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**A Noise Within Announces  
The second production of 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season:**

***Seven Guitars***

**By August Wilson**

**Directed by Gregg T. Daniel**

**Oct. 17–Nov. 14, 2021**

**(Press Opening Weekend – Oct. 23 & 24)**

**Pasadena, Calif. (Oct. 7, 2021)** – A Noise Within (ANW), California’s acclaimed classic repertory theatre company, announces its second entry in **August Wilson’s** American Century Cycle, ***Seven Guitars***, directed by **Gregg T. Daniel** (he/him/his). Daniel previously directed ANW’s production of Wilson’s ***Gem of the Ocean***, an *LA Times Critic’s Choice*, for the theatre’s 2019-2020 season. ***Seven Guitars*** will run from **Oct. 17 through Nov. 14, 2021** with **press performances** on **Saturday, Oct. 23 at 8 p.m.** and **Sunday, Oct. 24 at 2 p.m.**

In 1948 Pittsburgh, old friends gather to mourn the death of a young guitarist and his dream of stardom. This heartrending blues opera combines touching elegy, humor, and emotional grit as the characters strike their own notes in a discordant world that threatens their hopes and lives at every turn. Bursting with musical lyricism and courage, Wilson’s Pulitzer-nominated play continues his theatrical saga that richly captures the spirit and heritage of Black Americans in the 20th Century. “Each of the individuals have their own song to sing but they haven’t learned to sing it yet,” said **Daniel**. “As much as these friends try to harmonize with one another, too many thwarted dreams get in their way and they keep playing in different keys. Their journey is a valiant

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struggle to maintain their identity and dignity in a racist society imposing barriers on them—a mirror to contemporary America.”

In conjunction with the blues-inspired musical language of the play, the guitar becomes a prominent symbol of ambition and unfulfilled promise for all the characters as they navigate their lives and their relationships with each other.

“The seven characters who inhabit this thrilling piece all have a passionate story to tell, but each is incessantly muted by systemic racism. Theirs is a story of courage and resilience,” said Co-Producing Artistic Directors **Geoff Elliott** (he/him/his) and **Julia Rodriguez-Elliott** (she/her/hers).

The wellness of the patrons, staff, crew, and artists continues to be a top priority for A Noise Within. For over a year, the theatre has developed and refined extensive plans to keep everyone safe. These procedures include but are not limited to: staff and crew certifying as COVID compliance officers, initiating a deep clean of our HVAC system for optimal turnover of fresh air, routinely disinfecting high-touch areas, providing PPE, and following LA Department of Health guidelines.

Before being admitted into the theatre, all audience members must provide proof of full vaccination. Masks are required regardless of vaccination status and will be available onsite until such time that LA County stops requiring masks indoors. At that point, masks will continue to be strongly recommended. A Noise Within has required full vaccination for all staff, artists, and volunteers who work onsite. Social distanced seating is available upon request. More information is available at [anoisewithin.org/covidsafety](https://anoisewithin.org/covidsafety).

“We are engaging in ongoing conversations with crew, staff, and artists to ensure that we hear all voices and make everyone feel as safe as possible,” said Managing Director **Michael Bateman** (he/him/his).

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Single ticket prices for *Seven Guitars* start at \$25 and are available at [anoisewithin.org](http://anoisewithin.org), by phone at 626-356-3121, and at the box office located at 3352 East Foothill Blvd in Pasadena, Calif.

August Wilson's *Seven Guitars* is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc. [www.concordtheatricals.com](http://www.concordtheatricals.com)

