity, Suzan-Lori Parks' riff on the way we are defined by history. The play tells the story of Lincoln and Booth, two brothers whose names were given to them as a joke, foretelling a lifetime of sibling rivalry and resentment. Haunted by the past, Lincoln and Booth are forced to confront the shattering reality of their future. *Topdog/Underdog* opened off-Broadway at the Public Theater on July 26, 2001, and closed on September 2, 2001. Directed by George C. Wolfe, the play starred Don Cheadle (as Booth) and Jeffrey Wright (as Lincoln). The play opened on Broadway at the Ambassador Theatre on April 7, 2002, and closed on August 11, 2002. Cheadle was replaced by Mos Def; direction was again by George C. Wolfe. The play won the 2002 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. In 2022, the play returned to Broadway 20 years after its initial debut, with stars Corey Hawkins and Yahya Abdul-Mateen II nominated for Tony Awards and the play itself nominated for Best Revival of a Play.

ECLIPSED - DANAI GURIRA

Eclipsed takes place in 2003 and tells the story of five Liberian women and their tale of survival near the end of the Second Liberian Civil War. It became the first play with an all-Black and female creative cast and team to premiere on Broadway. Gurira's inspiration for the play was a photo of Black Diamond, a female Liberian freedom fighter. The play marked the Broadway debut for Academy Award winner and Tony Award-nominated Lupita Nyong'o, who turned down Hollywood films to bring the production to Broadway. Emmy Award winner Uzo Aduba had a role in the play's production at the Woolly Mammoth Theatre in Washington, D. C. In 2021, Aduba starred in Lynn Nottage's play *Clyde's* on Broadway for which she received a Tony Award for Best Featured Actress in a Play nomination.

TROUBLE IN MIND - ALICE CHILDRESS

Childress (1916-1994) an actress and a playwright, was the first African-American woman to have a play professionally produced in New York City, *Gold Through the Trees*, in 1952, and the first woman to win an Obie for Best Play, for *Trouble in Mind*, in 1956, which is about the troubled Broadway production of a fictional anti-lynching play. *Trouble in Mind* returned to Broadway sometime in 2021 and marked Childress' Broadway debut as a playwright (she had several Broadway credits as an actress).

TWILIGHT: LOS ANGELES, 1992 - ANNA DEAVERE SMITH

From acclaimed playwright Anna Deavere Smith, a captivating work of dramatic literature and a unique first-person portrait of a pivotal moment in American history: the 1992 Los Angeles riots. *Twilight* is a stunning work of "documentary theater" that explores the devastating human impact of the five days of riots following the Rodney King verdict. From nine months of interviews with more than two hundred people, Smith has chosen the voices that best reflect the diversity and tension of a city in turmoil: a disabled Korean man, a White male Hollywood talent agent, a Panamanian immigrant mother, a teenage Black gang member, a macho Mexican-American artist, Rodney King's aunt, beaten truck driver Reginald Denny, former Los Angeles police chief Daryl Gates, and other witnesses, participants, and victims. *Twilight* ruthlessly probes the language and the lives of its subjects, offering stark insight into the complex and pressing social, economic, and political issues that fueled the flames in the wake of the Rodney King verdict and ignited a conversation about policing and race that continues today.

THE NACIREMA SOCIETY REQUESTS THE HONOR OF YOUR PRESENCE AT A CELEBRATION OF THEIR FIRST ONE HUNDRED YEARS - PEARL CLEAGE

In the winter of 1964, ten years after the Montgomery bus boycott, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., is planning a massive voter registration drive that promises to put the city back at the center of the Civil Rights Movement. Among those watching closely is Grace Dunbar, pillar of Montgomery's African-American aristocrats and doyenne of the Nacirema Society, an organization poised to celebrate its 100th anniversary by presenting an exclusive group of debutantes at their annual cotillion. Her lifelong friend, Catherine, hopes the cotillion will prompt her grandson to propose to Grace's granddaughter. Of course, neither woman considers the fact that their grandchildren have their own plans. The anticipation is overshadowed by the arrival of Alpha Campbell, daughter of the Dunbar family's late maid. Alpha has plans to blackmail the Dunbars into financing her own daughter's education.

Male Black Playwrights

Male Black Playwrights

♂ Black Playwrights

CHARLES GORDONE
— *No Place to Be Somebody*

GEORGE C. WOLFE
— *The Colored Museum*

JAMES BALDWIN
— *The Amen Corner, Blues for Mr. Charlie*

ED BULLINS
— *The Fabulous Miss Marie*

CHARLES FULLER
— *A Soldier's Play*

LeROI JONES/AMIRI BARAKA
— *Dutchman*

MICHAEL R. JACKSON
— *A Strange Loop*

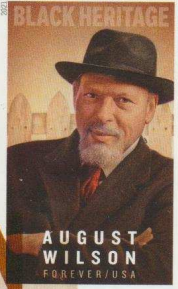
JOSEPH A. WALKER
— *The River Niger*

SAMM-ART WILLIAMS
— *Home*

TARELL ALVIN McCRANEY
— *Choir Boy*

AUGUST WILSON
FIRST DAY OF ISSUE
JANUARY 28, 2021 — PITTSBURGH, PA 15290


African-American playwrights have a long tradition of being at the forefront of pushing the art form of the American theater into new artistic, political, and popular territory with plays that are doggedly realistic, bitingly satirical, starkly allegorical, or wildly expressionistic, telling unconventionally theatrical stories about characters with evocative names and symbolic resonance, and all of them reflect the Black Experience.



Douglas Turner Ward
Pioneer in Black Theater

AUGUST WILSON
FIRST DAY OF ISSUE
JANUARY 28, 2021 — PITTSBURGH, PA 15290

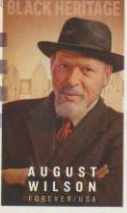
Douglas Turner Ward (May 5, 1930 – February 20, 2021), playwright, actor, director, and theatrical producer, co-founded the landmark, influential Off-Broadway Black theater group, the Negro Ensemble Company. The theater group's *The River Niger*, written by Joseph A. Walker, won the Tony Award for best play in 1974, with Ward producing, directing, and starting in a Tony-nominated role. Ward had already begun a solid New York stage acting career in the 1950s and '60s – including Off-Broadway roles in *The Iceman Cometh* and on Broadway in *A Raisin in the Sun* – when he wrote a 1966 *New York Times* editorial “American Theater: For Whites Only?” The article called for the establishment of a Black repertory theater company. Turner wrote, “Not in the future...but now!” A year later the Ford Foundation awarded a \$434,000 grant to create the Negro Ensemble Company with Ward as artistic director, along with Robert Hooks and Gerald S. Krone in other leadership roles. As a playwright, Ward penned the 1965 Off-Broadway double-bill of comedies, *Happy Endings/Day of Absence*, and received his first Drama Desk Award for outstanding new playwright. He would later write other one-act plays (*The Redeemer, Brotherhood, and The Reckoning*). Ward, who was inducted into the Theater Hall of Fame in 1996, adopted the stage name Douglas Turner Ward, a tribute to his two role models: Frederick Douglass and Nat Turner.



Tony Award Winner
A SOLDIER'S PLAY

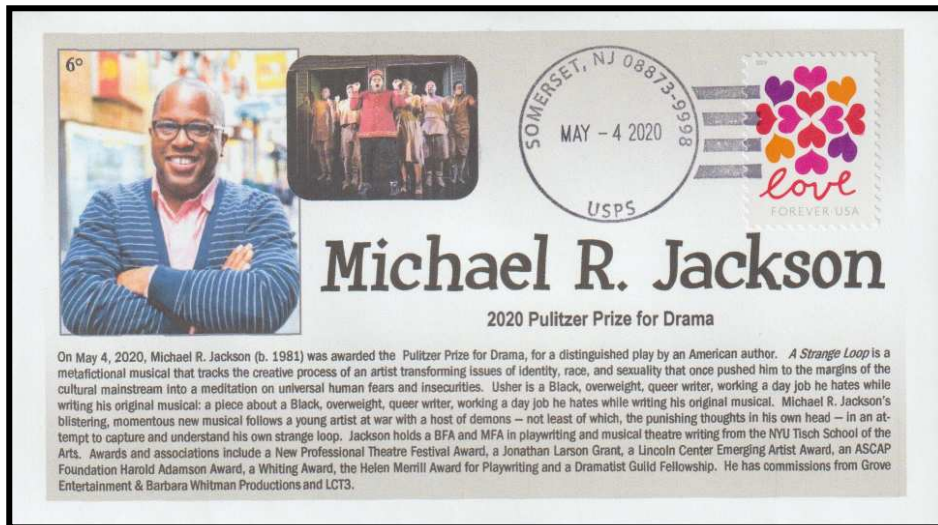
SOMERSET, NJ 08873-3968
SEP 26 2021
USPS

After two and a half years without Broadway's biggest night, the Tony Awards returned on September 26, 2021! This year's presentation honored the outstanding shows, performances, and artistry of the 2019-2020 Broadway season. Six-time Tony-winner Audra McDonald hosted the *American Theatre Wing's 74th Annual Tony Awards*, revealing winners in all but three categories. Then, Tony-winner Leslie Odom, Jr. hosted *The Tony Awards Present: Broadway's Back!*, featuring performances and the live presentation of three Tony Awards, including Best Play, Best Musical, and Best Revival of a Play, which was won by *A Soldier's Play*, based on Charles Fuller's Pulitzer Prize-winning masterpiece. David Alan Grier won a Tony for his role as a Black sergeant whose mysterious murder on a Louisiana Army base triggers an investigation by a fearless Captain — Blair Underwood, who was nominated for a Tony for his role. The play was directed by past Tony Award-winner Kenny Leon (*A Raisin in the Sun*), who also was nominated for a Tony. Leon gave the acceptance speech for the award. Charles Fuller is pictured in the cachet.

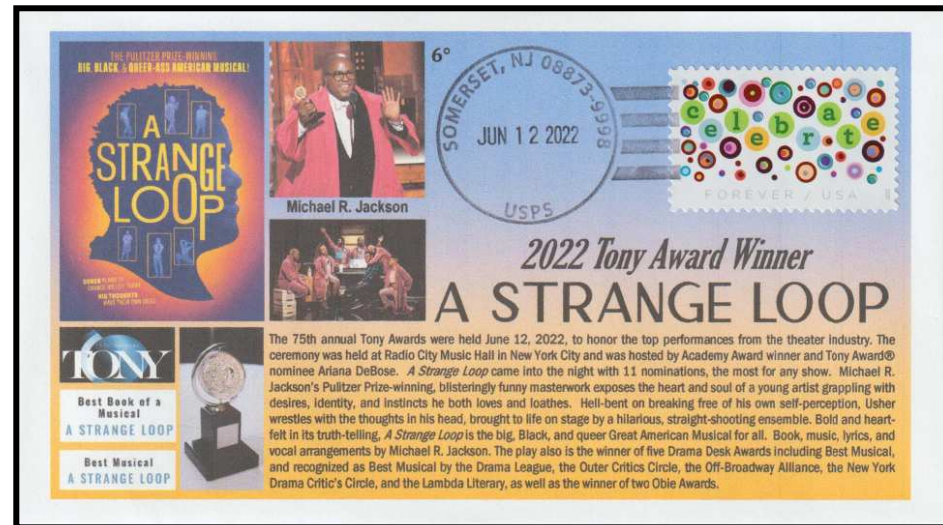


Day of Absence is a satire about an imaginary Southern town where all the Black people have suddenly disappeared. The only ones left are sick and lying in hospital beds, refusing to get well. Infants are crying because they are being tended to by strange parents. The Mayor pleads for the President, Governor, and the NAACP to send him “a jackpot of jigaboos.” On a nationwide radio network he calls on the Blacks, wherever they are, to come back. He shows them the cloths with which they wash cars and the brushes with which they shine shoes as sentimental reminders of the goodies that await them. In the end, the Blacks begin to reappear, as mysteriously as they had vanished, and the White community, sobered by what has transpired, breathes a sigh of relief at the return of the rather uneasy status quo. What will happen next is left unsaid, but the suggestion is strong that things will never quite be the same again.

Charles H. Fuller Jr. was a playwright, best known for his play *A Soldier's Play*, for which he received the 1982 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and the 2020 Tony Award for Best Revival of a Play. His 1975 play, *The Brownsville Raid*, is based on the Brownsville affair, an altercation between Black soldiers and White civilians in Brownsville, Texas, in 1906, which led to an entire Black regiment being dishonorably discharged, though later pardoned in 1976.



