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FENCES

APRIL 19-21, 2024
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AUGUST WILSON'S

FENCES

DIRECTED BY BRUCE JACKLIN

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- Video and audio recordings of any kind are prohibited.
- All aisles **MUST** remain free and unobstructed.
- Silence all devices - no texting or talking on phones.
- Please do not place any objects, lean on, or place feet on the balcony railing.
- For safety, balcony audiences should remain seated at all times.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE



Since 2008, MTVarts has connected theater to classrooms with classic American literature. Students throughout Knox county study and analyze the written works but watching it materialize on stage completes the experience. As a director you have a responsibility to manifest an idea, something that resonates with the students, something they can take with them, a seed that you plant into the back of their mind. When the work creates a feeling for positive change and advocacy for change, you feel you have made an impact. MTVarts Classics Series selects plays that will touch your heart, at the same time challenge you to take a second look at your beliefs and question what is wrong. FENCES was selected as a play that really resonates in the hearts of the audience, and leaves a lasting impact. The main themes in FENCES revolve around, race, class, stubbornness, family and most importantly pride.

I feel compelled to share a deeper understanding of his work I came to during our rehearsal process. In preparation for our upcoming performance of August Wilson's FENCES, between running acts of the play, I would ask the actors, "What are you feeling right here?" or, "What are your intentions here?" Listening to the actors' answers and as they shared what their motivations are, I begin to discover a hidden importance. We need this now more than ever. FENCES is a portrayal of what it was like to be a black family living in the 1950's in Pittsburgh, America. There were several challenges facing all Americans at that time but for black families, the added insult of institutionalized racism was a constant force pressing on the already tense moments of everyday life.

I wish to thank our talented cast and crew for their dedication and love for this literary treasure. I give enormous gratitude to Jonathan Tazwell for his scholarly contribution, clarity of Wilson's work and his guidance in navigating the complexity of a world of oppression, racism and pride. May this production give way to more conversations and a better understanding of each other.

Bruce Jacklin,
MTVarts Artistic Director

"I try to explore, in terms of the life I know best, those things which are common to all cultures."
August Wilson

BRUCE JACKLIN has been a certified adjudicator for the OCTA (Ohio Community Theater Association) and AACT (American Association of Community Theater) for over 20 years. Mr. Jacklin has directed and acted in more than 170 productions in the last 35 years. This includes professional, summer stock, collegian and community theater productions. He has received numerous awards in acting and directing at both regional and state festivals from OCTA, AACTfest, Columbus Theater Roundtable and OTA festivals. Bruce was also in the film "Nietzsche Ate Here". The film premiered in Washington, D.C. and was featured in the 2013 Montreal International Film Festival. He won Best Supporting Actor at the San Francisco Actor's Film Festival and in 2014 he received the Red Cross Education Hero Award. Bruce is a member of AFTRA/SAG (American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, Screen Actors Guild). For his film and television work he is represented by PCG Talent in Columbus, Ohio and Docherty in Pittsburgh, Penn. Bruce is the artistic director for both MTVarts and The Alcove Theater productions.

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SETTING

The play takes place in Pittsburgh, 1957.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

TROY MAXSON	Steve Jefferson
ROSE MAXSON	Kathy Mendenhall
GABRIEL MAXSON	Jonathan Tazewell
CORY MAXSON	Darius Fincher
JIM BONO	Harold Yarborough
LYONS MAXSON	Nigel Salvador
RAYNELL MAXSON	Jo-Ann Odonkor

PRODUCTION TEAM

Director.....Bruce Jacklin	Lighting Designer.....Kurt Mueller
Assistant Director.....Larry Evans	Light Board Operator.....Jack Davis
Producer.....Janis Stone	Sound Engineering.....Alex Thompson
Production Manager.....Mary Harris	Sound Assistant.....Lindsay Conant
Stage Manager.....Kate Ernsberger	Music Coordination.....Jonathan Tazewell
Assistant Stage Manager.....Chloe Skillman	
Dramaturg.....Jonathan Tazewell	
Set Designer.....Bruce Jacklin	Stage Crew.....Megan Evans
Carpenters.....Bill Szucs, Bill Bowers, Michael Sears	Ticketing.....Scott Swingle, Luke Ervin, and the Mount Vernon Arts Consortium
Scenic Painters...Bruce Jacklin, Allison Smith	Media Design.....Carrie Haver, Markt
Props.....Allison Smith, Megan Evans	Playbill.....Megan Evans and the Mount Vernon Arts Consortium
Costumes.....Debbie's Costumes, Susan SB Brown	MTVarts Interns.....Jaxon Reed, Jack Davis
Wigs and Hair.....Ruth Frady	Front of House.....Kirstin Fuller
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DRAMATURG'S NOTES

MTVarts is honored to present the work of one of America's greatest playwrights with this production of August Wilson's *FENCES*. A Pittsburgh native and high school drop-out, Wilson exploded onto the American stage in the early 1982 with his play, *JITNEY*. He became the preeminent African-American playwright with his Pittsburgh Cycle of ten plays that document Black life in each decade of the 20th century, including, *GEM OF THE OCEAN*, *JOE TURNER'S COME AND GONE*, *MA RAINEY'S BLACK BOTTOM*, *THE PIANO LESSON*, and the production presented here, *FENCES*. One of Wilson's most well known plays, *FENCES* centers on the life of Troy Maxson, a Pittsburgh garbage man and former Negro League star baseball player, and his family. Like most of Wilson's plays, *FENCES* is set in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where Wilson spent his childhood. The play makes reference to significant landmarks of the community, such as the Crawford Grill and to the famous history of the Homestead Grays and Pittsburgh Crawfords baseball teams. Set in 1957, at the beginning of the civil rights era, we watch as the characters struggle against a background of racial discrimination and segregation. Troy is a man who feels he has missed his chance to be somebody. In his regret, he injures all those around him who love him. The play was made into a film in 2016 by Denzel Washington. *FENCES* explores universal themes of regret, loss, and redemption, offering hope that forgiveness and happiness are possible for all. Wilson's career was cut short by his untimely death at the age of 60, but in his relatively short career, he became one of the most prolific and recognized playwrights of our time with multiple Tony Awards, Pulitzer Prizes, and Drama Critics Awards.



