

# ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

Molly Smith Artistic Director Edgar Dobie Executive Producer Zelda Fichandler Founding Director

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Lauren McMillen  
[press@arenastage.org](mailto:press@arenastage.org), 202-600-4055

October 20, 2021

For additional press materials, visit the online press room:  
[arenastage.org/press-room/press-kits/2122-press-kits/seven-guitars-press-kit](https://arenastage.org/press-room/press-kits/2122-press-kits/seven-guitars-press-kit)

### ARENA STAGE ANNOUNCES CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM FOR TONY AWARD-NOMINATED AUGUST WILSON'S *SEVEN GUITARS* NOVEMBER 26 – DECEMBER 26, 2021

\*\*\* Tazewell Thompson returns to Arena Stage to direct August Wilson's fifth cycle play surrounding second chances and inescapable circumstances \*\*\*

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater announces the cast and creative team for Tony Award-nominated **August Wilson's *Seven Guitars***, directed by **Tazewell Thompson** (Arena's *Jubilee*). Set in 1940s Pittsburgh, seven lives are interconnected when old friend and blues singer Floyd Barton vows to turn his life around after a surprise windfall leaves him hopeful for a second chance.

*Seven Guitars* is August Wilson's fifth play in his American Century Cycle. This "rich, music-drenched drama" (*New York Times*) runs **November 26 – December 26, 2021 in the Fichandler Stage**. Press night for *Seven Guitars* will be held on **Thursday, December 2, 2021**.

"Having directed August Wilson's *Fences* and *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, both at Arena Stage, I'm happy to return with August Wilson's *Seven Guitars*," explains **Thompson**. "Wilson is an extraordinary master storyteller and playwright — spinning yarns of African Americans and their rhythms and cycles of life, love, pain, suffering, ecstasy and joy; painting a big picture of his people's courage and folly; capturing their heartbeat and heartache; using his deep and wide imaginative soulful toolbox of blues and jazzy poetic idioms."

"To create great theater, you need great artists and great writers," shares Artistic Director **Molly Smith**. "Tazewell Thompson is one of America's best directors, whose beautiful ear for language inspires stellar performances. His elegant approach to 'in the round' work is a perfect complement to August Wilson's plays that address specific American issues in an eloquent and deeply meaningful way. He tells deeply human, complicated stories that resonate with magic and hope."

Returning to Arena Stage are **Dane Figueroa Edidi** (Choreographer for Arena's *Nina Simone: Four Women*) as Ruby, **Joy Jones** (Arena's *Jubilee*) as Vera, **David Emerson Toney** (Arena's *Two Trains Running*) as Hedley and **Michael Anthony Williams** (Arena's *King Hedley II*) as Canewell.

Making their Arena Stage debuts are **Roderick Lawrence** (National Tour, Disney's *The Lion King*) as Floyd Barton and **Roz White** (Mosaic Theater Company's *Marie and Rosetta*) as Louise. Additional casting will be announced at a later time.

In addition to Thompson, the creative team includes Set Designer **Donald Eastman**, Costume Designer **Harry Nadal**, Lighting Designer **Robert Wierzel**, Sound Designer **Fabian Obispo**, Wig Designer **Anne Nesmith**, Fight Director **Ron Piretti**, Stage Manager **Marne Anderson** and Assistant Stage Manager **Emily Ann Mellon**.

—continued—

**August Wilson** (*Playwright*)'s plays include *Gem of the Ocean*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *The Piano Lesson* (Pulitzer Prize winner), *Seven Guitars*, *Fences* (Pulitzer Prize winner, Tony Award winner), *Two Trains Running*, *Jitney* (Olivier Award winner), *King Hedley II* and *Radio Golf*. In 2003, he made his stage debut in his one-man show, *How I Learned What I Learned*. He received an Emmy Award nomination for his screenplay *The Piano Lesson*. Other works include *The Janitor*, *Recycle*, *The Coldest Day of the Year*, *Malcolm X*, *The Homecoming* and the musical satire *Black Bart and the Sacred Hills*. Other awards include eight New York Drama Critics Circle Awards, Rockefeller and Guggenheim Fellowships in Playwriting, a Whiting Writers Award, 2003 Heinz Award, 1999 National Humanities Medal and induction into the Theater Hall of Fame.