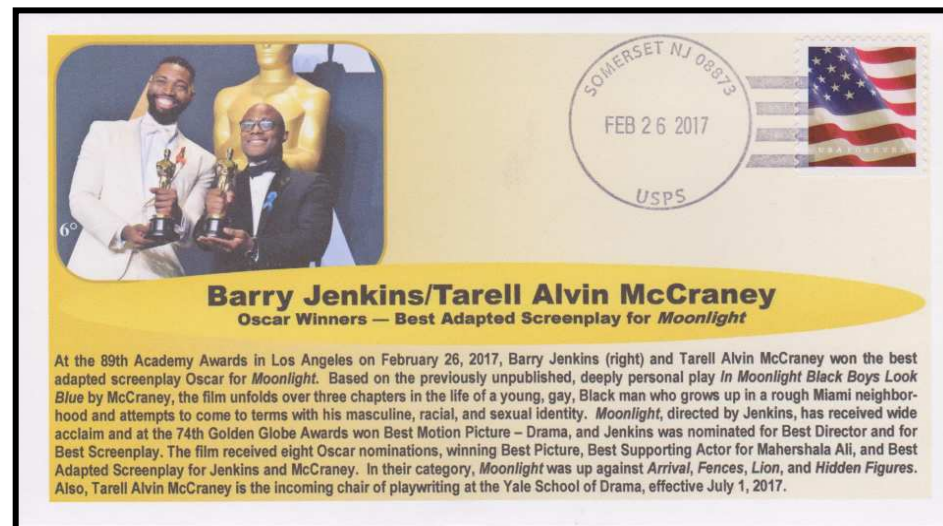
Michael R. Jackson (born 1981) is an American playwright, composer, and lyricist, best known for his musical *A Strange Loop*, which won the 2020 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and the 2022 Tony Award for Best Musical. His musical *White Girl in Danger* began previews at the Tony Kiser Theater on March 15th, 2023, and opened on April 10th, 2023. The musical explores the intersections of race, class, and identity in daytime soap operas.



At the 75th annual Tony Awards, *A Strange Loop* came into the night with 11 nominations, the most for any show. Book, music, lyrics, and vocal arrangements were all by Michael R. Jackson. The play also is the winner of five Drama Desk Awards including Best Musical, and recognized as Best Musical by the Drama League, the Outer Critics Circle, the Off-Broadway Alliance, the New York Drama Critics' Circle, and the Lambda Literary, as well as the winner of two Obie Awards.



In *Dot* (2015), the holidays are always a wild family affair at the Shealy house. But this year, Dotty and her three grown children gather with more than exchanging presents on their minds. As Dotty struggles to hold on to her memory, her children must fight to balance care for their mother and care for themselves. This twisted and hilarious play by Colman Domingo grapples unflinchingly with aging parents, midlife crises, and the heart of a West Philly neighborhood.



Tarell Alvin McCraney is a playwright, screenwriter, and actor who co-wrote *Ms. Blakk for President* with director Tina Landau. The show was first performed by the Steppenwolf Theatre Company in Chicago in 2019. Based on a true story, the play follows drag queen Joan Jett Blakk (played by McCraney himself in the play's first production) in Chicago at the height of the AIDS crisis as she announces her bid to run for President of the United States.

NO PLACE TO BE SOMEBODY - CHARLES GORDONE

Charles Edward Gordone was a playwright, actor, director, and educator. He was the first Black American to win the annual Pulitzer Prize for Drama, and he devoted much of his professional life to the pursuit of multi-racial American theater and racial unity. During his employment as a waiter in a Greenwich Village bar, Gordone found inspiration for his first major work as a playwright, *No Place to Be Somebody*, for which he won the 1970 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. The play also was the first Off-Broadway play to receive the award. *No Place to Be Somebody* is the story of Black bar owner (Johnny Romero) trying to carve out his piece of the American Dream in a New York City neighborhood where most venues are run by the Mafia.

THE COLORED MUSEUM - GEORGE C. WOLFE

Poised to be a major Black playwright thanks to *Spunk*, *The Colored Museum*, which sniped at the kinds of plays the aforementioned Hansberry used to write, and his book of *Jelly's Last Jam*, Wolfe instead turned to direction and management. He runs the New York Shakespeare Festival/Public Theatre and recently directed *On The Town* in Central Park. His next project is an Alec Baldwin/Angela Bassett *Macbeth*.

BLUES FOR MISTER CHARLIE - JAMES BALDWIN

In a small Southern town, a White man murders a Black man, then throws his body in the weeds. With this act of violence – which is loosely based on the notorious 1955 killing of Emmett Till – James Baldwin launches an unsparing and at times agonizing probe of the wounds of race. For where once a White storekeeper could have shot a “boy” like Richard Henry with impunity, times have changed. And centuries of brutality and fear, patronage and contempt, are about to erupt in a moment of truth as devastating as a shotgun blast.

DUTCHMAN - AMIRI BARAKA (nee LeROI JONES)

Baraka's angry, confrontational dramas set the tone for the more militant side of Black politics in the 1960s. His best-known plays include *The Toilet*, *Baptism*, and *Dutchman*, which showed a trashy White woman verbally emasculating (and then knifing) an intellectual Black man who struggles to embrace White middle class values. According to *The Back Stage Theatre Guide*, more Black plays were written and staged since *Dutchman* than in the previous 130 years of American Black theatre history. Marxism also played a part in Baraka's politics, as evidenced by such play titles as *What Was the Relationship of the Lone Ranger to the Means of Production?* and 1982's *Money*.

HOME - SAMM-ART WILLIAMS

It's rare that a year goes by when some regional or NY theatre company isn't reviving 1979's *Home*, Williams' Tony-nominated drama about a young Black man leaving the South to visit relatives up North. Said Williams of that play, “We've got to show a different side of Black lifestyle... All Black characters don't have to be heroes. All Black men do not have to be Black macho, strong leaders of the household, knocking everybody down on stage. You can have very sensitive, very kind, very gentle, kinds of Black men.” Other Williams plays include *Cork* and *Welcome Back To Black River*.

CHOIR BOY - TARELL ALVIN MCCRANEY

The Charles R. Drew Prep School for Boys is dedicated to the creation of strong, ethical Black men. Pharus wants nothing more than to take his rightful place as leader of the school's legendary gospel choir, but can he find his way inside the hallowed halls of this institution if he sings in his own key? Known for his unique brand of urban lyricism, Tarrell Alvin McCraney follows up his acclaimed trilogy *The Brother/Sister Plays* with this affecting portrait of a gay youth trying to find the courage to let the truth about himself be known. Set against the sorrowful sounds of hymns and spirituals, *Choir Boy* premiered at the Royal Court in London before receiving its Off-Broadway premiere in summer 2013 to critical and popular acclaim.

THE FABULOUS MISS MARIE - ED BULLINS

Bullins received numerous awards for his playwriting. He twice received the Black Arts Alliance Award, for *The Fabulous Miss Marie* and *In the New England Winter*. In 1971, Bullins won the Guggenheim Fellowship for playwriting. He received an Obie Award for *The Taking of Miss Janie*, which also received a New York Drama Critics' Circle Award.

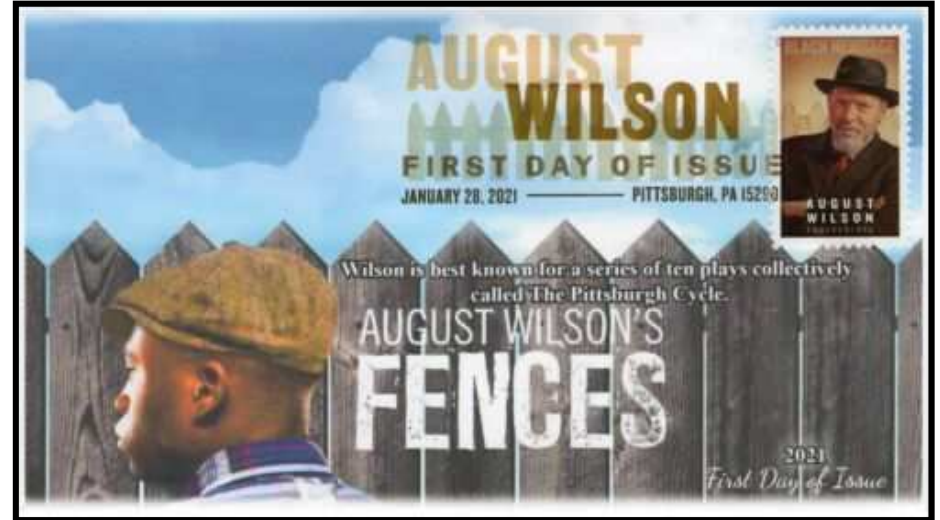
THE RIVER NIGER - JOSEPH A. WALKER

Joseph Alexander Walker was a playwright and screenwriter, theater director, actor, and professor. He is best known for writing *The River Niger*, a three-act play that was originally produced Off-Broadway by the Negro Ensemble Company, before being transferred to Broadway in 1973 and then adapted into a 1976 film of the same name starring James Earl Jones and Cicely Tyson. In 1974, Walker became the first Black American writer to win a Tony Award, receiving it for Best Play for *The River Niger*. The playwright previously won an Obie Award during that play's 1972 to 1973 Off-Broadway run. Other works include the drama *District Line*, *Yin-Yang*, *The Lion is a Soul Brother*, *Out of the Ashes*, and the musical *King Buddy Bolden*.

