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**PORTLAND CENTER STAGE CO-PRODUCTION OF  
*FENCES* EXPLORES THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN EXPERIENCE IN  
MID-20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY AMERICA**

**PCS is Third Stop for this Cast in Co-production with Hartford Stage Company and  
Dallas Theater Center**

***Fences* is that rare American tragedy that leaves you feeling that life may be desperate, but it bears the seeds of its own redemption. Lawson Taitte, *Dallas Morning News***

March 19, 2007 – **Portland** Closing the inaugural **Key Private Bank Main Stage Series** in the Gerding Theater at the Armory, Portland Center Stage, in collaboration with Hartford Stage Company and Dallas Theater Center presents August Wilson’s *Fences*. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Drama and the Tony Award for Best Play in 1987, *Fences* stands toe-to-toe with plays like *Death of a Salesman* as both a snapshot of a troubling time in American history and an epic atemporal portrayal of the human condition. But *Fences* is told from the African-American perspective.

Troy Maxson never had it easy as a black man in early 20<sup>th</sup> century America. When he joined the Negro Baseball Leagues, straight out of prison, he always thought it would be a short stop on the way to the Majors. That break never came and now, in the late 1950’s, instead of living on a big league pension, he’s living the life of a big city garbage man. Though parts of him are obviously broken, Troy stands strong and tall and runs his household with an unwavering credo and a firm hand. His son Cory is a promising young football player with a scholarship offer on the table, but Troy is hearing none of it. This is the backdrop for a classic father/son drama, which is further intensified by the pervasive taint of racial inequality, never far below the surface in this play. In addition, *Fences* offers a strikingly genuine portrait of an aging and imperfect man greeting the end of his days with none of the fame he always anticipated and little of the money he always wanted but a love for life as big as the world itself and as much humanity as one can imagine.

**Jonathan Wilson**, having worked with August Wilson and his plays for over 17 years, directs *Fences* on the **Gerding Theater at the Armory Main Stage**, 128 NW Eleventh Ave. Preview performances run Tuesday, April 10 - Thursday, April 12; Opening is Friday, April 13 at 7:30 PM and the Closing Performance is Sunday, May 6th at 2 PM. All evening performances take place at 7:30 PM while Noon Thursday and 2 PM Saturday and Sunday matinee dates are also available. Tickets: \$28 - \$59.50; 30 & under Sunday – Thursday Evenings \$16.50. PCS Box Office: 503-445-3700; More information is available at [www.pcs.org](http://www.pcs.org). *Fences* is the fifth and final production in PCS’s 2006/07 **Key Private Bank Main Stage Series** in the Gerding Theater at the Armory and is generously supported by sponsor, **Wieden + Kennedy**.

The cast and creative team for this production have enjoyed incredible reviews in Hartford and Dallas. The Hartford Courant praised director Jonathan Wilson as having delivered “a powerful, beautifully crafted production” and Wendell Wright as Troy Maxson has been lauded as shouldering the lead role “as if he were Atlas.” Wandachristine was called “superb as the sassing, stoical Rose.” Each of Wilson’s plays contains one

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character that is “not all there.” In *Fences* it’s Troy’s brother Gabriel who Ray Anthony Thomas succeeds in making both “terrifying and endearing.” Fred Sokol simply states, “This is a superlative cast and Jonathan Wilson interprets August Wilson’s language and intent with vision, scope, and consummate understanding.”

**The Playwright, August Wilson**, recognized as one of the greatest American playwrights of the twentieth century, was born April 7, 1945 in Pittsburgh and grew up with his mother and five siblings. He dropped out of the 9th grade and took a series of odd jobs beginning at age 16. In the 60s, he began writing plays in Pittsburgh and then took a job in St. Paul writing dramatic skits for the Science Museum of Minnesota. In the 1960s and 1970s his writing was significantly influenced by the blues and his participation in the Black Nationalist movement.

In 1968, Wilson co-founded the Black Horizon Theater in the Hill District of Pittsburgh along with fellow resident Rob Penny. Wilson served as a scriptwriter and director for the next ten years; staging many of the company’s plays in elementary school auditoriums and community centers. His first commercial success was *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom*, the first in a cycle of ten, decade-specific plays, designed to communicate the comedy and tragedy of the twentieth century African American experience in the United States. *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom* was developed at the Playwrights Center in 1983, premiered at the Yale Repertory Theatre in 1984 and went on to Broadway where it won the New York Drama Critics Circle Award the following year.

Among his many awards, Wilson won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Play and the Drama Desk Award for Outstanding New Play for both *Fences* (1987) and *The Piano Lesson* (1990). August Wilson died of liver cancer October 2, 2005. Just two weeks later, Broadway’s Virginia Theater was renamed the August Wilson Theater in his honor.

