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The Emancipated Century: A Staged Reading Series

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The Emancipated Century: A Staged Reading Series

Robert Lublin and Clifford Odle, Performing Arts Department and
Barbara Lewis, Trotter Institute for the Study of Black History and Culture

Summary

A coordinated series of dramatic staged readings of the plays of August Wilson in theatres throughout greater Boston. This project aims to pay tribute to the 150th anniversary of the Emancipated Proclamation with a full presentation of August Wilson's monumental 10-play cycle on African American life in each decade of the twentieth century. The accompanying Re-Visioning Tomorrow Forums explored ongoing themes in urban communities.

Goals and Objectives

1. To join and contribute to a growing public discourse around citizenship and empathy, which are through-lines in August Wilson's plays and were brought to the fore with the April 15 Boston marathon bombing and its aftermath.
2. To highlight an untapped reserve of talent in Boston, those actors and actresses adept at interpreting urban-based work.
3. To research and grow new theatre audiences, so necessary to theater's continued growth in an age of shifting demographics and growing economic insecurity.
4. To mentor an upcoming generation of performers, playwrights, and technical theatre talent.
5. To nurture and bring more resources to the middle segment of Boston's cultural pipeline, creating more opportunities and pathways for artistic and cultural success.
6. To model collaboration, led by the five partner theaters, each located in a distinct district, across greater Boston's neighborhoods, thus combating a silo mentality that is often entrenched in Boston.

The Performing Arts Department and the Trotter Institute at UMass Boston present

THE EMANCIPATED CENTURY:
Readings of August Wilson's
10-Play Cycle

 Aug. 5 Gem of the Ocean UMass Boston - McCormack Theatre 100 Morrissey Blvd. Boston, MA	 Oct. 21 Fences Central Square Theater 450 Massachusetts Ave. Cambridge, MA
 Aug. 19 Joe Turner's Come and Gone The Strand Theatre 543 Columbia Rd. Dorchester, MA	 Nov. 4 Two Trains Running Boston Playwrights' Theatre 949 Commonwealth Ave. Boston, MA
 Sept. 9 Ma Rainey's Black Bottom The Strand Theatre 543 Columbia Rd. Dorchester, MA	 Nov. 18 Jitney Boston Playwrights' Theatre 949 Commonwealth Ave. Boston, MA
 Sept. 23 The Piano Lesson Hibernian Hall 184 Dudley St. Roxbury, MA	 Dec. 2 King Hedley II Hibernian Hall 184 Dudley St. Roxbury, MA
 Oct. 7 Seven Guitars Central Square Theater 450 Massachusetts Ave. Cambridge, MA	 Dec. 16 Radio Golf UMass Boston - McCormack Theatre 100 Morrissey Blvd. Boston, MA

ALL PERFORMANCES BEGIN AT 7 P.M.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT OUR FACEBOOK PAGE: [Emancipated Century: August Wilson Readings](#)

UMASS BOSTON DEPARTMENT OF PERFORMING ARTS COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS and WILLIAM MONROE TROTTER INSTITUTE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON

MASS HUMANITIES
This project is generously supported by a Creative Economy Grant from the University of Massachusetts' President's Office

Results

- Barbara Lewis's **ongoing scholarly works** (2010-current) led to The Emancipated Century project, and the staged reading series continue to inform her scholarship; Lewis will be a Religion and Theater panelist at Association for Theater in Higher Education's Conference in July 2014, discussing her new essay on the theme of redemption and resurrection in Joe Turner's Come and Gone.
- **Staged 10 plays** at 5 local theatres.
- **Employed over 70 actors**, 9 different directors, 10 academic specialists, and 10 stage managers.
- **15 UMass Boston students** earned roles in the productions.
- **More than 800 audience members** from throughout greater Boston attended productions, and engaged in dialogue.

Conclusion/Next Steps

- Boston is home to a large number of highly talented, professional African American actors, directors, and scholars.
- Boston residents are very interested in the works of August Wilson and will travel for the opportunity to attend high quality productions of his plays.
- Boston professional theatres are eager to collaborate on significant artistic projects.

The Trotter Institute is leading next steps:

April 14, Emancipated Century Reception:

Celebrate the success of the August Wilson readings and Re-Visioning Tomorrow forums, reflect on the impact of the staged readings, and explore future enhancements.

May 8-9, Cultural Equity Forum, Strand Theatre:

Join the conversation to amplify and express the cultural and creative community voice in order to build a more culturally inclusive Boston.

Partnership Information

UMass Boston McCormack Theatre
100 Morrissey Blvd. Boston, MA 02125

The Strand Theatre
543 Columbia Rd., Dorchester, MA 02125

Hibernian Hall
184 Dudley St., Boston, MA 02119

Central Square Theater
450 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, MA 02139

Boston Playwrights' Theatre
949 Commonwealth Ave., Boston, MA 02215