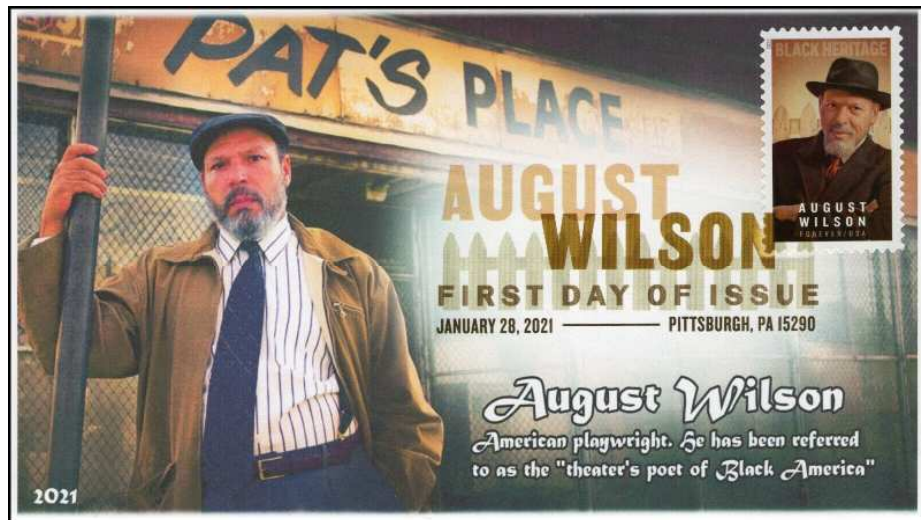
AW Covers



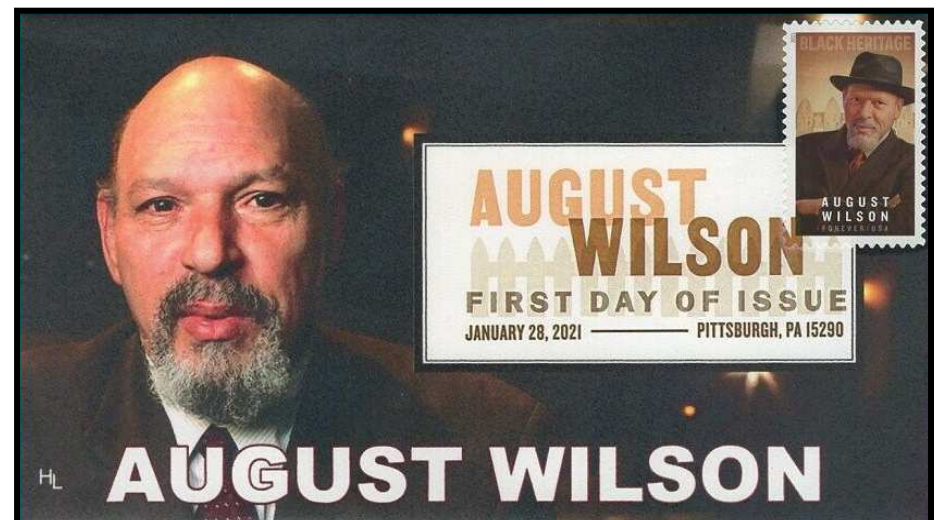
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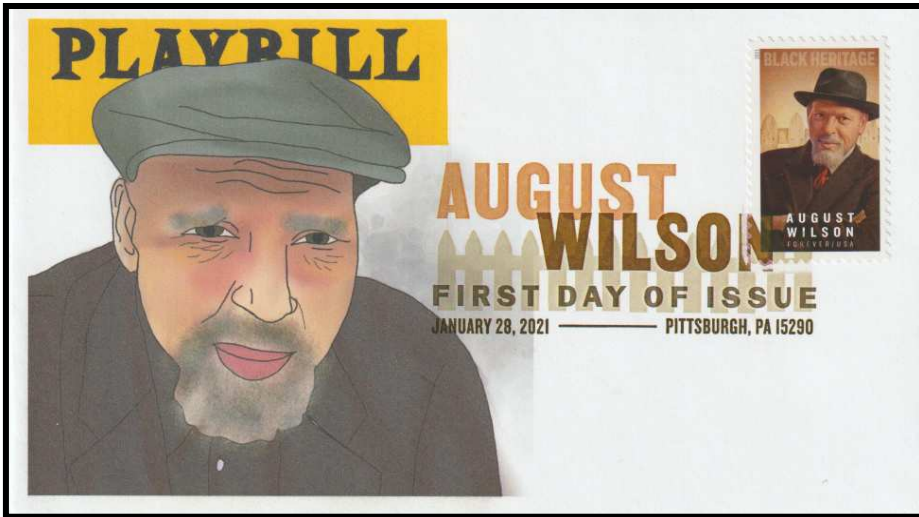
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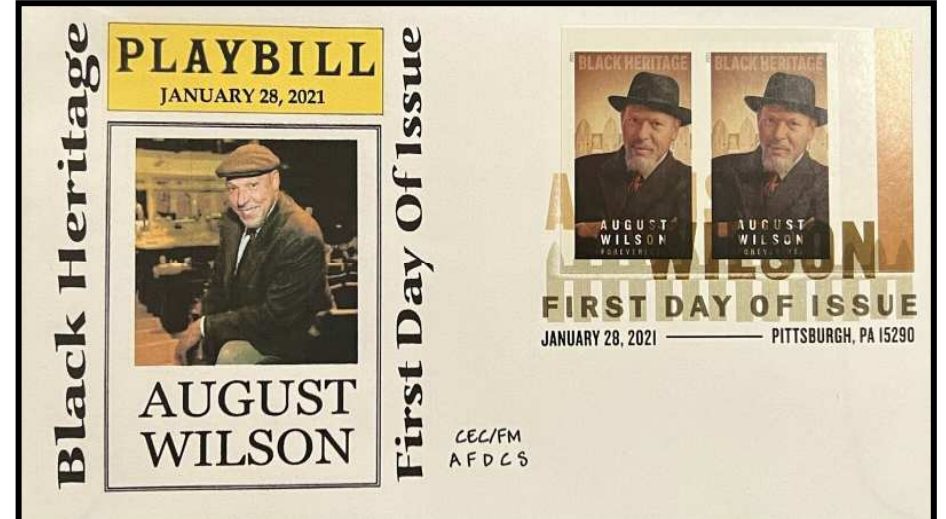
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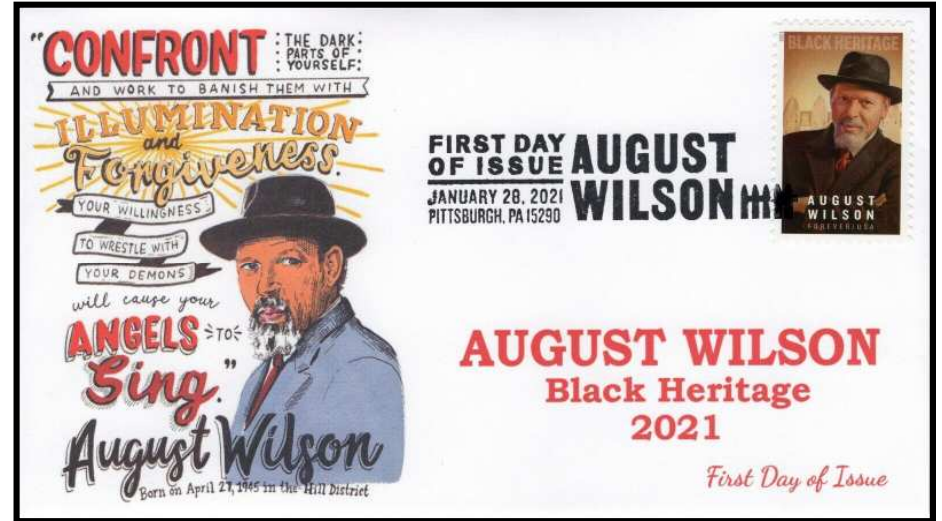
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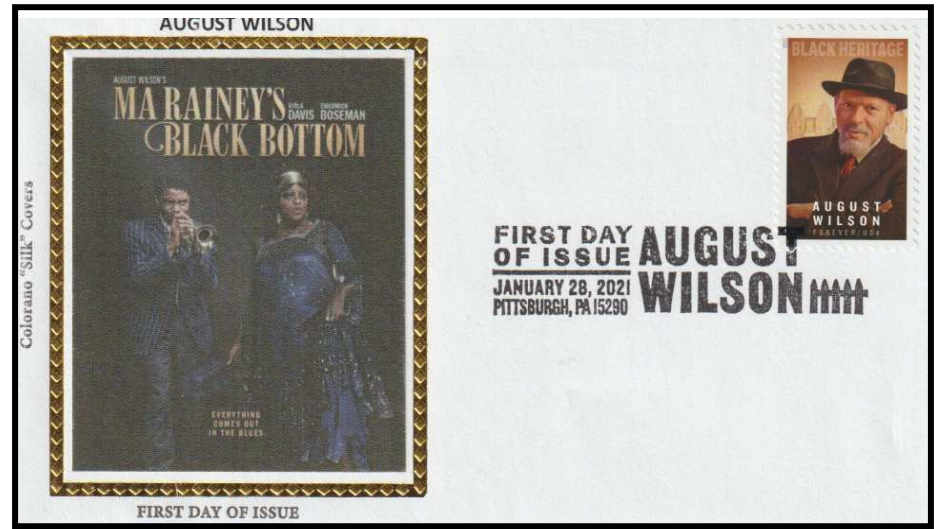
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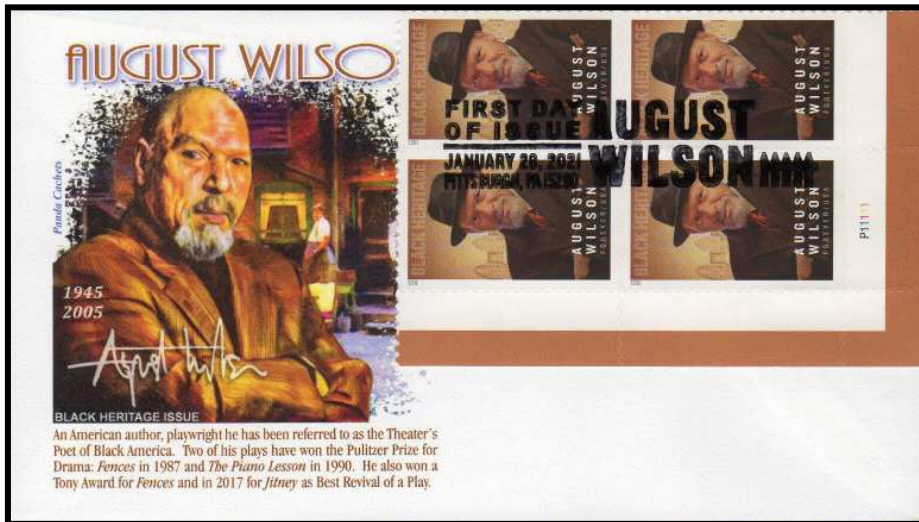
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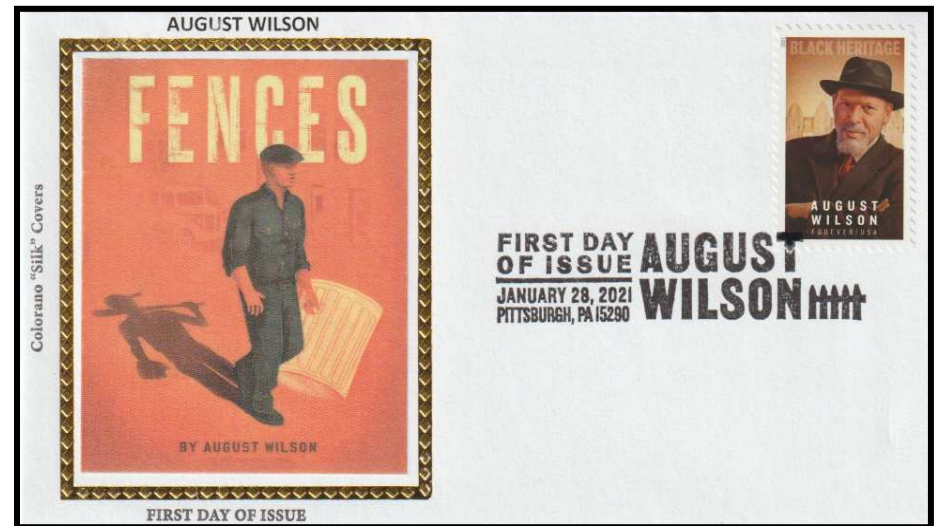
Wilson at the rehearsal of one of his Broadway shows



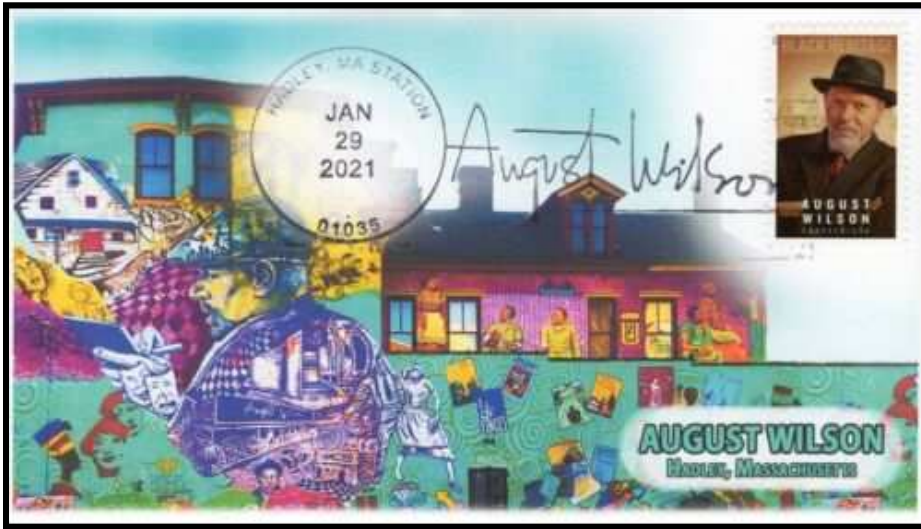
Cachet by Colorano / *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*



Panda Cachets by Rollin Berger

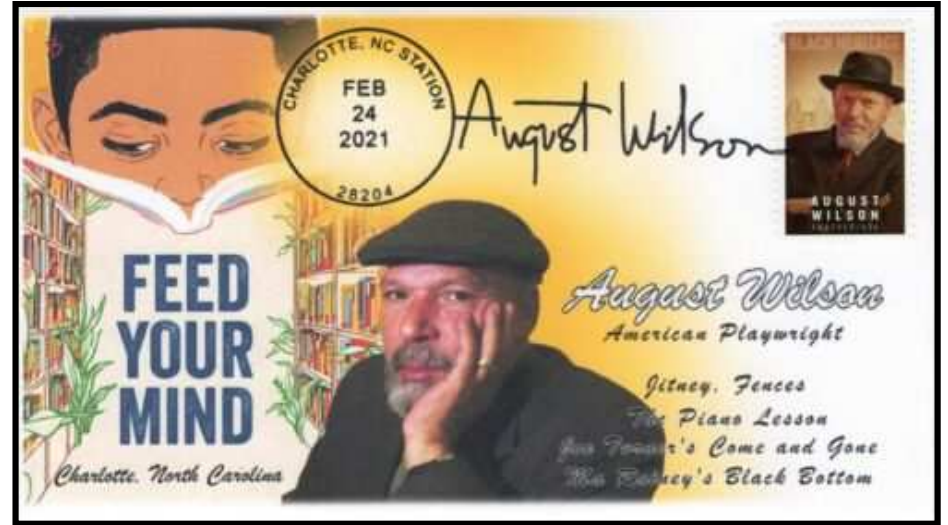


Cachet by Colorano / *Fences*



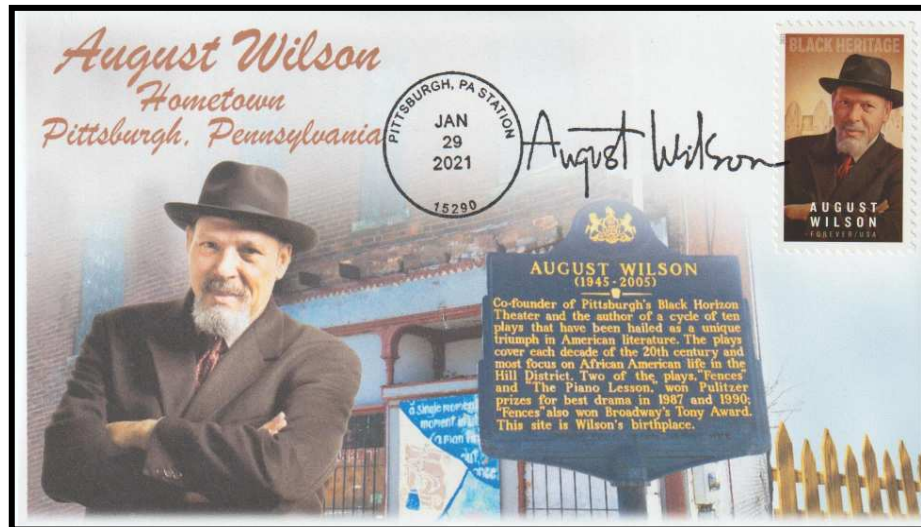
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Features special dedication postmark from Hadley, Massachusetts