**Tazewell Thompson** (*Director*) is an internationally acclaimed theater and opera director, award-winning playwright, teacher and actor. He has more than 125 directing credits, and many world and American premieres, in major opera houses and theaters: France, Spain, Italy, Germany, Africa, Japan, Canada and the USA. He served as associate artistic director under Zelda Fichandler and has directed and/or written over 20 productions at Arena Stage, the most recent, his a cappella musical, *Jubilee*. His award-winning play, *Constant Star*, has had 16 productions in major theaters across the country and his play *Mary T. & Lizzy K.*, commissioned by and produced at Arena Stage, is the recipient of The Edgerton Foundation New American Play Award. His production of *Porgy and Bess*, broadcast live from Lincoln Center, received Emmy Award nominations for Best Director and Best Production. He holds the record of directing three productions — *Appomattox/ Philip Glass*, *Lost in the Stars/ Kurt Weill* and *Cato in Utica/ Vivaldi* — all in the same season in three different theaters at The Kennedy Center. His opera *Blue* (librettist) with composer Jeanine Tesori, commissioned by Francesca Zambello, had its world premiere July 2019 at Glimmerglass Festival, followed by productions at Washington National Opera, June 2020 at The Lyric Opera of Chicago and February 2021 at Minnesota Opera.

#### **Cast Biographies (in alphabetical order)**

**Dane Figueroa Edidi** (*Ruby*) is excited to be returning to Arena Stage. The last time she was here, she choreographed *Nina Simone: Four Women* which garnered her a Helen Hayes Award nomination. In 2020 she won a Helen Hayes Award for her play *Klytmenestra: An Epic Slam Poem*, which had its world premiere at Theater Alliance, and in February 2022 her play *Ghost/Writer* will receive a world premiere at Rep Stage. Considered a prolific artist, she has had 13 books published and has acted in and written for the web series *Untitled Documentary Project*. [www.LadyDaneFE.com](http://www.LadyDaneFE.com).

**Joy Jones** (*Vera*) has previously appeared in Arena Stage's *Jubilee*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, and *Mary T & Lizzy K.* Selected DC-area credits include *The Hard Problem*, *Cloud 9*, *Belleville* and *Invisible Man* (Studio Theatre). Off-Broadway, she appeared in workshops at the Lincoln Center Festival, The Public, and Playwrights Horizons. Her notable regional credits include *Invisible Man* (Huntington Theatre), *Disgraced* (Virginia Stage), *Tantalus* and *Ruined* (Denver Center), *The Champion* (TheatreSquared) and *Pericles* (PlayMakers Repertory). Her recent TV appearances are *We Own This City* (HBO), *Blue Bloods* (CBS) and *Monsterland* (Hulu). Joy has an Acting MFA from UNC-Chapel Hill and a Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Ensemble for *Invisible Man* at Studio Theatre. Web: [thejoyjones.com](http://thejoyjones.com). Instagram: @joyjonesig

**Roderick Lawrence** (*Floyd Barton*) is an actor, filmmaker and Blacktivist who recently founded Black Man Films. He created, produced and starred in the multi-award-winning short film *Silent Partner*, which premiered in August at the Oscar-qualifying RSF Martha's Vineyard African-American Film Festival and is currently on the festival circuit. A 2020 AUDELCO nominee, credits include Simba in Disney's *The Lion King* National Tour, Ramses in the Broadway-bound *The Prince of Egypt*, Othello in John Leguizamo's *Othello: The Remix* and Guy in *ONCE: The Musical*. Comedy Central's *Broad City*. BM, Baldwin Wallace Conservatory of Music. *Love to Ma*, *Pope*, *Evan*, *Shelby*, *Auntie Cindy*, *Auntie Buffy*, *Granny*, *Cousin Gang & Ken*. *To God for all that I am*. *BLM*. *RIP KJB* Socials: @rodericklaw. [www.silentpartner-film.com](http://www.silentpartner-film.com).

**David Emerson Toney** (*Hedley*) is happy to return to where he began his professional career. This production is his 30th and spans five decades. Other regional credits include Lucio in *Measure for Measure* at the Folger; Army in *The Persians* and *Othello* at the Shakespeare Theatre Company in Washington, D.C.; Jacques in *As You Like It* at the Utah Shakespearean Festival; *Splash Hatch On The "E" Going Down* at Yale Repertory Theatre; and *The Fool in King Lear* and *West* in *Two Trains Running* at the Kansas City Repertory Theatre. Broadway credits include Julie Taymor's production of *Juan Darién* and *A Free Man of Color* directed by George C. Wolfe. David is also an assistant professor in performance at VCUarts at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia.

