

# ARENA STAGE MEDIA RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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For additional press materials, visit the online press room: <https://www.arenastage.org/press-room/press-kits/1920-press-kits/seven-guitars-press-kit/>

ARENA STAGE ANNOUNCES CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM  
FOR AUGUST WILSON'S TONY AWARD-NOMINATED PLAY,  
AUGUST WILSON'S *SEVEN GUITARS*  
APRIL 3 – MAY 3, 2020

\*\*\* 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 company for **August Wilson's *Seven Guitars***. Tazewell Thompson (Arena's *Jubilee*) will direct this Tony Award-nominated play. 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 second production in Arena Stage's August Wilson Festival. This "...rich, music-drenched drama," (*New York Times*) runs **April 3 – May 3, 2020 in the Fichandler Stage**.

"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, an extraordinary master storyteller and playwright, spinning yarns of African Americans, 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."

"Tazewell Thompson is one of America's best directors today and I'm thrilled to have him back at Arena, directing *Seven Guitars* as part of our August Wilson Festival," shares Artistic Director **Molly Smith**. "Tazewell has a beautiful ear for language and brings out stellar performances through actors. He creates graceful imagery in the round. There really could be no better person to bring this important August Wilson play to life."

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## Page 2— Casting and creative team announced for *Seven Guitars*

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 include **Chris Herbie Holland** (Berkeley Repertory's *White Noise*) as Red Carter, **Michael Zachary Tunstall** (NYU's Tisch School of the Arts' *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*) as Floyd Barton and **Roz White** (Mosaic Theater Company's *Marie and Rosetta*) as Louise.

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**, Casting Directors **Victor Vazquez** and **Geoff Josselson**, Stage Manager **Christi B. Spann**, Assistant Stage Manager **Marne Anderson** and Directing Assistant **Megan Watson**.

**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.

**Tazewell Thompson** (Director) is an internationally acclaimed theater and opera director, award-winning playwright, teacher and actor. He has more than 125 directing credits, 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 Nomination. She had an exciting 2019, with the world premiere of her play *Klytmenestra: An Epic Slam Poem* at Theater Alliance; a reading of her play *For Black Trans Girls...* at Joe's Pub, produced by Woolly Mammoth; choreographing *Elephant and Piggie* at Adventure Theater; playing Queen Isabella in *E2* at Rep Stage; and co-starring as Patra in the web series *King Ester*. Considered a prolific artist, she has 13 books published and another world premiere of her latest play, *Ghost/Writer*, at Rep Stage in February 2021. [www.LadyDaneFE.com](http://www.LadyDaneFE.com).

### Page 3— Casting and creative team announced for *Seven Guitars*

**Chris Herbie Holland** (*Red Carter*) is thrilled to be making his Arena Stage debut in *Seven Guitars*. Regional credits include: *White Noise* (Berkeley Repertory); *The Box* (Z Space); *12 Angry Men* (Northern Stage); and *Six Degrees of Separation* (Theatre Workshop of Nantucket). Williamstown credits include *Tempo* and *Soft*. NYU credits include: *Zooman and the Sign*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *Othello*, *Hamlet* and *Animal Farm*. B.A.: Dartmouth College. M.F.A.: NYU Grad Acting.

**Joy Jones** (*Vera*) was previously seen in Arena Stage's *Jubilee*, *A Raisin in the Sun* and *Mary T. & Lizzy K*. Off-Broadway, she appeared in workshops at the Lincoln Center Festival, The Public and Playwrights Horizons. In London, Joy performed in *Tantalus* (Royal Shakespeare Company). Selected D.C.-area credits include: *The Hard Problem*, *Cloud 9*, *Belleville* and *Invisible Man* (Studio Theatre). Her selected regional credits include: *Disgraced* (Virginia Stage); *Invisible Man* (Huntington Theatre); *Ruined* and *Tantalus* (Denver Center); *The Champion* (TheatreSquared); and *Pericles* (PlayMakers Repertory). Her recent on-camera appearances are *Little America* (Apple TV); *Daylight Daycare* (Hulu); and *Augustus* (iEG Productions). Joy has an acting M.F.A. from UNC-Chapel Hill/PlayMakers Repertory and a Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Ensemble in *Invisible Man* (Studio Theatre). [thejoyjones.com](http://thejoyjones.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.