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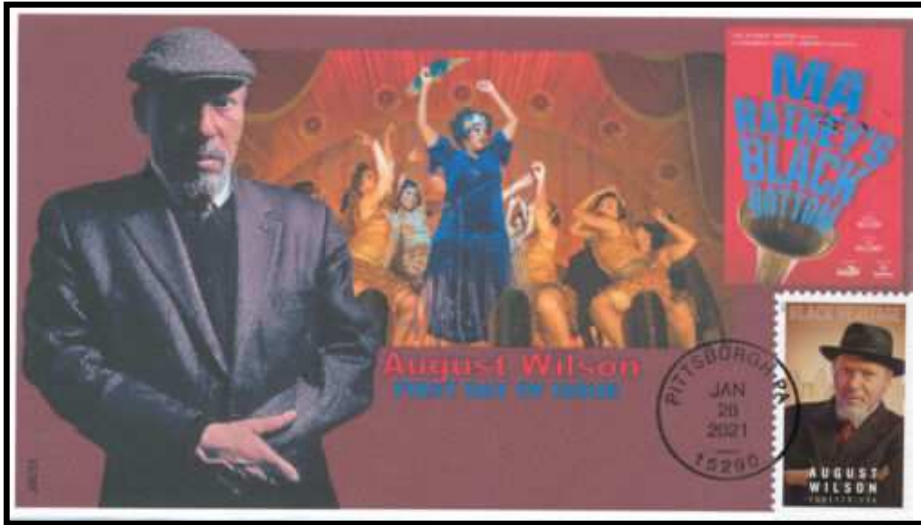


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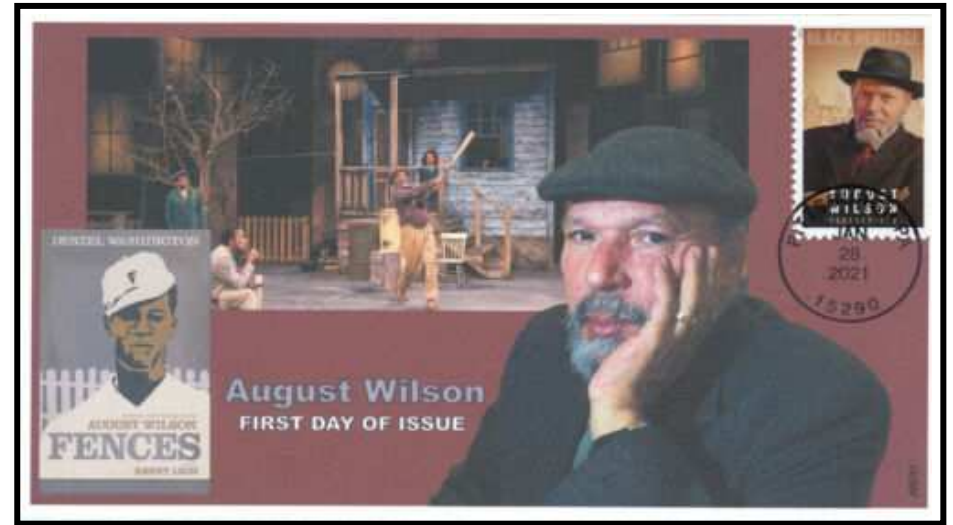
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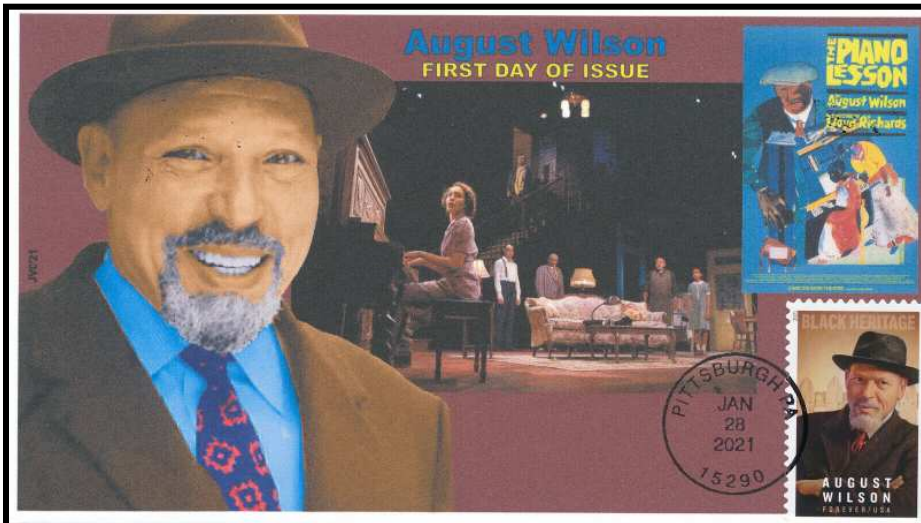
Wilson at the Huntington Theatre (Boston), October 13, 1998



JVC Cachets by John Colasanti



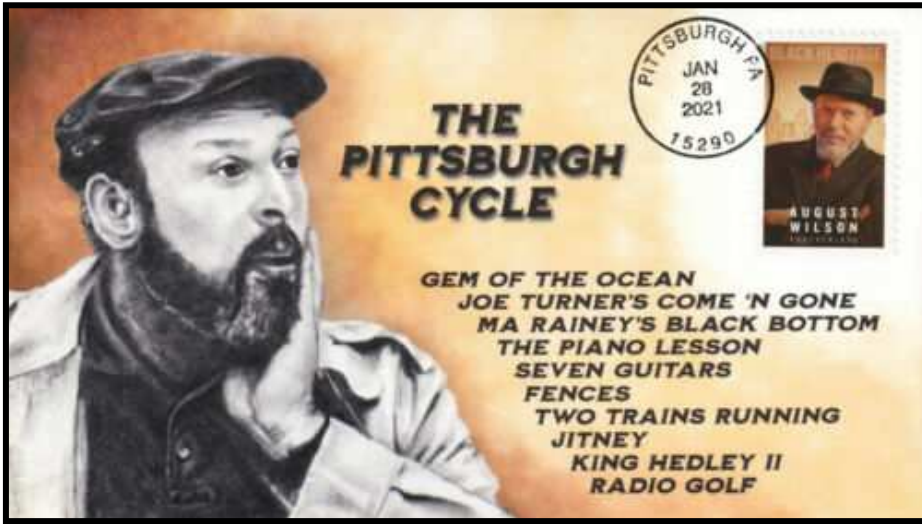
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JVC Cachets by John Colasanti



Coverscape Cachets by David S. Lipof



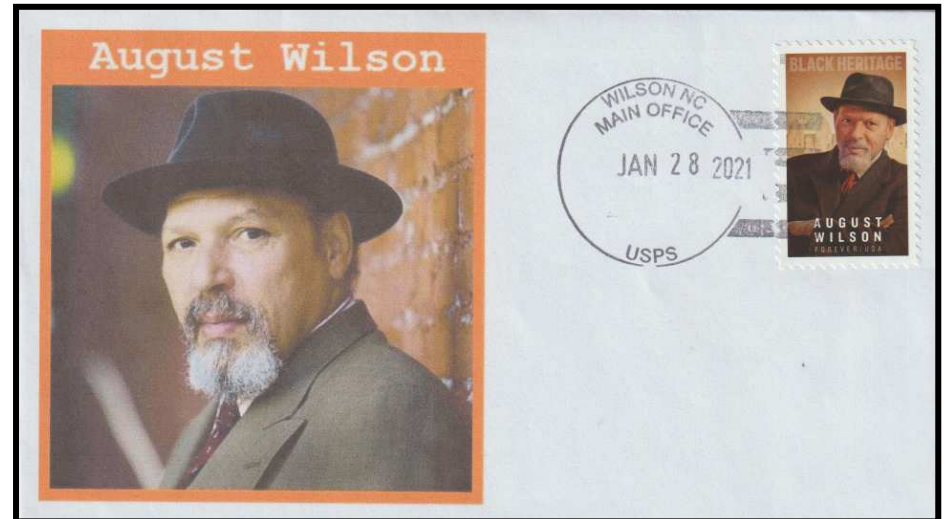
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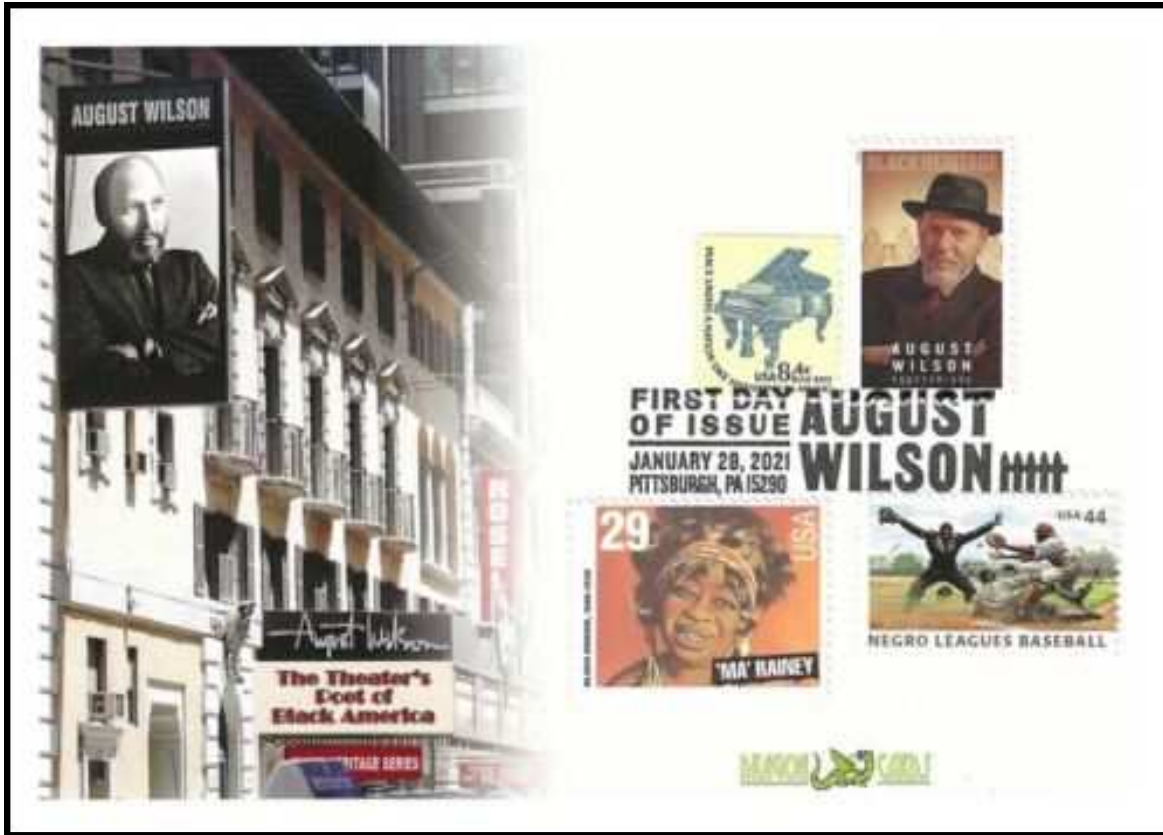
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Cachet by David Smith