## Cast and Creative Team

The cast includes

**Floyd Barton:** Desean K. Terry\*

**Louise:** Veralyn Jones\* (she/her/hers)

**Hedley:** Kevin Jackson\*

**Canewell:** DeJuan Christopher\*

**Ruby:** Sydney A. Mason\*

**Red Carter:** Amir Abdullah\* (he/him/his)

**Vera:** Cherish Monique Duke\* (she/her/hers)

Directed by **Gregg T. Daniel**<sup>§</sup>. Scenic design by **Stephanie Kerley Schwartz**<sup>†</sup> (she/her/hers); costume design by **Myllette Nora**; lighting design by **Derrick McDaniel** (he/him/his); original music composition by **Maritri Garrett** (she/her/hers); sound design by **Jeff Gardner**<sup>†</sup> (he/him/his); choreographer is **Joyce Guy**; assistant director is **Khalil J. Powell** (he/him/his); fight choreography by **Kenneth R. Merckx, Jr.**; intimacy director is **Carly Weckstein** (she/her/hers); stage manager is **Rita Cofield**\*; assistant stage manager is **Quinn O'Connor** (she/they); wig/make-up design by **Shelia Dorn**; props master is **Denys Podmazko**; dialect coach is **Andrea Odinov**; Solo Blues Harmonica is **David A. Barnes**; and Scenic Construction / Painting is **Sets to Go**.

<sup>§</sup>The Director is a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, a national theatrical labor union.

\*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

<sup>†</sup>Designer is represented by United Scenic Artists Local USA-829 of the IATSE.

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## Performances

Sunday, Oct. 17 at 2 p.m. (Preview)

Wednesday, Oct. 20 at 7:30 p.m. (Preview, Pay What You Choose, & Symposium)

Thursday, Oct. 21 at 7:30 p.m. (Preview & Pay What You Choose)

Friday, Oct. 22 at 8 p.m. (Preview)

Saturday, Oct. 23 at 8 p.m. (Opening Night & Press Performance #1)

Sunday, Oct. 24 at 2 p.m. (Press Performance #2)

Thursday, Oct. 28 at 7:30 p.m.

Friday, Oct. 29 at 8 p.m. (Post-Show Conversation)

Saturday, Oct. 30 at 2 p.m.

Saturday, Oct. 30 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, Oct. 31 at 2 p.m. (Post-Show Conversation)

Thursday, Nov. 4 at 7:30 p.m.

Friday, Nov. 5 at 8 p.m. (Post-Show Conversation)

Saturday, Nov. 6 at 2 p.m.

Saturday, Nov. 6 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, Nov. 7 at 2 p.m.

Sunday, Nov. 7 at 7 p.m. (Sunday Rush)

Thursday, Nov. 11 at 7:30 p.m.

Friday, Nov. 12 at 8 p.m. (Post-Show Conversation)

Saturday, Nov. 13 at 2 p.m.

Saturday, Nov. 13 at 8 p.m.

Saturday, Nov. 14 at 2 p.m.

## Ticket and Price Information

**Buy Online:** [www.anoisewithin.org](http://www.anoisewithin.org) **Buy Via Phone:** 626-356-3121

**Purchase at Box Office:** 3352 E. Foothill Blvd., Pasadena, CA 91107

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**Regular Prices:** Single tickets from \$25, Student Rush with ID an hour before performance \$20.

**Groups (10 or more):** Adults from \$25 to \$50 a ticket, up to 35% off; Students from \$18/tickets. Call 626-356-3121 for more information and ask for Subscriber Services Manager Deborah Strang.

**Sunday Rush:** Nov. 7 at 7 p.m. – all tickets remaining are \$25, available online after 12 a.m. day of performance with the code SUNDAYRUSH or at the box office, cash or credit, after 2 p.m. day of performance.

**Pay What You Choose:** Oct. 20 and Oct. 21 at 7:30 p.m. – Pay What You Choose tickets will become available online starting at 12 a.m. on the day of each performance with the choice to pay \$5, \$10, or \$15 (handling fee not included).

### **Conversations and Presentations with the Artists**

This run of *Seven Guitars* includes a pre-show symposium featuring a noted scholar at 6:45 p.m. on Oct. 20, and post-show conversations on Oct. 29, Oct. 31, Nov. 5, and Nov. 12.

### **ANW's 2021-2022, 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season - THEY SHATTERED THE CHRYSALIS**

“The world is in the midst of extraordinary change,” said **Geoff Elliott** and **Julia Rodriguez-Elliott**, “a year of Covid-19; a time of greater awareness of systemic racism, and of confronting violence against people of color; a more aggressive push for women’s and LGBTQ+ rights; and more. The world we once inhabited is shattering. Each of the productions in the **2021-22, 30th Anniversary Season** is a passionate examination of seismic shifts in reality and how special individuals summon extraordinary courage to meet these changes head-on.”