**Roz White** (*Louise*) is an actress, vocalist and teaching artist. Roz recently appeared as Odessa in The Shakespeare Theatre Company's *The Amen Corner*. She played multiple roles in Mosaic Theater Company's *Fabulation or The Re-Education of Undine* and the title role of Pearl in Alliance for New Music Theatre's *Black Pearl Sings!* Roz starred as Sister Rosetta Tharpe in *Marie and Rosetta* (Mosaic Theater Company of D.C.). She is a graduate of The Duke Ellington School of the Arts and Howard University. Roz studied with the late Mike Malone, Dorothy Dash and the legendary Vera Katz. Theater credits include *Dreamgirls* (National Tour); *Bessie's Blues* (Helen Hayes Award); *Once on This Island*; *Crowns*; *Gee's Bend* (Helen Hayes Award Nomination); *Pearl Bailey by Request*; *Anne and Emmett*; and *The Gin Game* (MetroStage). She is a proud member of The Actor's Equity Association for nearly 20 years. Roz is the proud mom of two brilliant sons, Anthony and King, and "Big Mama" to a beautiful grandson, Messiah.

**Michael Anthony Williams** (*Canewell*) last appeared at Arena Stage as Elmore in *King Hedley II*. Off-Broadway credits include *Persephone* (Brooklyn Academy of Music). Regional theater credits include *Nomathemba* with Ladysmith Black Mambazo (Kennedy Center); *Two Trains Running* (Kennedy Center, Cincinnati Playhouse In the Park and Milwaukee Repertory); *Fences* (Pioneer Theater Company); *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* and *Fences* (Swine Palace Productions); and *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (1<sup>st</sup> Stage), for which Michael received his fifth Helen Hayes Award nomination. Television credits include *Homicide: Life on the Streets* (NBC) and *The Wire* (HBO). Feature film credits include *The Replacements* (Warner Bros); *Contact* (Warner Bros); *Unbreakable* (Touchstone Pictures); and *The Brave One* (Warner Bros). Instagram: michaelanthony.williams. Michael dedicates these performances to Joseph Shabalala and dedicates these performances and his creative body of work to his inspiration, daughter Margarita Williams.

For full company biographies, please visit [arenastage.org/tickets/2021-22-season/seven-guitars/](https://arenastage.org/tickets/2021-22-season/seven-guitars/).

*Seven Guitars* is generously sponsored by **AARP** and **Comcast**.

*Supporting Sponsorship* is generously provided by **Judith N. Batty** and **Patricia and David Fisher**.

*Arena Stage* offers this production in memory of long-time friend and Trustee, **Margot Kelly**.

### **Post-Show Conversations**

Connect with our shows beyond the performance at a post-show conversation on Thursday, December 9, featuring guests Dr. Sandra Shannon, Howard University Professor Emerita and founder and president of the August Wilson Society, and Riley Temple, scholar, theologian and author of *Aunt Ester's Children Redeemed: Journeys to Freedom in August Wilson's Ten Plays of Twentieth-Century Black America*.

### **PRODUCTION INFORMATION**

**August Wilson's *Seven Guitars***

**Directed by Tazewell Thompson**

**In the Fichandler Stage | November 26 – December 26, 2021**

**ABOUT:** The lives of seven friends are irrevocably changed when their old friend and blues singer Floyd Barton reappears with a chance of a lifetime. Infused with deep and soaring blues rhythms, this "rich and exceptionally vivid" (*Variety*) play pits the determination for a better future against life's harsh realities, ultimately leading to heartbreaking and inescapable circumstances. Director Tazewell Thompson returns to Arena Stage to direct August Wilson's *Seven Guitars* — the fifth play in Wilson's American Century Cycle.

