

A Noise Within Stage August Wilson's 'Joe Turner's Come and Gone'

BY DANIELLA MASTERSON
Contributing Writer

A Noise Within Theatre continues its commitment to August Wilson's magnum opus "American Century Cycle" with performances of "Joe Turner's Come and Gone," beginning Oct. 18 through Nov. 9, under the helm of director Gregg T. Daniel.

Daniel returns to direct the theatre's sixth play as the

and "The Piano Lesson."

"I wasn't on a mission to do all 10," said Daniel. "We did the "Gem of the Ocean" and so we moved on and did another one. By that time, it had sparked so much interest by the audience and supporters that our assistant directors said we should do all 10," he said.

"As long as they keep asking me to come back, I'm honored to do it. I will be one of a few Black



Kai A. Ealy and Jessica Williams

company makes its way through Wilson's ten-part "American Century Cycle" series that display the Black experience in each decade of the 20th century. Daniel's previous productions with the Pasadena theatre include "Gem of the Ocean," "Seven Guitars," "Radio Golf," "King Hedley II,"

directors who has done all of them," said Daniel, adding that ticket sells have been great.

Considered one of the playwright's most brilliant literary achievements, "Joe Turner's Come and Gone" explores the legacy of slavery and the importance of reclaiming identity and her-



Nija Okoro, Brandon Gill, Kai A. Ealy, Gerald C. Rivers, Veralyn Jones, Alex Morris, Briana James star in the play.

itage at the height of the Great Migration.

Set in 1911, the story follows a group of recently freed Black people who travel to and from Seth Holly's Pittsburgh boarding house, where they come "walking... riding... carrying their Bibles... coming up here from the country carrying Bibles and guitars

looking for freedom..."

Considering the Trump administration's initiatives to remove references to slavery and racial oppression from cultural discourse, Daniel said that Wilson's historic series offers an important contribution on the truth about the exploitation of African Americans.

"I know that there has been an attack or an attempt to alter Jackie Robinson's legacy as well as the Tuskegee Airmen, and the restoration of Confederate statues and flags. So, there seems to be some sort of guided effort to alter history particularly when it comes to African Americans. ...honoring African American history in the face of those who want to do a revisionist version of America and its history of

slavery becomes much more important. (Wilson) resonates more now with these attacks," he said.

Kai A. Ealy plays Herald Loomis, the play's protagonist who is tormented by the traumatic memory of Joe Turner, a racist bounty hunter who illegally enslaved him for seven years. To reclaim his identity and heal, Loomis must discover his "song"—a profound expression of self that is both mystical and transformative.

Ealy stated that August Wilson's work, like that of William Shakespeare and Anton Chekhov, is timeless and universal. While rooted in the African American experience, its themes resonate broadly, speaking to the shared truths of the human condition.

"I think people should come to see this play to see a piece of themselves," said Ealy. "This play speaks to finding yourself on your journey or losing yourself on your journey."

The play stars Jared Bennett, Tori Danner, Kai A. Ealy, Bert Emmett, Brandon Gill, Briana James, Veralyn Jones, Alex Morris, Nija Okoro, Gerald C. Rivers, and Jessica Williams.

Tickets to "Joe Turner's Come and Gone" start at \$51.50 (including fees). Student tickets start at \$20. Discounts are available for groups of 10 or more.

A Noise Within is located at 3352 E Foothill Blvd., Pasadena, CA 91107. For more information and to purchase tickets, call (626) 356-3100 or go to www.anoisewithin.org.



Kai A. Ealy