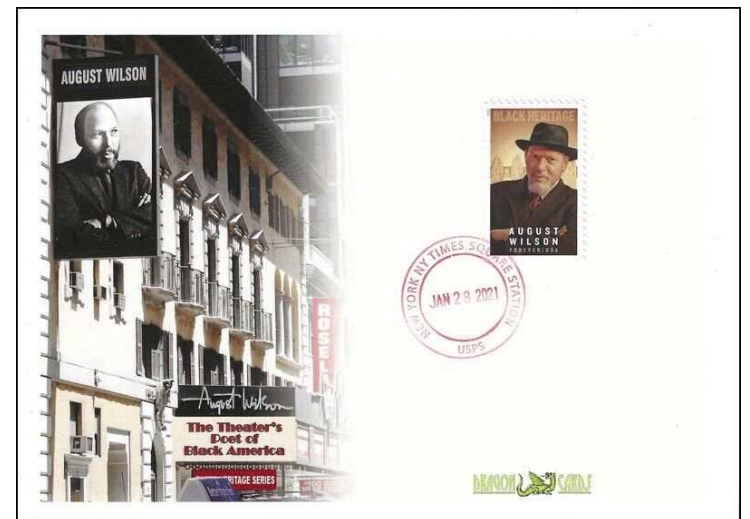
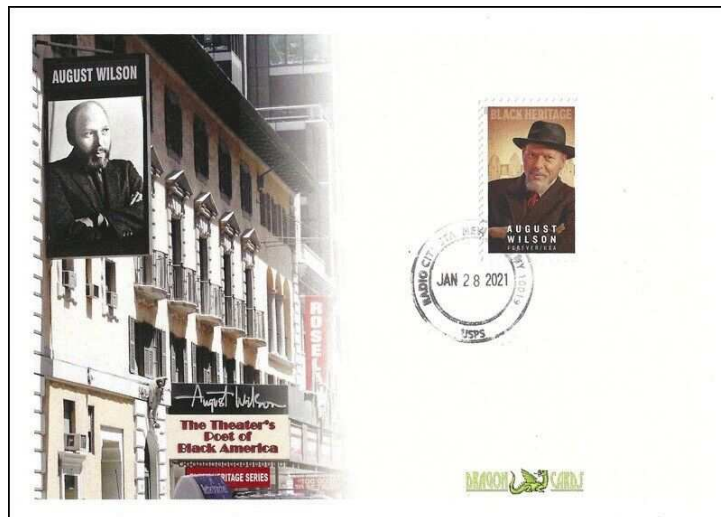
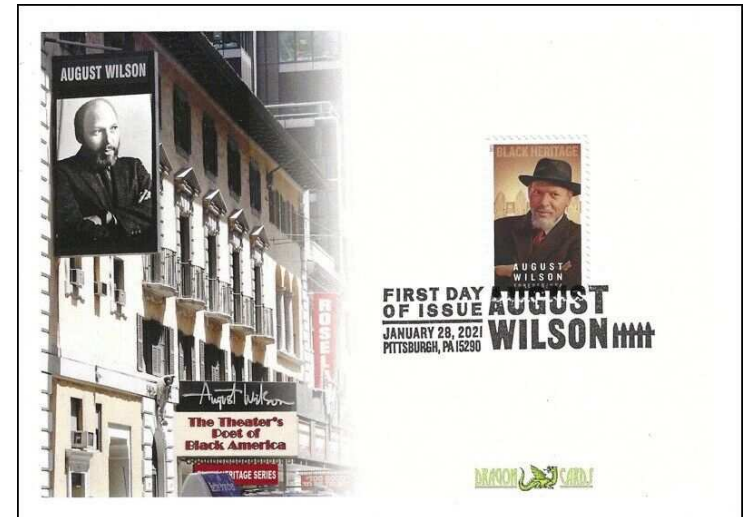


Cachet by David Smith



Dragon Cards by Lloyd de Vries

Cachet features the August Wilson Theatre in New York. The computer art was based on a 2007 photo of the theater. We modified the banners and marquee. The 5"x7" card includes the new Wilson stamp plus three stamps representing his top plays: Sc. 1615C Piano (*The Piano Lesson*), 2859 Ma Rainey (*Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*), and 4465 Negro Leagues (*Fences*).



History of the AW Theater

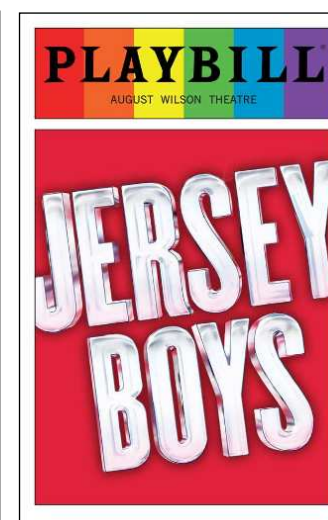
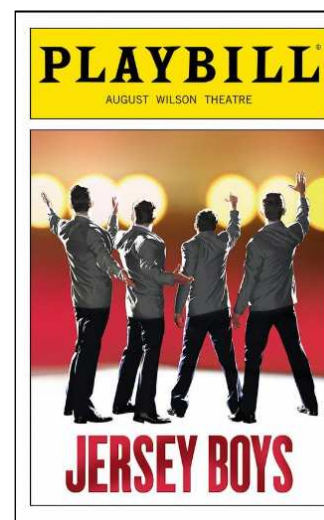
The August Wilson Theatre (formerly the Guild Theatre, ANTA Theatre, and Virginia Theatre) is a Broadway theater at 245 West 52nd Street in the Theater District of Midtown Manhattan in New York City. Opened in 1925, the theater was designed by C. Howard Crane and Kenneth Franzheim and was built for the Theatre Guild. It has approximately 1,225 seats across two levels and is operated by Jujamcyn Theaters.

The Guild Theatre opened on April 13, 1925, when president Calvin Coolidge pressed a button in the White House to turn on the lights. The first production was a revival of George Bernard Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra*, with Lionel Atwill and Helen Hayes, which ran for 128 performances. The Theatre Guild started leasing the venue to other producers in 1938. Radio station WOR (AM) took over the auditorium as a broadcast studio in 1943, with the Theatre Guild moving out the next year.

The American National Theater and Academy (ANTA) purchased the theater in 1950 and renamed it the ANTA Playhouse. The theater reopened as the ANTA Theatre in 1954 after a renovation. Some of the productions at the ANTA Theatre included *Blues for Mister Charlie*, James Baldwin's second play; *No Place to Be Somebody* by Charles Gordone; *Othello*, with Moses Gunn as the Moor; *Purlie*, a musical based on Ossie Davis's play *Purlie Victorious*; and *Bubbling Brown Sugar*, a musical revue featuring the music of numerous Black artists who were popular during the Harlem Renaissance, 1920–1940, including Duke Ellington, Eubie Blake, Count Basie, Cab Calloway, and Fats Waller.

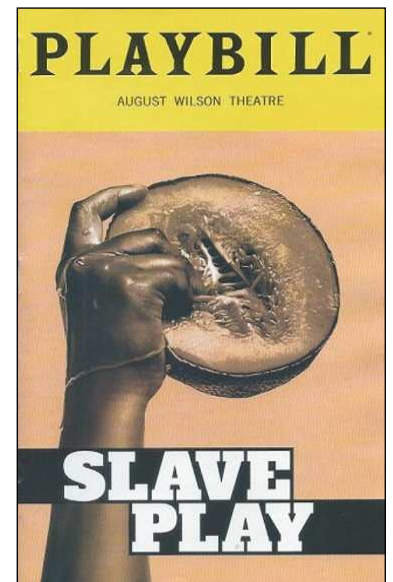
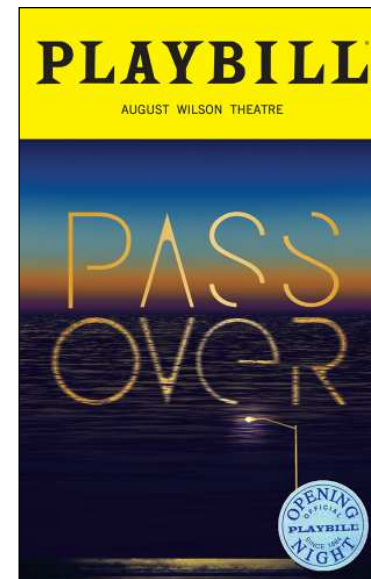
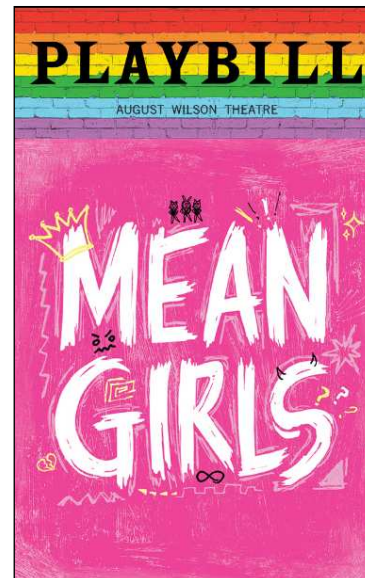
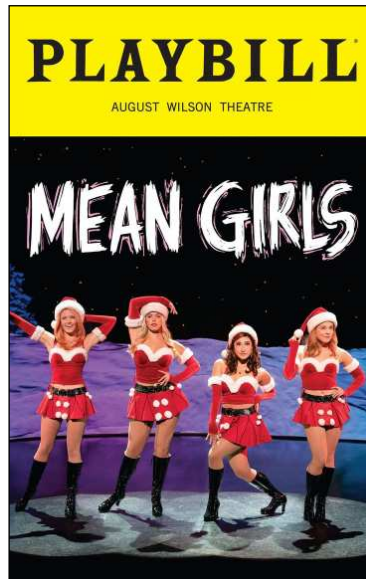
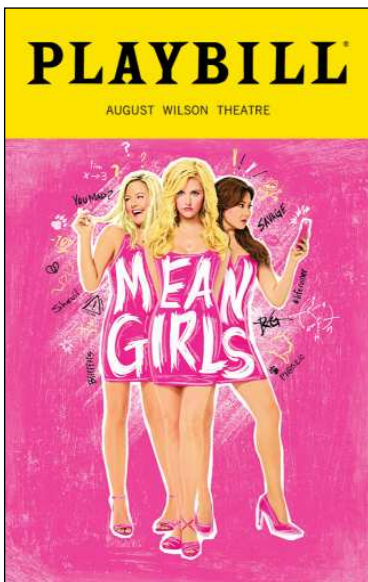
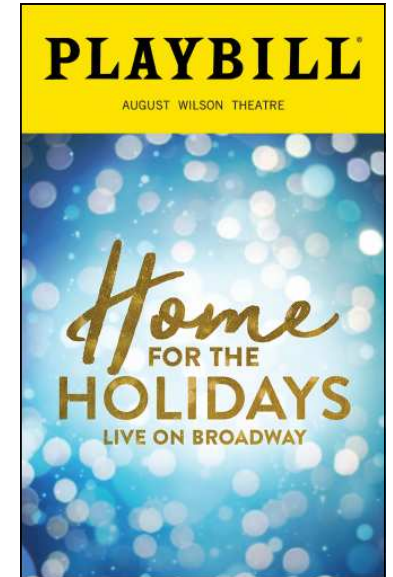
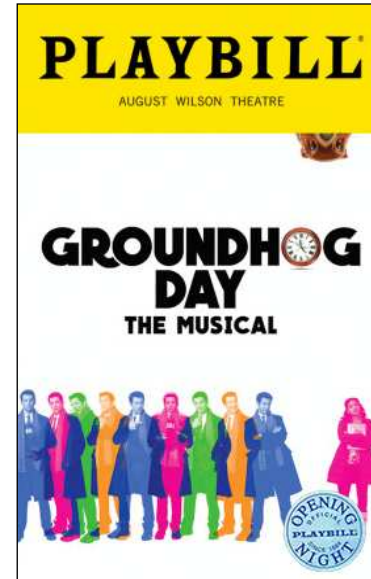
Jujamcyn purchased the ANTA Theatre in 1981 and renamed it for Virginia McKnight Binger, a co-owner. The Virginia Theatre was renovated in the 1990s. The musical *Jelly's Last Jam*, with Gregory Hines and Tonya Pinkins, opened in April 1992 and ran for over a year. *King Hedley II*, the ninth play in August Wilson's ten-part series, opened on Broadway at the Virginia Theatre on May 1, 2001 and closed on July 1, 2001, after 72 performances and 24 previews.