**The Director, Jonathan Wilson** is a Professor of Theatre and Drama in Loyola University Chicago’s Theatre Department, and has been actively involved in the professional theatre in Chicago and around the country. Recently, Jonathan directed August Wilson’s *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom* for the Seattle Repertory Theatre, *Two Trains Running* for the Pegasus Theatre Company (Chicago), *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* for Loyola University Chicago, Athol Fugard’s *Playland* for Steppenwolf Theatre Company (Chicago), August Wilson’s *Jitney* for Alley Theatre (Houston) and August Wilson’s *Fences* for the Hartford Stage Company in Connecticut. Affiliations: member of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education and the Illinois Theatre Association. Mr. Wilson holds degrees in Play Direction from Daeman College, the University of Cincinnati and Northwestern University. He has also done doctoral work at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

**The Cast of *Fences***

Troy Maxson ..... Wendell Wright\*  
 Rose..... Wandachristine\*  
 Jim Bono..... Don Mayo\*  
 Cory..... Robert Christopher Riley\*  
 Gabriel..... Ray Anthony Thomas\*  
 Lyons..... Che Ayende\*  
 Raynell..... Justyce Chaney  
    Makayla Cymon Irvan-Burke

**The Creative Team for *Fences***

Director..... Jonathan Wilson  
 Scenic Designer..... Scott Bradley  
 Costume Designer..... Jacqueline Firkins  
 Lighting Designer..... R. Lap-Chi Chu  
 Composer/Sound Designer... Jim Ragland  
 Assistant Director..... Megan Ward  
 Fight Director..... Mark Olsen  
 Stage Manager..... Michelle Medvin\*

\* The actors and stage managers employed in this production are members of Actors’ Equity Association the national union of actors and stage managers in the United States.

Casting by Harriet Bass

***Fences***  
**By August Wilson**  
**Directed by Jonathan Wilson**

Portland Center Stage \* Gerding Theater at the Armory \* 128 NW Eleventh Ave.  
 Tickets \$16.50 - \$59.50 \* **Box Office 503-445-3700** \* [www.pcs.org](http://www.pcs.org)

**EVENINGS 7:30 PM**

**Tuesdays** Apr. 10(P), 17, 24, May 1  
**Wednesdays** Apr. 11(P), 18, 25, May 2  
**Thursdays** Apr. 12(P), 19, 26, May 3  
**Fridays** Apr. 13(O), 20, 27, May 4  
**Saturdays** Apr. 14, 21, 28, May 5  
**Sundays** Apr. 15, 29

**MATINEES**

**Noon with Q&A**

**Thursdays** April 19, 26, May 3

**2PM**

**Saturdays** April 21, May 5  
**Sundays** Apr. 15, 22, 29, May 6(C)

**(P) = Preview**

**(O) = Opening Night**

**(C) = Closing Matinee**

**Student/Senior Matinees and Thursday Q and A**

**Thursday Matinees at Noon** are programmed especially for our student and senior audiences and are available for *Fences* on three Thursday dates noted above. All patrons enjoy discounted ticket prices to these performances and they also include informative **Question & Answer** sessions after the performance with the cast of *Fences*.

**Come Early and Get MORE from Prologues on Weekday Evenings**

Join us for an intriguing pre-show introduction to *Fences* with PCS Literary and Education staff and/or special guests on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings, April 17 – May 3 @ 6:30PM on the Main Stage.

**Universal Access**

Audio Described Performance

Friday, April 20 7:30 PM

Sign Interpreted Performance

Thursday, April 26 7:30 PM

The Gerding Theater Main Stage is fully accessible to all. **Assistive listening devices** are available from the coatroom, **free** of charge. **Wheelchair accessible** seating is available in a variety of locations for all performances. Please inform your ticket agent **at the time of purchase** if this seating is necessary or preferred and we'll be more prepared to optimize your theater experience when you arrive.

**Price List for *Fences***

	<b>Area 1</b>	<b>Area 2</b>
Preview Evenings	\$31.50	\$29.50
Sunday – Thursday Evenings	\$46.50	\$41.50
Friday/Saturday Evenings & Sunday Matinees	\$59.50	\$53.50
Thursday & Saturday Matinees	\$30.00	\$28.00
30 yrs. and under (Sun – Thur. Eve/Sat. Mat only)	\$16.50	\$16.50
18 yrs. and under (all performances)	\$16.50	\$16.50

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## **About Portland Center Stage**

Established in 1988, **PORTLAND CENTER STAGE** is Portland's flagship theater company, attracting more than 90,000 theatergoers annually. With five Main Stage and four Studio productions in the 2006-2007 Season, PCS produces a blend of classical, contemporary and world premiere works, in addition to its annual summer playwrights festival, Just Add Water/West. PCS also offers a variety of education and outreach programs for youth and adults, including the new Portland Center Stage GreenHouse school of theater.

**PORTLAND CENTER STAGE'S** new home in the Gerding Theater at the Armory opened to the public with facility tours and an outdoor community celebration on October 1, 2006. The rehabilitated Armory houses a 599-seat Main Stage and a 200-seat black box Studio, along with production, rehearsal, and administrative office spaces. The facility is also a national model for sustainable design: it is the first building in Portland, the first building on the National Register of Historic Places, and the first performing arts venue in the world to achieve the pinnacle of green building certification, Platinum LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). The \$36.1 M capital campaign to fund this new home continues, with over 76% of that amount raised to date.

## The Remaining Portland Center Stage 2006-2007 Inaugural Season in the Gerding Theater at the Armory

- *Fences* by August Wilson, Directed by Jonathan Wilson, April 10-May 6, 2007, Main Stage A co-production with Hartford Stage Company and Dallas Theater Center
- *Bad Dates* by Theresa Rebeck, Directed by Timothy Near, April 15 – June 10, 2007, Studio

*Portland Center Stage's 2006/07 season is made possible in part by support from the Regional Arts & Culture Council, the Oregon Arts Commission, and the National Endowment for the Arts, which believes that a great nation deserves great art.*

[www.pcs.org](http://www.pcs.org)