### **CAST:**

Ruby: Dane Figueroa Edidi

Vera: Joy Jones

Floyd Barton: Roderick Lawrence

Hedley: David Emerson Toney

Louise: Roz White

Canewell: Michael Anthony Williams

Voice Actor: Edmund Bradley

### **CREATIVE TEAM:**

Written by: August Wilson

Director: Tazewell Thompson

Set Designer: Donald Eastman

Costume Designer: Harry Nadal

Lighting Designer: Robert Wierzel  
Sound Designer: Fabian Obispo  
Wig Designer: Anne Nesmith  
Fight Director: Ron Piretti  
Stage Manager: Marne Anderson  
Assistant Stage Manager: Emily Ann Mellon

### **PLAN YOUR VISIT**

**TICKETS:** Tickets for *Seven Guitars* are \$40-95, subject to change and based on availability, plus applicable fees. For information on savings programs such as pay-your-age tickets, student discounts, Southwest Nights and hero's discounts, visit [arenastage.org/tickets/savings-programs](https://arenastage.org/tickets/savings-programs).

Tickets may be purchased online at [arenastage.org](https://arenastage.org), by phone at 202-488-3300 or at the Sales Office at 1101 Sixth Street, SW, D.C. The Sales Office is open Tuesday – Sunday, 12:00-8:00 for phone purchases and beginning 90 minutes prior to each performance until curtain for in-person purchases. **Please note that proof of vaccination against COVID-19 and photo identification must be shown to enter the building.**

Sales Office/Subscriptions: 202-488-3300  
Group Sales Hotline for 10+ Tickets: 202-488-4380 TTY for deaf patrons: 202-484-0247  
Info for patrons with disabilities: 202-488-3300

### **PERFORMANCE DATES:**

Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday at 7:30 p.m.\*

Friday & Saturday at 8 p.m.\*\*

Saturday & Sunday at 2 p.m. (excludes Saturday, November 27 and Sunday, December 19)

Weekday matinees at noon on Wednesday, December 15 and Tuesday, December 21

\*Sunday, December 19 at 6 p.m. only

\*\*Friday December 24 at 2 p.m. only

No shows on Saturday, December 25

**Open-captioned performance: December 15 at 7:30 p.m. and December 23 at 7:30 p.m.**

**Audio-described performance: December 11 at 2 p.m.**

**Southwest Night: December 24 at 8 p.m.**

**Full Calendar:** [arenastage.org/tickets/calendar](https://arenastage.org/tickets/calendar)

**STAY SAFE:** Proof of vaccination against COVID-19 and photo identification must be shown to enter the building. Arena Stage is requiring that patrons, staff and volunteers wear facial masks inside the Mead Center regardless of vaccination status. Enhanced cleaning and sanitization will take place throughout the building. For superior air quality, we have upgraded our ventilation/filtration systems and have implemented a full digital ticketing system that will include contactless ticket scanning and digital programs. These conditions are subject to change. For the latest information, visit [arenastage.org/staysafe](https://arenastage.org/staysafe).

**METRO:** Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater is only one block from the Waterfront Metro station (Green Line). When exiting the station, walk west on M Street toward Sixth Street, and the main entrance to the Mead Center is on the right.

**PARKING:** Parking is available in Arena Stage's on-site garage. Subscribers may purchase parking in advance for \$18. Single ticket buyers may purchase parking in advance for \$25 or on the day of the performance for \$27 on a first-come, first-served basis. Limited accessible parking is available by reservation. Advanced parking must be reserved by calling 202-488-3300. The entrance to the Mead Center garage is on Maine Avenue between Sixth and Seventh streets, and the garage closes one hour after the day's last performance ends. Patrons can also park at the Public Parking Garage at 1101 Fourth Street, one block from the Mead Center, for \$18 when pre-purchased and \$22 on the day of the performance.

**VALET PARKING:** Arena Stage offers valet service at no additional cost to patrons with accessibility needs who call 202-488-3300 in advance to request valet parking. On days when valet parking is being used for accessibility, it is also available to general patrons one hour prior to show time for \$30, based on availability. To use valet parking, pull up to the main entrance on Sixth Street.

For complete 2021/22 Season details, visit: [arenastage.org/tickets/2122-subscriptions](https://arenastage.org/tickets/2122-subscriptions)

**Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater**, under the leadership of Artistic Director Molly Smith and Executive Producer Edgar Dobie, is a national center dedicated to American voices and artists. Arena Stage produces plays of all that is passionate, profound, deep and dangerous in the American spirit, and presents diverse and ground-breaking work from some of the best artists around the country. Arena Stage is committed to commissioning and developing new plays and impacts the lives of over 10,000 students annually through its work in community engagement. Now in its seventh decade, Arena Stage serves a diverse annual audience of more than 300,000. [arenastage.org](https://arenastage.org)

###