Jujamcyn announced in September 2005 that it would rename the Virginia for August Wilson, the Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright, who had terminal cancer. Wilson died the next month, and the theater was renamed in his honor on October 16, two weeks after his death. Wilson was the first Black theatrical personality to have a Broadway theater named after him. The musical *Jersey Boys* opened November 6, 2005. *Jersey Boys* occupied the August Wilson Theatre for over a decade, running for 4,642 performances before closing January 15, 2017.



The August Wilson Theatre has had seven productions to date: *Jersey Boys*, *Groundhog Day* (April 17, 2017 – September 17, 2017, 176 performances), *Home for the Holidays* (November 21, 2017 – December 30, 2017, 47 performances), *Mean Girls* (April 8, 2018 – March 11, 2020 when Broadway shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 833 performances), *Pass Over* (August 22, 2021 – October 10, 2021, the first play to return to Broadway since the COVID-19 closure, 57 performances), *Slave Play* (November 23, 2021 – January 23, 2022), and *Funny Girl*.

Mean Girls achieved the box office record for the August Wilson Theatre, grossing \$1,994,386 for the week ending December 30, 2018. This was surpassed by *Funny Girl*, which grossed \$2,005,696 over nine performances for the week ending December 18, 2022. *Funny Girl* broke its own record two weeks later, grossing \$2,405,901 over nine performances running through January 1, 2023.

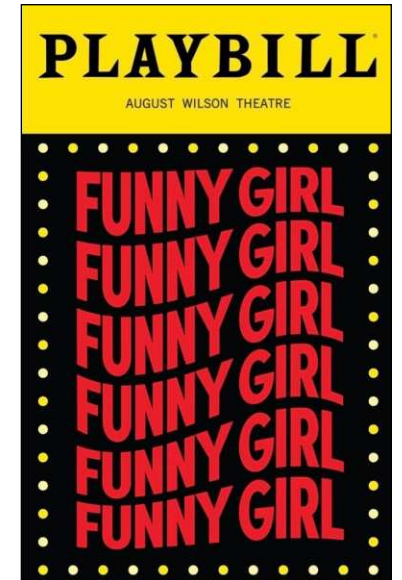
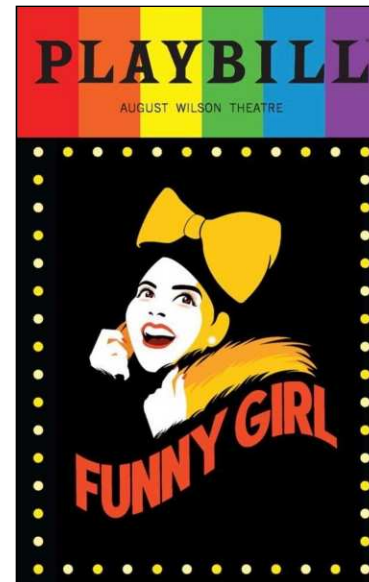
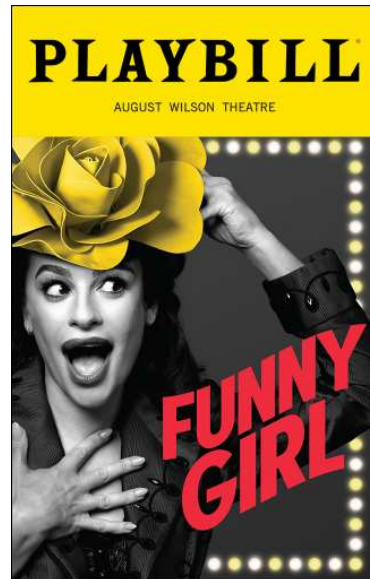
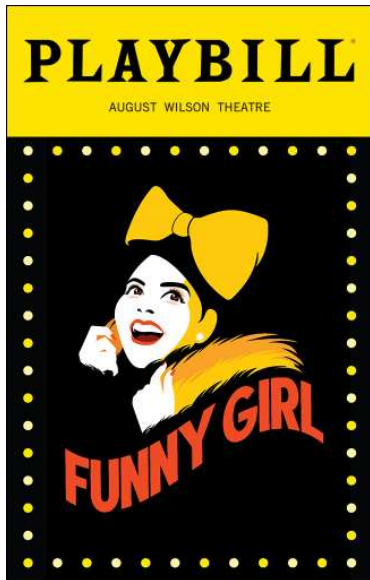


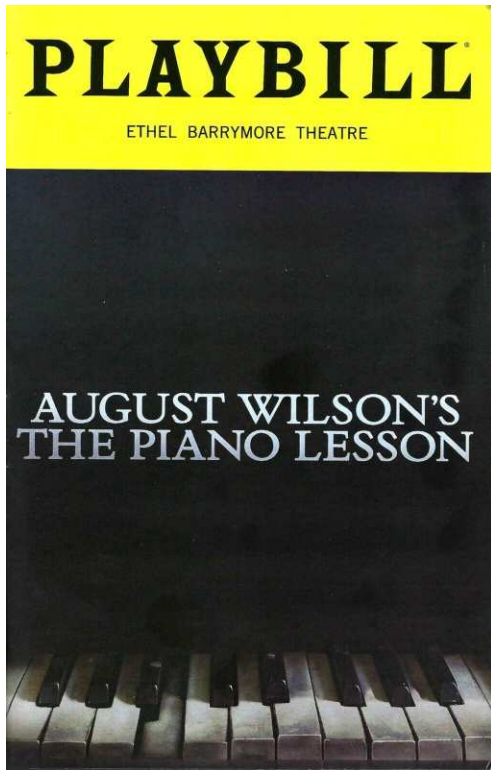
The original production of *Funny Girl* premiered on Broadway in 1964 starring Barbra Streisand as Fanny Brice and was nominated for eight Tony Awards including Best Musical.

The current production starring Lea Michele as Fanny Brice is the first revival of this classic musical. It also stars Jared Grimes as Eddie Ryan. Grimes is nominated for a Best Featured Actor in a Musical Tony for his work. *Funny Girl* opened April 24, 2022 at the August Wilson Theatre and is scheduled to close September 3, 2023.



Now Playing!





The first Broadway revival of August Wilson's *The Piano Lesson* played at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre from October 13, 2022 to January 29, 2023. The original production premiered at the Walter Kerr Theatre on Broadway on April 16, 1990.

The Piano Lesson revival was directed by Tony Award nominee LaTanya Richardson Jackson who made her Broadway directorial debut; she is the first woman to ever direct an August Wilson play on Broadway. *The Piano Lesson*, the fourth play in Wilson's Century Cycle, premiered at the Yale Repertory Theatre in 1987 and starred a then-39-year-old Samuel L. Jackson as Boy Willie.

Three years later, a new production, starring Carl Gordon, Charles S. Dutton, and S. Epatha Merkerson, opened at Chicago's Goodman Theatre and soon transferred to Broadway. In addition to winning the Pulitzer Prize for drama, *The Piano Lesson* won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for Best Play, the Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Play, the Peabody Award, and was nominated for the 1990 Tony Award for Best Play.

Appearing in well over 100 films, Samuel L. Jackson is one of the most respected actors in Hollywood. His films have grossed a total of \$27 billion, more than any other actor. He starred in this revival of *The Piano Lesson* as Doaker Charles and is nominated for a 2023 Tony Award for Best Performance by an Actor in a Featured Role in a Play. Jackson made his Broadway debut in 2011 at the Bernard B. Jacobs Theater in *The Mountaintop*, where he portrayed Martin Luther King, Jr. The play also starred Angela Bassett and was directed by Kenny Leon. Jackson's career began onstage upon his graduation from Morehouse College in Atlanta with a degree in dramatic arts. Among the plays were *Home*, *A Soldier's Play*, *Sally/Prince*, and *The District Line*. He also originated roles in two of August Wilson's plays, *The Piano Lesson* and *Two Trains Running* at the Yale Repertory Theatre.

The latest production of *The Piano Lesson* also stars Tony Award-nominated (for *The Color Purple*) Danielle Brooks (as Berniece) who starred as Tasha "Taystee" Jefferson in Netflix's Emmy-nominated series *Orange is the New Black*. She starred as the legendary Gospel singer Mahalia Jackson in director Kenny Leon's *Mahalia* which premiered on Lifetime.

Making his Broadway debut, John David Washington starred as Boy Willie. In 1992, he got his film debut as a child in Spike Lee's *Malcolm X*, which starred his father Denzel Washington. As an adult, John David played the lead in *Blackkklansman*, also directed by Spike Lee.

Michael Potts starred as Wining Boy. In 2017, he starred as the notorious gossip "Turnbo" in the Tony Award-winning production of August Wilson's *Jitney*, under the direction of Ruben Santiago-Hudson. In 2020, his portrayal of "Slow Drag" earned him critical acclaim in Netflix's award-winning, feature adaptation of August Wilson's play *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*. The film served as Chadwick Boseman's final acting portrayal.

Trai Byers starred as Avery. He began his career on the popular soap opera *All My Children*. On the FOX hit show *Empire* (2015 - 2020), Byers starred as Andre Lyon, the eldest son of Lucious and Cookie Lyon. In 2014, Byers portrayed James Foreman in the Ava DuVernay directed *Selma*.

Denzel Washington plans to bring *The Piano Lesson* to the big screen with this latest cast and is committed to making films of all of Wilson's Century Cycle plays.



Recent Loss of an August Wilson Play Alum

John Beasley (June 26, 1943 – May 30, 2023) left his job as a railroad clerk in his mid-40s to pursue acting full time, bringing an understated power to films like the inspirational 1993 football movie *Rudy*. He became an in-demand character actor in the 1990s and went on to appear in nearly 70 movies and TV shows, often playing steady, dignified men of integrity.

He first drew notice for his work in four episodes of *Brewster Place*, a short-lived spinoff of the 1989 television movie *The Women of Brewster Place*, based on a novel by Gloria Naylor about the intertwined lives of Black women living in tenements on a dead-end street.

Beasley also earned plaudits for his work in *The Apostle*, a 1997 film starring Robert Duvall (who also wrote and directed) as Sonny, a fiery Pentecostal preacher who flees trouble with the law to start over in Louisiana.

His many other film credits included the 1992 family hockey comedy *The Mighty Ducks*, starring Emilio Estevez; the 1999 John Travolta drama *The General's Daughter*; and the 2002 Ben Affleck terrorism thriller *The Sum of All Fears*.

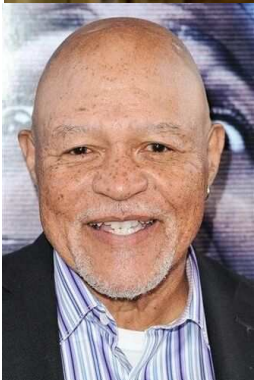
Beasley perhaps is best remembered for his role as a kindly school-bus driver on *Everwood*, which starred Treat Williams as a New York neurosurgeon who starts a new life in the mountains of Colorado after his wife dies in a car accident. Ironically, Williams recently was killed in a motorcycle accident. Beasley was in every episode of *Everwood*, from the show's debut in 2002 until it ended in 2006.

In 2002, Beasley founded the "John Beasley Theater & Workshop" in Omaha, Nebraska, to promote live theater, especially works written by or featuring Black Americans.

August Wilson's *Fences* opened the 2009-2010 season at The Huntington Theater in Boston. The production was directed by Kenny Leon. John Beasley played the protagonist, Troy Maxson. Troy's wife Rose was played by Crystal Fox; his friend Bono was played by Eugene Lee; Brandon J. Dirden played Troy's son Lyons; Warner Miller played Troy's second son Cory. The character of Gabriel (Troy's brother) was played by Bill Nunn.

Starting in 2012, Mr. Beasley also turned heads for five seasons on *The Soul Man* as the father of the R&B star turned preacher played by Cedric the Entertainer.

Last fall, Mr. Beasley scaled a personal peak as a stage actor with a prominent role as the older incarnation of Noah, the love-struck male protagonist, in a musical adaptation of the 1996 Nicholas Sparks novel *The Notebook*, and the 2004 film based on it, at the Chicago Shakespeare Theater. Beasley died before the production could make its anticipated move to Broadway.