**Michael Zachary Tunstall** (*Floyd Barton*) is thrilled and excited to be working at Arena Stage for the very first time! Mike is a recent graduate of New York University's graduate acting program, where he acted in *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *Zooman and the Sign*, *Animal Farm* and *Three Days in the Country*. Before attending NYU, he was a mainstay at the Will Greer Theatricum Botanicum in Los Angeles, California, where he performed in *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *As You Like It*. Mike is excited to continue his professional journey outside of school and is ecstatic to resume it at Arena Stage!

**Roz White** (*Louise*) is an actress, vocalist and teaching artist. 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). She is a graduate of The Duke Ellington School of the Arts and Howard University. Roz studied with the late Mike Malone 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). Roz is the proud mom of two brilliant sons, Anthony and King.

## Page 4— Casting and creative team announced for *Seven Guitars*

**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. Michael dedicates his creative body of work to his inspiration, daughter Margarita Williams.

For full company biographies, please visit [arenastage.org/tickets/1920-season/seven-guitars/](https://arenastage.org/tickets/1920-season/seven-guitars/).

*Seven Guitars* is generously sponsored by the **Paul M. Angell Foundation, Comcast, Patricia and David Fisher and Margot Kelly.**

The August Wilson Festival is generously sponsored by **AARP.**

### Post-Show Conversations

Connect with our shows beyond the performance at a post-show conversation with artists and staff on April 21 and 23 following the 7:30 p.m. performance and April 15, 22 and 28 following the 12 p.m. performance.

*Seven Guitars* 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 *Seven Guitars***

**Directed by Tazewell Thompson**

**In the Fichandler Stage | April 3 –May 3, 2020**

**ABOUT:** The 1940s Pittsburgh is the backdrop for August Wilson's fifth cycle play and the second production in the August Wilson Festival. 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. Infused with deep and soaring blues rhythms, this "rich and exceptionally vivid" (*Variety*) play pits the desire for a better future against the harsh realities ultimately leading to heartbreaking and inescapable circumstances.

#### **CAST:**

Ruby: Dane Figueroa Edidi

Red Carter: Chris Herbie Holland

Vera: Joy Jones

Hedley: David Emerson Toney

Floyd Barton: Michael Zachary Tunstall

Louise: Roz White

Canewell: Michael Anthony Williams

## Page 5— Casting and creative team announced for *Seven Guitars*

### **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  
Casting Directors: Victor Vazquez and Geoff Josselson  
Stage Manager: Christi B. Spann  
Assistant Stage Manager: Marne Anderson

### **PLAN YOUR VISIT**

**TICKETS:** Tickets for *Seven Guitars* 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](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.

**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 Wednesday, April 15 and 22 and Tuesday, April 28

**Closed captioning:** GalaPro begins Friday, April 10  
**Open-captioned performance:** Wednesday, April 29 at 7:30 p.m.  
**Audio-described performance:** Saturday, May 2 at 2 p.m.  
**Southwest Night:** Wednesday, April 8 at 7:30 p.m.

**Full Calendar:** [arenastage.org/tickets/calendar](https://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 \$29, and a la carte options are also available. To pre-order and see the menu, call 202-488-3300 or visit [arenastage.org/plan-your-visit/richards-place-cafe/prix-fixe](https://arenastage.org/plan-your-visit/richards-place-cafe/prix-fixe). The café opens two hours before the show. To view the concessions menu, visit [arenastage.org/plan-your-visit/richards-place-cafe/concessions](https://arenastage.org/plan-your-visit/richards-place-cafe/concessions).

## Page 6— Casting and creative team announced for *Seven Guitars*

**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/1920-season](https://arenastage.org/tickets/1920-season).

*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)*

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