

ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Lauren McMillen/Samantha Schneider
press@arenastage.org, 202-600-4055

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arenastage.org/press-room/press-kits/1920-press-kits/Jitney-press-kit/

ARENA STAGE ANNOUNCES PARTIAL CASTING FOR AUGUST WILSON'S *JITNEY* SEPTEMBER 13 – OCTOBER 20, 2019

*****This production kicks off the national tour of Wilson's time-honored American classic with stops in Washington, D.C., Detroit, Los Angeles, San Diego and Seattle*****

(Washington, D.C.) Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater announces partial casting of **August Wilson's *Jitney***. Tony Award-winner **Ruben Santiago-Hudson** directs his 2017 Broadway production — recipient of the Tony Award for Best Play Revival. Set in the early 1970s, *Jitney* follows a group of men trying to make a living by driving unlicensed cabs, or jitneys. The dramatic story of a Pittsburgh jitney station becomes a symbol of stability as the drivers resist powerful forces while coming to grips with their pasts to fulfill their own hopes and dreams for the future.

This kicks off the national tour of one of Wilson's great masterpieces. "A joyfully intoxicating celebration!" (*The New York Times*), *Jitney* runs **September 13 – October 20, 2019 in the Kreeger Theater**. The production was produced on Broadway by Manhattan Theatre Club in association with Eric Falkenstein, Ron Simons, John Legend/Mike Jackson and Ken Wirth.

Jitney opens Arena Stage's August Wilson Festival, celebrating the Pulitzer Prize-winning giant.

"Arena has a long love affair with August Wilson's work, going all the way back to 1987 and Joe Turner's *Come and Gone*. Wilson is one of our most-produced playwrights, so it felt celebratory to mark our 70th Anniversary Season with a season-long festival highlighting his work and the impact he has on the American theater," shares Artistic Director **Molly Smith**. "What a thrill to have Ruben Santiago-Hudson's award-winning production of *Jitney* kick off a national tour from Arena to other theaters around America. Each of Wilson's plays tackle deep human relationships, and *Jitney* will take us on an emotional journey."

Cast members in the 2017 Broadway production of *Jitney* and making their Arena Stage debuts include **Harvy Blanks** (Roundabout's *Toni Stone*, Kennedy Center's *Death of a King's Horseman*, Two River's *Two Trains Running*) as Shealy, Tony Award-nominee **Anthony Chisholm** (Broadway's *Radio Golf*, *Gem of the Ocean*, *Two Trains Running*) as Fielding, **Keith Randolph Smith** (Broadway's *Fences*, *King Hedley II*, Spike Lee's *Malcolm X*, *Girl 6*) as Doub and **Ray Anthony Thomas** (Broadway's *The Crucible*, *Race*) as Turnbo.

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Page 2— Arena Stage announces partial casting for August Wilson's *Jitney*

Also making their Arena debuts are **Francois Battiste** (Broadway's *Magic/Bird*, *Bronx Bombers*) as Booster, **Amari Cheatom** (Lincoln Center's *On the Levee*, The Public's *The Book of Grace*) as Youngblood and **Brian D. Coats** (Marvel's *Luke Cage*, Studio's *Invisible Man*) as Philmore.

"There had been nine jewels in August Wilson's formidable crown; each had changed the landscape of Broadway in their respective seasons," explains **Santiago-Hudson**. "Only one jewel was missing. Twenty years after it had taken the country by storm and won the Olivier Award in London, *Jitney*, the first play of August Wilson's American Century Cycle, received its Broadway debut. With this Tony Award-winning production, the crown is complete. How amazing that 'the first was the last'."

In addition to Santiago-Hudson, the creative team includes Set Designer David Gallo, Costume Designer Toni-Leslie James, Lighting Designer Jane Cox, Co-Sound Designers Darron L West and Charles Coes, Original Music by Bill Sims Jr. and Fight Director Thomas Schall.

Full casting will be announced at a later date.

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* (Oliver 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.