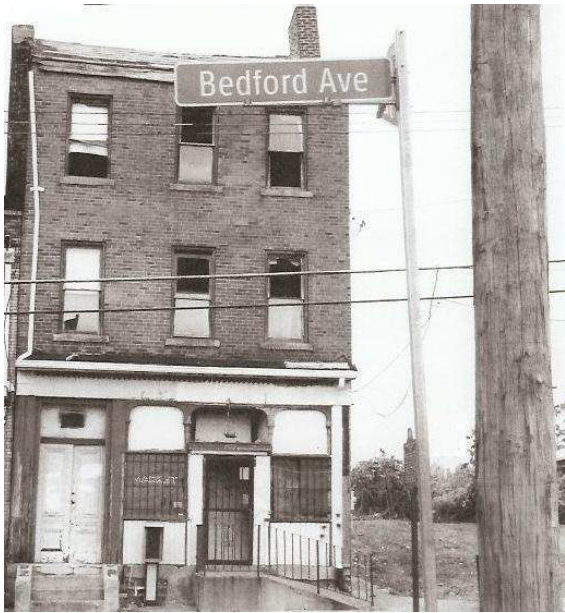
Fences
By August Wilson
Directed by Kenny Leon
Sep. 11 – Oct. 11, 2009
The Huntington Theatre

When his rise through the Negro baseball leagues hit the ceiling of racial prejudice, Troy Maxson turned away from a world of unfulfilled promises and denied opportunities. But in 1957, his son Cory, an emerging football star, sees the world through very different eyes, and his wife Rose yearns for an outlet for her love.

Winner of the 1987 Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award for Best Play, *Fences* is the sixth chapter in August Wilson's groundbreaking ten-play cycle of the African-American experience in the 20th century and the ninth of his plays to be staged by the Huntington, one of Wilson's longstanding artistic homes.

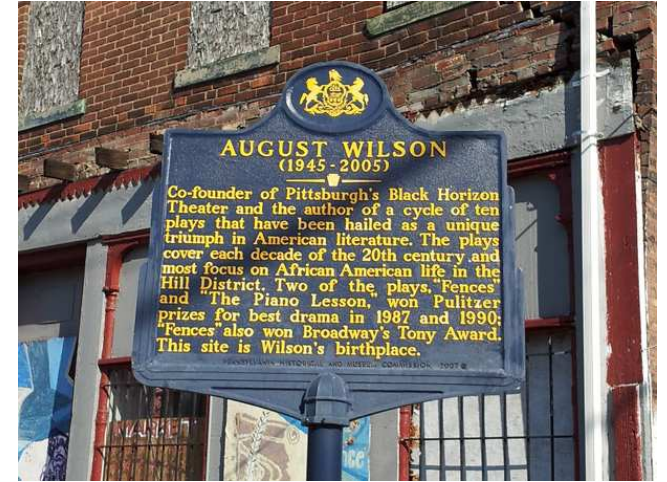


Designed by prominent Black American architect Allison Grace Williams, **the August Wilson Center for African-American Culture** in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, celebrated its grand opening on September 17, 2009. The dramatic glass and stone structure at the corner of Liberty Avenue and William Penn Place was inspired by the sails of the Swahili trading ships that first brought East African culture to America. The nearly \$40 million center includes a 486-seat theater, gallery spaces, and halls for educational programs, encompassing about 65,000 square feet.



History Preserved

August Wilson's childhood home was 1727 Bedford Avenue in Pittsburgh's Hill District. On April 30, 2013, the **August Wilson House** was added to the National Register of Historic Places. On August 13, 2022, the grand opening and the ribbon-cutting for **August Wilson House** as a state-of-the-“arts” center occurred, just like Pittsburgh's beloved playwright desired.



A-list celebrities, such as actors Denzel Washington and Russell Hornsby, joined members of August Wilson's family to celebrate the grand opening of August Wilson House. Daughter Sakina is second from left. Wife Constanza is far right.

Personal Life

The legendary American playwright, August Wilson married three times. He married his first wife, Brenda Burton, in 1969. After only three years of marriage, the couple parted their ways in 1972. They had one daughter together named Sakina Ansari, born in 1970.

In 1978, Wilson left Pittsburgh for St. Paul, Minnesota. He was hired as a writer for the St. Paul Science Museum. In 1981, he married Judy Oliver, a social worker; they divorced in 1990, and Wilson moved to Seattle, Washington.

Wilson married again in 1994 to his third wife, Columbian-born costume designer Constanza Romero, whom he met for the first time on the set of *The Piano Lesson*. They had a daughter, Azula Carmen Wilson, born in 1997.



Constanza Romero and August Wilson



At the 2001 New York City premiere of *King Hedley II*, August Wilson holds his daughter Azula, 3, in front of the Virginia Theatre.



Daughter Sakina Ansari, August Wilson, and wife Constanza Romero Wilson at the opening of *Gem Of The Ocean* at the Walter Kerr Theatre in New York on December 6, 2004.



Jitney director Ruben Santiago-Hudson snaps a pic with August Wilson's daughter Azula Carmen Wilson and the late playwright's wife Constanza Romero (2017).



August Wilson's niece, Dr. Kimberly Ellis; his nephew, Paul Ellis; and daughter Sakina Ansari Wilson (2022).



August Wilson's daughters — Azula Carmen Wilson (left) and Sakina Ansari Wilson at the New York Premiere of Wilson's *How I Learned What I Learned* (2013).

When August Wilson knew he was dying of cancer, he asked that two of his favorite songs be played at his funeral: "Danny Boy," a traditional Irish ballad, and "When the Saints Go Marching In," a gospel hymn used in funeral marches in New Orleans. Wynton Marsalis, the Grammy- and Pulitzer Prize-winning jazz trumpeter and composer, honored that request at Wilson's funeral in 2005. Marsalis played "Danny Boy" at the end of the service in Pittsburgh's Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall before playing a joyous version of "When the Saints Go Marching In," leading mourners in a celebratory procession through the Hill District, where Wilson grew up and set most of his plays. Marsalis later recorded these songs for the documentary *August Wilson: The Ground on Which I Stand*.

August Wilson shared that he had been diagnosed with liver cancer in June 2005 and been given three to five months to live. He died on Sunday, October 2, 2005, at Swedish Medical Center in Seattle, and was interred not far from his mother Daisy at Greenwood Cemetery, Pittsburgh, on October 8, 2005, aged 60. He reportedly requested a "Black funeral" at Saint Paul Cathedral, but permission for a non-Catholic funeral was not granted by the diocese. A memorial service was instead held at Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall adjacent to the University of Pittsburgh. Wilson was survived by his widow and two daughters and by siblings Freda Ellis, Linda Jean Kittel, Donna Conley, Barbara Jean Wilson, Edwin Kittel, and Richard Kittel.



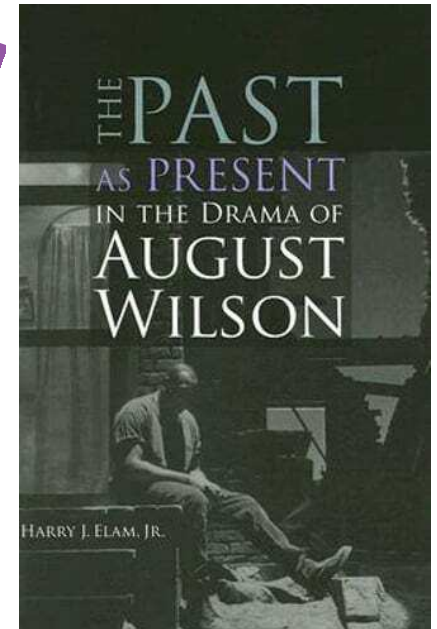
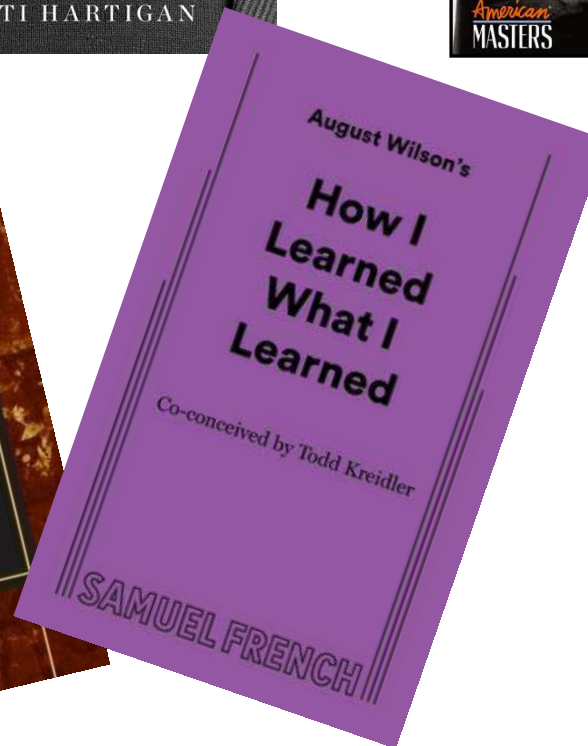
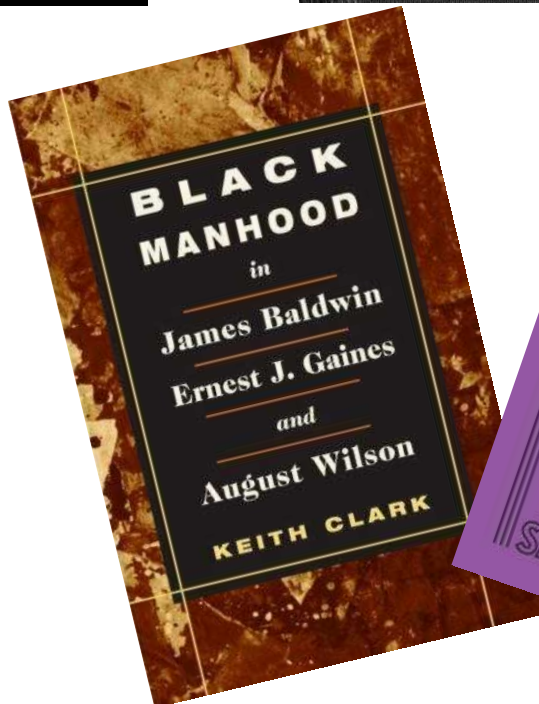
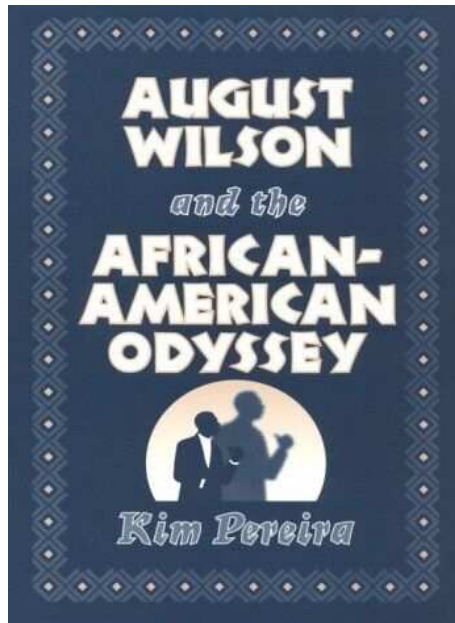
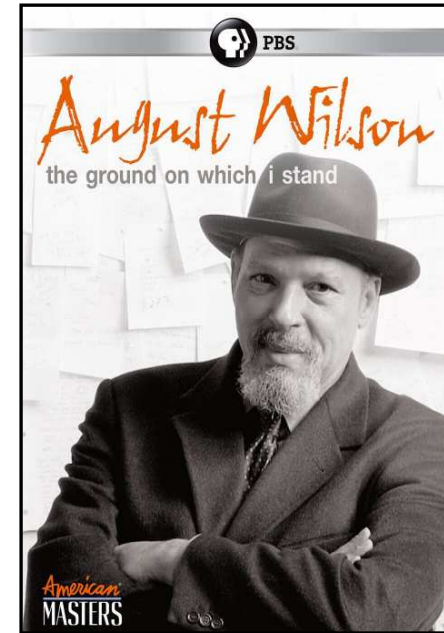
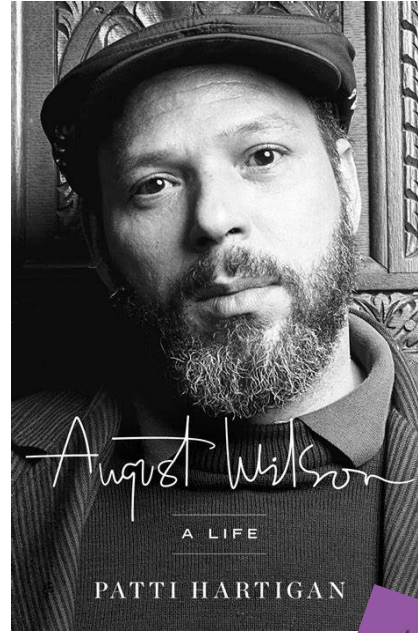
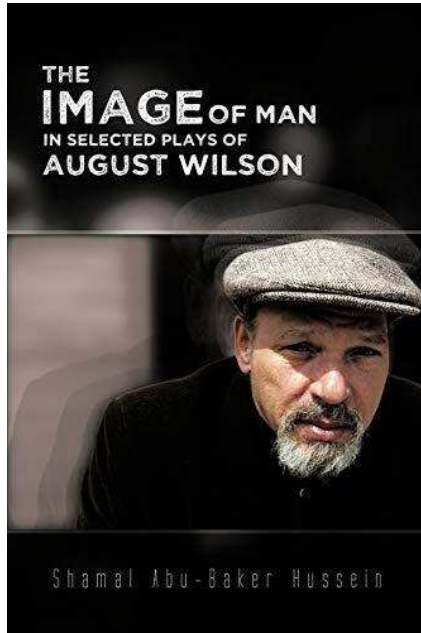
Pallbearers bring August Wilson's casket out of Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall after a celebration of Wilson's life.