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CAST MEMBERS



DARIUS FINCHER (Cory Maxson) is a singer, dancer, actor, painter based in Columbus but native to Dayton, Ohio. He received his training from WSU and gained performance experience

dancing with several local dance companies. When he is not on stage, he is busy running his company Itzgenetics where he creates custom art for the community. Darius has been featured with several companies spanning multiple art disciplines companies such as Onyx Productions, The Neverland Arts Collective, and Short North Stage just to name a few. Darius is very excited to be sharing the stage with such talented individuals!



STEVE JEFFERSON (Troy Maxson) was born in Cleveland, Ohio. After graduating from John F. Kennedy High School, he enlisted in the United States Navy and served in Vietnam. Upon completing his military

service, he began his career in the field of Engineering Technology for 21 years before becoming an instructor of Drafting Technology for the Knox County Career Center for 17 years. He began performing on stage in 2013. His performances included OF MICE and MEN, THE BLACK CYCLONE, DEATH OF A SALESMAN, DRIVING MISS DAISY, TWELVE ANGRY MEN, I'M NOT RAPPAPORT, WHEN YOUR SOUL CRIES, LILIES OF THE FIELD, MISERY, IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE, and RAISIN IN THE SUN. He wishes to dedicate the performance of FENCES to the memory of his father, who received the Congressional Medal of Honor for his service in the Marines during World War II, and his mother, the Greatest Woman he ever knew. He would like to thank MTVarts for the many

opportunities they have given him.



KATHY MENDENHALL (Rose Maxson) has always been passionate about music, theatre, and dance. She attended Fort Hayes School of Performing Arts vocational program from 1981 - 1983

with a major in theatre, under the tutelage of Dr. Phillip S. Wilson. In 2019, she returned to the stage after 36 years and made her debut with MTVarts in A RAISIN IN THE SUN as Lena Younger "Mama." In 2020, Kathy was in the virtual CATCO production of A COLUMBUS CHRISTMAS CAROL, as the mother of Ebony Scrooge. She also enjoys singing, teaching, and directing various art forms. Kathy is extremely excited to be back with the MTVarts family and looks forward to working with them in the future. "I am grateful for the unconditional love and support of my daughter, Israeljah Reign, my son, Gyvnn Zion, and 'My Special Village,' I Love You..."



JO-ANN ODONKER (Raynell Maxson) This is Jo-Ann's first show with MTVarts and she is very excited to be in Fences. She is in 8th grade at St. Vincent de Paul School.

She plays the piano, enjoys reading, writing, drawing, and playing volleyball. One of her favorite roles from the theatre includes Amayllis from THE MUSIC MAN JR. She is thankful for the opportunity to try something new and is grateful to everyone who gave up their time to put this play together.

NIGEL SALVADOR (Lyons Maxson) is a multifaceted talent whose passion for acting transcends his professional career in IT. His



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journey on stage began with playing Walter Younger in MTVarts' A RAISIN IN THE SUN. In 2022, Nigel captivated audiences once again with his portrayal of Dr. Watson in CATCO's production of Chris

Leyva's PRIMA DONNA. Last year, Nigel was honored to be part of the prestigious 11th Annual Black Theater Festival, where he played the Shopper in I'M NOT BUYING IT. Beyond the stage, Nigel's passion for acting extends to the world of film, where he eagerly anticipates exploring new opportunities and pushing the boundaries of his artistry.



JONATHAN TAZEWELL (Gabriel Maxson; Dramaturg) is the Thomas S. Turgeon Endowed Professor of Drama and Film at Kenyon College specializing in theater and film directing and cinema studies.

Tazewell has been a professional actor and


director for over 40 years, and has worked for CATCO, Red Herring Theater Company, the Arden Theater Company, the Walnut Street Theater, Philadelphia Theater Company, and Santa Clarita Shakespeare Theater. He is also a filmmaker with an award winning feature film, GOTTA GET DOWN TO IT, filmed in Knox County, Ohio. Tazewell holds a Masters of Fine Arts from California Institute of the Arts. This is his debut with MTVarts and he is thrilled to achieve his dream of performing in one of August Wilson's great plays.



HAROLD YARBOROUGH (Jim Bono) is thrilled to work with Steve again in this classic work. He has driven Miss Daisy twice, ran away as Jim in BIG RIVER, Scrooged his way through A CHRISTMAS CAROL, Bishoped in LES MIZ, blah blah. Thanks to my maker for the opportunity to do, my wife, supporting friends, and Ken and Robin B.




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On behalf of our Board of Directors, volunteers, actors, and crew, we extend our sincere gratitude for your generous support and for believing that live, local theatre makes our community thrive.

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