Ruben Santiago-Hudson (Director) directed the Tony Award-winning Broadway revival of August Wilson's *Jitney* which garnered several awards including the Drama Desk Award, Outer Critics Circle Award, Drama League and the NY Drama Critics Circle Awards, along with six Tony nominations. Mr. Santiago-Hudson won a Tony Award as featured actor for his performance in August Wilson's *Seven Guitars* and later went on to direct the play himself to critical acclaim. Other directing credits include: *The Piano Lesson*, *Skeleton Crew*, *Othello*, *Gem of the Ocean*, *Paradise Blue*, *My Children My Africa*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *Cabin in the Sky*, *The Happiest Song Plays Last*, *Two Trains Running*, *Things of Dry Hours*, *The First Breeze of Summer* and *Your Blues Ain't Sweet Like Mine*, among many others. His autobiographical play *Lackawanna Blues* won several awards, including two OBIE Awards and a Helen Hayes Award, and went on to be an HBO movie receiving the NAACP Image Award, Humanitas Prize, The Christopher Award and Emmy and Golden Globe nominations.

Cast Biographies (in alphabetical order)

Francois Battiste (Booster) is known for his roles on Broadway in *Bronx Bombers*, *Magic/Bird* and *Prelude to a Kiss*. Francois' select Off-Broadway credits include *Paradise Blue* (Signature Theatre); *Head of Passes* (Public Theatre); Shakespeare in the Park's *The Winter's Tale*; *Merchant of Venice*, *Broke-ology* (Lincoln Center); and *10 Things to Do Before I Die* (WP Theater).

Harvy Blanks (Shealy) is excited to be at Arena Stage. He was seen on Broadway in August Wilson's *Jitney* and Off-Broadway in *On the Levee* (Lincoln Center Theatre). His regional credits include *Fences* (Florida); *King Hedley II* (New Jersey); *Familiar* (Seattle); *Moscow Moscow Moscow Moscow Moscow* (Williamstown); *The Mountaintop* (Portland); *Fire on the Mountain* (Mountain View); *Familiar* (Yale Rep); and *Jitney* (Redbank).

Amari Cheatom (Youngblood) is excited to be at Arena Stage. Theater credits include *Skeleton Crew* (The Old Globe); *Detroit 67* (Baltimore Center Stage); *The Temple Bombing* (Alliance Theatre); *The Book of Grace* (The Public Theatre); and *Zooman and the Sign* (Signature Theatre). Select television credits include *The Alchemist*, *Django Unchained* and *Night Catches Us*.

Page 3— Arena Stage announces partial casting for August Wilson's *Jitney*

Anthony Chisholm (*Fielding*) is known for his roles on Broadway in August Wilson's *Jitney*, *Radio Golf* (Tony nomination), August Wilson's *Two Trains Running* and *Gem of the Ocean*. Anthony's select Off-Broadway credits include August Wilson's *Jitney* (Drama Desk and Obie Awards) and *The Happiest Song Plays Last* (Second Stage). He was also seen in the film "Going in Style" with Morgan Freeman.

Brian D. Coats (*Philmore*) will be returning to D.C. for his role in Arena Stage's *Jitney*. He has been seen on Broadway in *Jitney* and Off-Broadway in *The Brothers Paranormal* (Pan Asian Rep); *Travisville* (Ensemble Studio Theatre/Working Theater); *The Bacchae*, *The First Noel* (Classical Theatre of Harlem/The Apollo); and *On the Levee* (LCT3/Lincoln Center Theater).

Keith Randolph Smith (*Doub*) is excited to be back in D.C. He has been seen on Broadway in *American Psycho*; *Fences*; *King Hedley II*; *The Piano Lesson*; *Come Back, Little Sheba*; and *Salome*. His Off-Broadway credits include *Intimacy* (New Group); *Theatre for One* (Brookfield Place); *The First Breeze of Summer* (Signature); *Holiday Heart* (MTC); *Tamburlaine* (TFANA); *Jitney* (2ST); and *Fabulation* (Playwrights Horizon).

Ray Anthony Thomas (*Turnbo*) is thrilled to return to D.C. for this production. His Broadway credits include *Jitney*, *The Crucible* and *Race*. Ray has created roles in two Pulitzer Prize-winning plays: *Water by the Spoonful* and *Between Riverside and Crazy*. He also created a role in *Volunteer Man* (Obie winning-performance). Recent film and TV credits include "Isn't It Romantic" and "High Maintenance" (HBO).