A Noise Within’s shattering new season began in the fall with Lisa Peterson and Denis O’Hare’s rendition of *An Iliad* (September 12 – October 3, 2021) directed by **Julia Rodriguez-Elliott**. The Spring 2021 filmed production returns live to the stage with alternating performances from **Deborah Strang** and **Geoff Elliott**. *An Iliad* will be followed by another chapter of August Wilson’s 10-play American Century Cycle, the blues opera *Seven Guitars* (October 17 – November 14, 2021). Bursting with musical lyricism and courage, Wilson’s Pulitzer-nominated play richly

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captures the spirit and heritage of Black Americans in the 20th Century. *Seven Guitars* will be directed by **Gregg T. Daniel**, director of *LA Times* Critic's Choice *Gem of the Ocean* at ANW in 2019 and a recipient of the 2016 NAACP Best Director award for the International City Theatre's production of *Fences*.

The Holiday Season brings back Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (December 2 – 23, 2021) directed by **Julia Rodriguez-Elliott** and **Geoff Elliott**. This timeless classic takes to the stage once more with an **all-new** musical score by Resident Artist Robert Oriol.

The new year will begin with William Shakespeare's bittersweet comedy *All's Well That Ends Well* (February 6 – March 6, 2022). Directed by **Nike Doukas** (she, her, hers), the rarely seen classic celebrates a young woman as she breaks the man-made chrysalis to follow her heart. Next, Nilo Cruz's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Anna in the Tropics* (March 20 – April 17, 2022), intertwines ritual, tradition, and raw sensuality in the working community of a Cuban-American cigar factory in 1920s Tampa, Florida. *Anna in the Tropics* will be directed by **Jonathan Muñoz-Proulx** (he/him/his), Director of Cultural Programming at ANW.

Finally, A Noise Within will conclude its triumphant return to the live stage with Mary Zimmerman's (she, her, hers) *Metamorphoses* (May 8 – June 5, 2022) directed by **Julia Rodriguez-Elliott**. Mary Zimmerman (author of ANW's award-winning *Argonautika*) creates this Tony Award®-nominated masterpiece, based on the Myths of Ovid. Be mesmerized with tales of Midas, Orpheus, Aphrodite, and more in a whimsical and heartbreaking meditation on the joys and perils of being human.

Geoff Elliott and Julia Rodriguez-Elliott conclude, "Change can be joyful or heartbreaking. Change is inevitable. Change is necessary. Change is here! Join us as we celebrate protagonists who each 'Shattered the Chrysalis.'"

### About August Wilson

**August Wilson** was born on April 27, 1945, in the Hill District community of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania as Frederick August Kittel, Jr. to Daisy Wilson, a cleaning lady, and Frederick August

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Kittle, a German immigrant and baker. Wilson's father was absent for most of his life, leaving Daisy Wilson to raise August and his six siblings in a two-room apartment.

In 1958, Daisy Wilson married David Bedford. Growing up, Wilson had a complex experience with race. His mother, Daisy, was Black, his father, Frederick Kittle, was white, and David Bedford, his stepfather, was Black. The complexity of Wilson's experience with race is expressed in many of his plays.

While Wilson was a bright and creative student, he found school life difficult. In 1959, Wilson attended three different schools. He began high school at Central Catholic High School, a predominantly white, private school. There, he was the victim of race-based bullying so extreme that he transferred to Connelly Trade school. However, Wilson quickly grew bored at Connelly Trade school and transferred once more to Gladstone High School. There, he was accused of plagiarizing a paper he had written, and he secretly dropped out of school all together at the age of 15.

After leaving school, Wilson continued to educate himself—he would go to the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh during school hours to study while his mother thought he was at school. During his self-education, he read the works of Langston Hughes and Ralph Ellison, and he learned to love the blues and Bessie Smith's voice. During this time, he began to spend time in restaurants and barbershops around the Hill District simply to listen to the residents' voices and stories. Wilson would later draw on these voices and stories as inspiration for his writing.