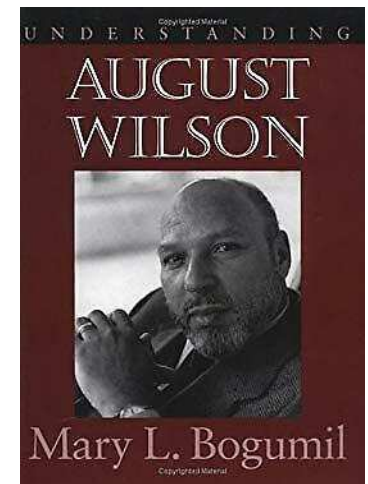
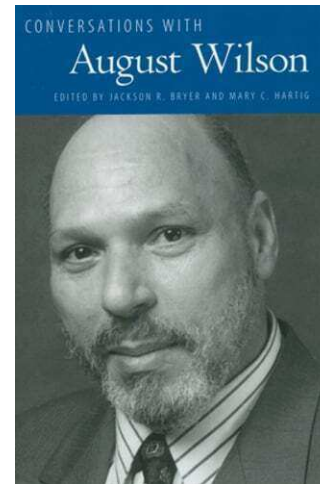
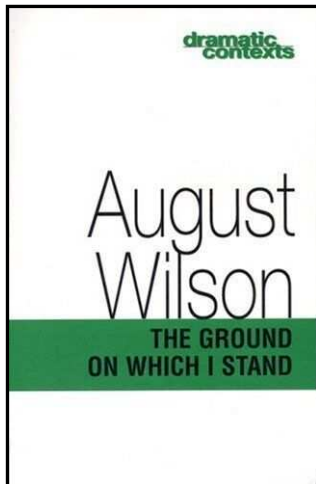
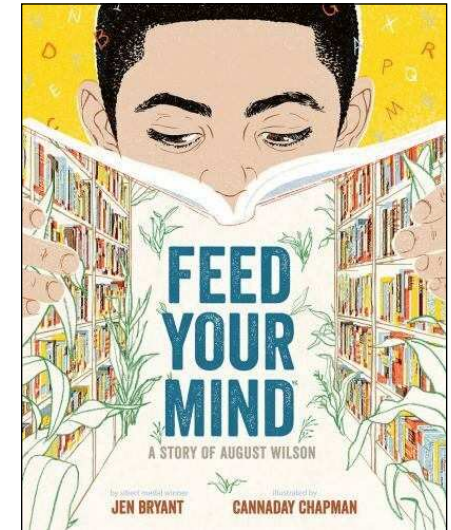
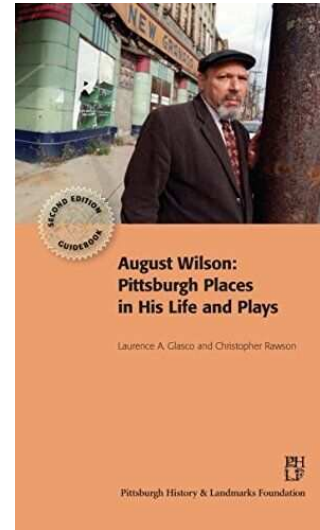
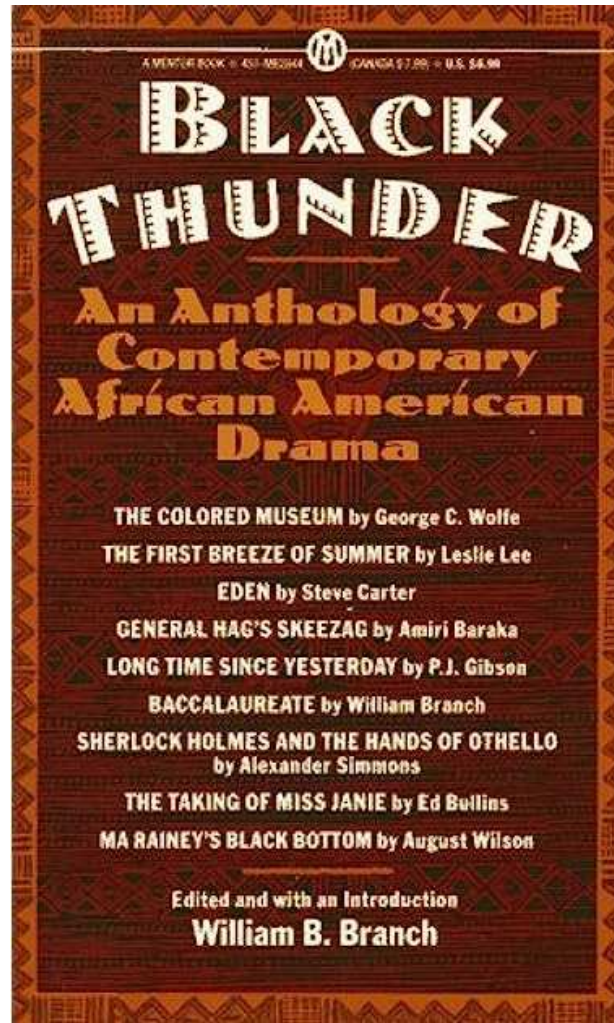
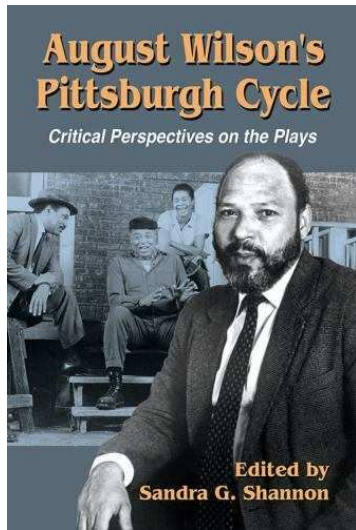
Actors Charles S. Dutton, Phylicia Rashad, Anthony Chisholm, and Ruben Santiago-Hudson read passages from four of Wilson's plays.



"August, I will always love you" Constanza

Informational Reading





www.visitpittsburgh.com/directory/august-wilson-african-american-cultural-center/

www.cleveland.com/travel/2022/04/new-pittsburgh-exhibit-celebrates-hometown-playwright-august-wilson-everyones-life-experiences-are-important.html

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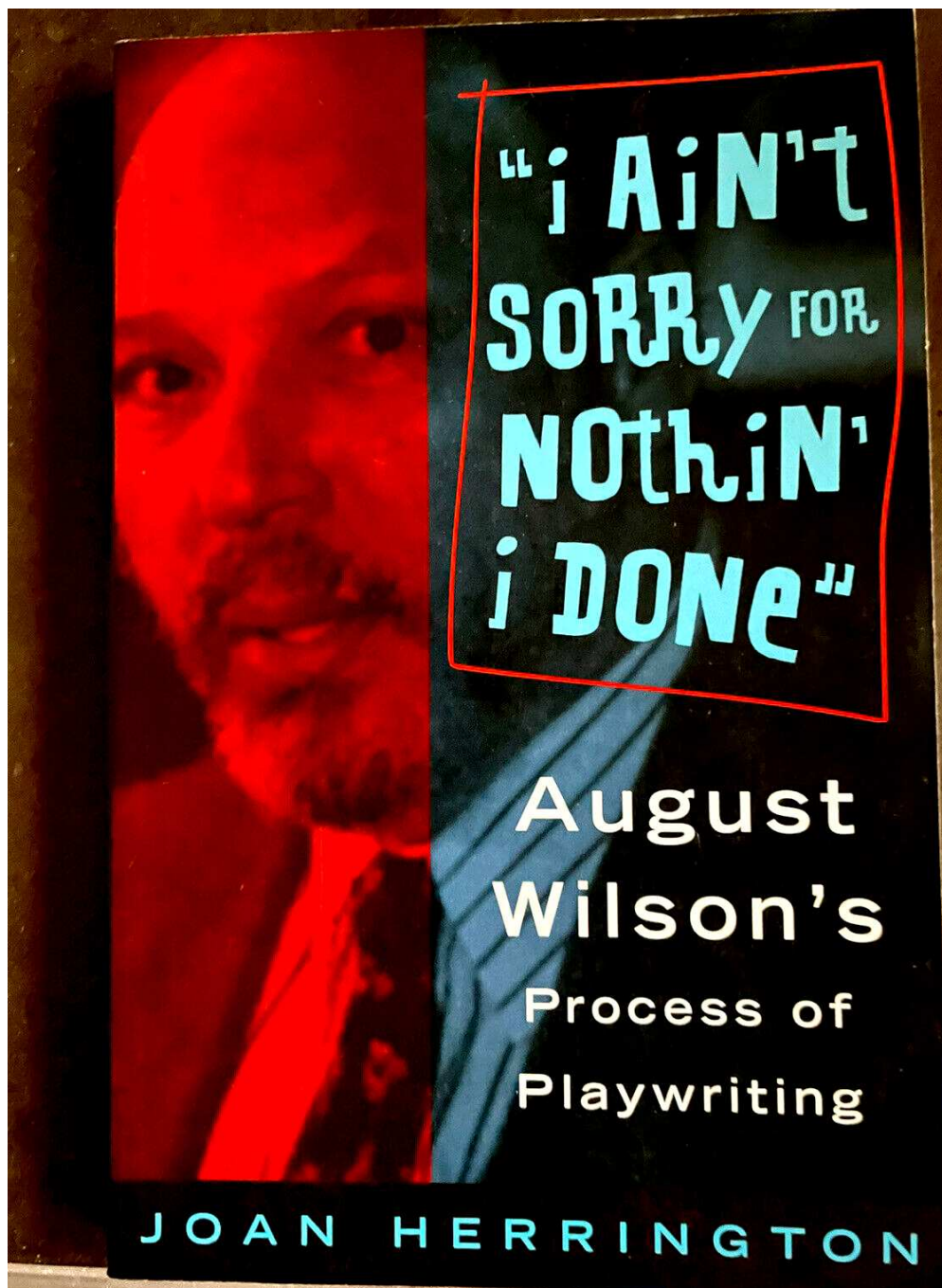
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www.youtube.com/watch?v=pwjqRiFqQDE

Informational Websites



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“i AiN't SORRY FOR NOthiN' i DONE”

August Wilson's Process of Playwriting

BY JOAN HERRINGTON

The most successful African-American playwright of his time, August Wilson is a dominant presence on Broadway and in regional theatres and college drama courses throughout the country. In little more than a decade, his work has earned him two Pulitzer Prizes, two Tonys and six New York Drama Critics Circle Awards. Plays like *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *Fences*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, *Two Trains Running*, *The Piano Lesson* (which Wilson himself adapted for television's Hallmark Hall of Fame) and *Seven Guitars* have brought not only a strong and unique voice to the modern stage—they have created new and strikingly authentic roles for African-American actors such as James Earl Jones, Courtney Vance, Roscoe Lee Brown, Angela Bassett, Laurence Fishburne and Charles Dutton.

In this book Joan Herrington, who teaches theatre at Western Michigan University, traces the roots of Wilson's drama to visual artists like Romare Bearden and to the jazz musicians who inspire and energize him as a dramatist. She goes on to analyze his process of playwriting—how he brings his experiences and his ideas to stage life—by comparing successive drafts of his first three major plays: *Ma Rainey*, *Fences*, and *Joe Turner*. Her study is enriched and enlivened by interviews with Wilson himself and with actors (Jones, Dutton) directors (Lloyd Richards, Walter Dallas) and other theatre professionals who have worked closely with him.

The book concludes by focusing on Wilson as the figure of controversy he has recently become. While his plays have won acclaim in mainstream theatre and deeply touched a diverse and broad-based audience, he now asserts, “I stand myself and my art squarely on the self-defining ground of the slave quarters.” Reconciling this declaration with the nature of August Wilson's work and the reality of his career becomes the book's final challenge.

Front cover photograph: Glen Frieson
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“All you need in the world is love and laughter. That’s all anybody needs. To have love in one hand and laughter in the other.”

—AUGUST WILSON



August Wilson in April of 2001

"Confront the dark parts of yourself, and work to banish them with illumination and forgiveness. Your willingness to wrestle with your demons will cause your angels to sing."