For company biographies, please visit arenastage.org/tickets/1920-season/jitney

Jitney is generously sponsored by **Dr. Donald Wallace Jones**, **Dr. Betty Jean Tolbert Jones** and **Tracey Tolbert Jones**.

Post-Show Conversations

Connect with our shows beyond the performance at a post-show conversation with artists and staff on October 1, 2 and 9 following the 12 p.m. performance, October 15 following the 7:30 p.m. performance and October 17 following the 8 p.m. performance with Paul Ellis, Wilson's nephew and executive director of the August Wilson House in Pittsburgh, PA.

Jitney is a part of Arena Stage's August Wilson Festival. Additional information regarding events can be found by visiting [here](#).

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

August Wilson's *Jitney*

Written by August Wilson

Directed by Ruben Santiago-Hudson

In the Kreeger Theater | September 13 – October 20, 2019

ABOUT: August Wilson's *Jitney* opens Arena Stage's season-long Festival celebrating the Pulitzer Prize-winning giant with Ruben Santiago-Hudson directing his 2017 Broadway production — recipient of the 2017 Tony Award for Best Revival of a Play. The dramatic story of a Pittsburgh jitney station, a symbol of stability, struggles against an oppressive lack of opportunity and unnerving neighborhood gentrification that threatens the way they live and work. The drivers resist powerful forces while coming to grips with their pasts to fulfill their own hopes and dreams for the future. Arena Stage's presentation kicks off the National Tour of one of this great master's masterpieces.

Also making their Arena debuts are **Francois Battiste** (Broadway's *Magic/Bird*, *Bronx Bombers*) as **Booster**, **Amari Cheatom** (Lincoln Center's *On the Levee*, The Public's *The Book of Grace*) as **Youngblood** and **Brian D. Coats** (Marvel's *Luke Cage*, Studio's *Invisible Man*) as **Philmore**.

Page 4— Arena Stage announces partial casting for August Wilson's *Jitney*

CAST:

Fielding: Anthony Chisholm
Youngblood: Amari Cheatom
Booster: Francois Battiste
Shealy: Harvy Blanks
Turnbo: Ray Anthony Thomas
Doub: Keith Randolph Smith
Philmore: Brian D. Coats

CREATIVE TEAM:

Director: Ruben Santiago-Hudson
Set Designer: David Gallo
Costume Designer: Toni-Leslie James
Lighting Designer: Jane Cox
Co-Sound Designers: Darron L West and Charles Coes
Original Music: Bill Sims Jr.
Fight Director: Thomas Schall

PLAN YOUR VISIT

TICKETS: Tickets for *Jitney* go on sale July 30 and are \$41-95, 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.

Tickets may be purchased online at arenastage.org, by phone at 202-488-3300 or at the Sales Office at 1101 Sixth Street, SW, D.C.

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 and Wednesday at 7:30 p.m.
Thursday, Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.
Weekday matinees at noon on Tuesday, October 1, Wednesday, October 2 and Wednesday, October 9

Open-captioned performance: October 3 at 8 p.m.

Closed captioning: GalaPro begins Friday, September 20

Audio-described performance: September 28 at 2 p.m.

Full Calendar: arenastage.org/tickets/calendar

ARENA STAGE CAFÉ: Prix fixe meals are available at Richard's Place, Arena Stage's casual dining café, and include a choice of soup or salad, main entrée and dessert. Pre-ordered meals are only \$22 (\$25 if purchased that day). To pre-order and see the menu, call 202-488-3300 or visit arenastage.org/plan-your-visit/richards-place-cafe/prix-fixe. The café opens two hours before the show, and reservations are recommended. To pre-order refreshments, visit arenastage.org/plan-your-visit/richards-place-cafe/concessions.

Page 5— Arena Stage announces partial casting for August Wilson's *Jitney*

METRO: Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater is only one block from the Waterfront-SEU 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 \$17. Single ticket buyers may purchase parking in advance for \$20 or on the day of the performance for \$24 on a first-come, first-served basis. Limited handicapped 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 \$15.

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 \$25, based on availability. To use valet parking, pull up to the main entrance on Sixth Street.

For complete 2019/20 Season details, visit: arenastage.org/tickets/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

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