In 1962, Wilson enlisted in the U.S. Army, but he only served for one year. After leaving the Army, he began to work a variety of odd jobs while he wrote poetry. By the late 1960s, Wilson had officially adopted the name August Wilson in honor of his mother, and he became involved in the Black Arts Movement. During this time, he collaborated with poets, artists, and educators, and became the co-founder of the Black Horizon Theater in Pittsburgh. Wilson served as the resident director of the theater company until the mid-1970s, when Black Horizon Theater dissolved. Before the company dissolved, Wilson met Brenda Burton, his first wife. In 1970, they married, and Wilson's first daughter, Sakina Ansari Wilson, was born.

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In 1978, Wilson moved to St. Paul, Minnesota. There, Wilson began to focus on playwriting. In 1981, he married Judy Oliver, his second wife. One year later, Wilson was accepted to the National Playwrights Conference at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center in Connecticut in 1982. During the conference, Wilson met Lloyd Richards, the dean of the Yale University School of Drama and the artistic director of the Yale Repertory Theatre. Lloyd Richards was a legend in the theatrical world, especially in Black theater. Richards became a mentor for Wilson and eventually directed Wilson's first six Broadway productions. The same year, Wilson's play, *Jitney*, premiered at the Allegheny Repertory Theatre in Pittsburgh as the first play produced in his American Century Cycle, a 10-play cycle depicting the Black experience throughout each decade in the 20th century.

In 1984, Wilson's play, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, the second play in Wilson's American Century Cycle, premiered at the Yale Repertory Theatre to great critical acclaim. The production moved to Broadway and earned Wilson his first New York Drama Critics Circle Award. Throughout the 1980s to the early 2000s, Wilson continued to write plays for his American Century Cycle. During this time, he won two Pulitzer Prizes for his writing: one for *Fences* in 1987, and one for *The Piano Lesson* in 1990.

In 1990, Wilson's marriage to Judy Oliver ended, and Wilson moved to Seattle, Washington. There, he met Constanza Romero, a costume designer, and the two married in 1994. Three years later, Wilson's second daughter, Azula Carmen Wilson, was born.

In June 2005, Wilson was diagnosed with terminal liver cancer. He died a few months later, on October 2, in Seattle. His funeral service was held in Pittsburgh, and he is buried in Greenwood Cemetery, not far from his mother, Daisy.

### **About August Wilson's American Century Cycle**

Over the course of his playwriting career, August Wilson wrote a cycle of ten plays collectively called the **American Century Cycle**. In his cycle, Wilson sets each of his ten plays in a different decade of the 20th century. The result is a chronicle of the complexities of the changing social and historical landscape of the Black American experience over the course of 100 years. The plays in Wilson's cycle, except *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, are set in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania—the area of Pittsburgh where Wilson grew up.

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When Wilson began writing his plays, he did not have a large-scale cycle in mind. In fact, Wilson wrote the plays out of order—his first play, *Jitney*, is set in the 1970s, his second is set in the 1920s, and his third in the 1950s. Eventually, Wilson realized that he could create a cycle out of his plays. While the ten plays in his cycle all serve a greater narrative spanning 100 years, there is no common thread that runs through all ten of the plays.

Instead, the cycle tells the story of a neighborhood through time—the changes in the community that inhabits the neighborhood, and the challenges the individuals in that community face. In his cycle, Wilson highlights characters who typically go unnoticed in society—an elderly woman in *Gem of the Ocean*, a garbage man in *Fences*—giving voice to otherwise invisible groups. The plays in his cycle also tend to feature spiritual and supernatural elements of African and African American cultures set against the gritty realism of a city plagued by inequality.

### **About A Noise Within**

**A Noise Within** has been called “an oasis for those who love classic stories” by *Los Angeles Times* and is a leading regional producer based in Pasadena, Calif. ANW’s award-winning resident company is committed to representing the entire community at their state-of-the-art, 324-seat performance space. In addition to producing world-class performances of classic theatre, the organization runs robust education programs with the goal of inspiring diverse audiences of all ages. ANW is striving to be a theatre that better represents our entire community, through ongoing anti-racism initiatives across the organization and by interpreting our mission to fully engage audiences through various creative forms and community and artist-centered work.

Producing Artistic Directors **Julia Rodriguez-Elliott** and **Geoff Elliott**, Managing Director **Michael Bateman**. [www.anoisewithin.org](http://www.anoisewithin.org)

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