

ALLEY THEATRE

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August Wilson's *Radio Golf* Takes Center Stage in the 4th Ward: A Collaboration between Alley Theatre, Freedmen's Town Museums, and The Ensemble Theatre

HOUSTON, TX – Tony Award®-winning Alley Theatre and Artistic Director **Rob Melrose** is pleased to announce Alley Theatre will host a staged reading of August Wilson's *Radio Golf* in collaboration with the **Freedmen's Town Museums of Rutherford B. H. Yates Museum, Inc.** and **The Ensemble Theatre** on May 18, 2024, at 3:00 pm. The initiative aims to provide a profound understanding of the historical significance of Freedmen's Town and spark meaningful dialogues.

Alley Theatre Associate Artistic Director **Brandon Weinbrenner** shares, "August Wilson's *Radio Golf* is a seminal piece of theatre, interrogating how gentrification can affect a community that is defined by its heritage. By collaborating with our friends, the Rutherford B.H. Yates House of Freedmen's Town Museums and The Ensemble Theatre, we are humbled to bring a staged reading of Wilson's play to a community that is directly impacted by the same themes as characters Harmon, Old Joe, Sterling, Mame, and Roosevelt. We are doing this for, with, and because of the Freedmen's Town community."

Radio Golf, August Wilson's final play in his ten-play The American Century Cycle, explores the themes of progress and heritage. The play delves into the tension between economic development and the preservation of cultural identity. It examines the struggles of African Americans navigating the complexities of upward mobility while grappling with the erasure of their history. Ultimately, August Wilson's *Radio Golf* interrogates the price one must pay for success and the profound impact of gentrification on individuals and communities.

This play explores themes from multiple perspectives and will afford a safe space to dialogue with each other. The thought-provoking post-reading discussion will delve into the play's themes, providing a platform for candid dialogue and in-depth exploration of the complex issues raised.

Director **Steve Scott** shares "The Ensemble Theatre is proud to be a partner of this proactive collaboration, and we are dedicated to working in alignment with Alley Theatre in efforts to use the arts to break down communication barriers in Houston communities. The mission of The Ensemble Theatre is to preserve African American artistic expression and enlighten, entertain and enrich a diverse community. As a Black theatre, preserving our heritage is vital because it forms the foundation of our legacy. By honoring and celebrating our roots, we not only pay tribute to those that came before us but also inspire future generations to continue the legacy of artistic expression and social commentary within the Black community. Rutherford B. H. Yates House of the Freedmen's Town Museum is a beacon light of hope, and The Ensemble Theatre and its Tour Education Program are dedicated to work with Alley Theatre to bring performances and educational programming to Houston's Historical Fourth Ward and its similar communities."

This community-based reading, designed for up to 200 audience members, is not just a performance but a powerful platform for community engagement and lasting impact. This reading will engage with the Fourth Ward community, celebrating its rich history and addressing contemporary issues. Through this

performance, we aim to foster dialogue, preserve culture, and empower through meaningful conversations about the effects of urban development on marginalized communities. This sustained engagement will leave a lasting impact by amplifying community voices and contributing to the revitalization of Fourth Ward's cultural identity.

This project is funded in part by the City of Houston through the Houston Arts Alliance.

LOCATION: St. James United Methodist Church at 1217 Wilson St, Houston, TX

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ABOUT ALLEY THEATRE:

Alley Theatre, one of America's leading nonprofit theatres, is a nationally recognized performing arts company led by Artistic Director Rob Melrose and Managing Director Dean R. Gladden. The Alley is committed to developing and producing theatre that is as diverse as the Houston community. The Alley produces up to 11 plays and nearly 400 performances each season, ranging from the best current work and classic plays to new plays by contemporary writers. Home to a full-time resident company of actors and expert artisans in all theatre crafts, the Alley engages theatre artists of every discipline – actors, directors, designers, composer, playwrights – who work on individual productions throughout each season as visiting artists.

Alley Theatre performs at the Meredith J. Long Theatre Center which is comprised of two state-of-the-art theatres: the 774-seat Hubbard Theatre and the 296-seat Neuhaus Theatre. Alley reaches over 200,000 people each year through its performance, education, and community engagement programs.

ABOUT THE FREEDMEN'S TOWN MUSEUMS HOUSTON:

The Rutherford B.H. Yates Museum, Inc. is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization committed to the restoration of historic structures on their original homesteads and to the continuous study of Freedmen's town through cultural, archaeological and architectural research. Proceeds benefit the restoration and preservation of properties critical to the history of Freedmen's Town and provides for scholarships and internships for students.

ABOUT THE ENSEMBLE THEATRE:

The Ensemble Theatre was founded in 1976 by the late George Hawkins to preserve African American artistic expression and enlighten, entertain and enrich a diverse community. Decades later, the theatre evolved from a touring company operating from the trunk of Mr. Hawkins' car to being one of Houston's finest historical cultural institutions. The Ensemble is one of the only professional theatres in the region dedicated to the production of works portraying the African American experience, the oldest and largest professional African American theatre in the Southwest and holds the distinction of being one of the nation's largest African American theatres owning and operating its facility and producing in-house. The Ensemble Theatre has fulfilled and surpassed the vision of its founder and continues to expand and create innovative programs to bring African American theatre to a myriad of audiences. The programs and operations of The Ensemble Theatre benefit a multicultural audience that is diverse in age, income, ethnicity, and culture. Its core audience is African American (90%). The Ensemble produces a Mainstage Season of six contemporary and classical works devoted to the portrayal of the African American experience by local and national playwrights and artists. The Ensemble's Performing Arts Education program provides educational workshops, artist-in-residence experiences, and live performances for students both off-site and at the theatre, and the Young Performers Program offers intensive spring and summer training for youth ages 6 to 17 encompassing instruction in all disciplines of the theatre arts. Through its varied programs, The Ensemble reaches over 65,000 people annually.