



## NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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# A Noise Within continues commitment to August Wilson's 'American Century Cycle' with 'King Hedley II'

PASADENA, Calif (February 20, 2024) — **A Noise Within** continues its commitment to **August Wilson's "American Century Cycle"** with a new production of *King Hedley II*. **Gregg T. Daniel**, who has previously directed A Noise Within productions of Wilson's *Gem of the Ocean*, *Seven Guitars* and *Radio Golf*, returns to direct the ninth play in the two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright's extraordinary 10-play cycle that explores, decade-by-decade, the Black experience in 20th century America. Performances of *King Hedley II* begin **April 6** and continue at the company's Pasadena home through **April 28**. Previews begin March 31.

After seven years in prison, King Hedley re-enters society eager to rebuild his life, but quickly confronts the inescapable challenges facing Black men in Reagan-era Pittsburgh. King's disenfranchisement comes into conflict with the stories he's been telling himself. Yet he continues to plant seeds where nothing can grow.

"Wilson is our American Shakespeare, and his language comes alive in the mouths of fine actors in a similar way." state A Noise Within co-artistic directors **Geoff Elliott** and **Julia Rodriguez-Elliott**. "This play is a tragedy, but there's so much humor in it. That is part of the humanity Wilson brings to his work."

"He was a poet before he was a playwright, and you can hear it in the electrically charged richness of his language, the musicality." agrees Daniel. "You can feel it enter your body and lift you. King is someone trying to live up to his name. He aspires to live an honorable, respectful, just life after serving his time, but is denied that at every turn. There's an epic quality to the story in the way it addresses the human condition: what we strive to become and to achieve in life, how we try to better ourselves."

**Aaron Jennings**, recipient of an NAACP best ensemble award for his role in *Elmina's*



*Kitchen* at Lower Depth Theatre, takes on the title role of the proud and ambitious King. **Veralyn Jones** (Louise in *A Noise Within's Seven Guitars*, Aunt Ester in *Gem of the Ocean*) portrays King's mother, Ruby, a former big band singer; **Kacie Rogers** (last fall's *The Bluest Eye*) plays his wife, Tonya; and **Evan Lewis Smith** (Citizen Barlow in *Gem of the Ocean*) is his best friend and sometimes business partner, Mister. **Ben Cain** (Walter Lee Younger in *A Noise Within's A Raisin in the Sun*) and **Gerald C. Rivers** (best known for his work at Theatricum Botanicum) round out the cast as, respectively, Ruby's longtime flame Elmore and neighborhood truthsayer Stool Pigeon.

The creative team includes scenic designer **Efren Delgadillo Jr**; lighting designer **Brandon Baruch**; sound designer **Jeff Gardner**; costume designer **Mylette Nora**; wig and makeup designer **Shelia Dorn**; properties designer **Stephen Taylor**; and dramaturg **Dr. Miranda Johnson-Haddad**. The production stage manager is **Taylor Anne Cullen**, with **Arielle Hightower** assisting. The producing sponsors are **Dick** and **Sally Roberts**.

Taken as a whole, the ten plays in Wilson's monumental cycle span a period of 90 years, from *Gem of the Ocean* in 1904 to *Radio Golf* in 1997 — with nine of them set in Pittsburgh's Hill District, where Wilson himself grew up. But the plays were not written sequentially and are not connected in the manner of a serial story. Each play stands alone. Many of the characters recur or are referenced in several of the plays, which enriches the audience experience each time a new one is viewed

A Noise Within has been called "an oasis for those who love classic stories" by the *Los Angeles Times* and is a leading regional producer based in Pasadena, California. Under the leadership of Elliott and Rodriguez-Elliott, the award-winning resident theater company is honored to represent the entire community at its state-of-the-art, 324-seat performance space. In addition to producing world-class performances of classic theater, the organization runs robust education programs with the goal of inspiring diverse audiences of all ages. ANW is committed to anti-racist policies and practices across the entirety of the organization. By interpreting its mission to fully engage audiences through community and artist-centered work in multiple creative disciplines, ANW is striving to be a theater that better serves the entire community. A Noise Within's 2023-24 Season is presented by the **S. Mark Taper Foundation**.

Performances of *King Hedley II* take place **April 6** through **April 28** on **Thursdays** at **7:30 p.m.**; **Fridays** at **8 p.m.**; **Saturdays** at **2 p.m.** and **8 p.m.**; and **Sundays** at **2 p.m.** (no 2 p.m. matinee on Saturday, April 6; no evening performance on Saturday, April 27; dark Thursday, April 18). Four preview performances take place on Sunday, March 31 at 2 p.m.; Wednesday, April 3 and Thursday, April 4 each at 7:30 p.m.; and Friday, April 5 at 8 p.m.

The performance on **Thursday, April 11** is "**Black Out Night**," an opportunity for an audience self-identifying as Black to experience the performance together, and tickets include admission to a post-show reception; non-Black-identifying patrons are welcome to attend, or to select a different performance. **Post-performance conversations** take place **every Friday** (except the preview) and on **Sunday, April 14**. A one-hour **INsiders Discussion Group** will take place on **Sunday, April 7** at 12:30 p.m., prior to the matinee performance (separate admission: **\$25**).

In addition, **four student matinees** will take place on weekday mornings (**April 10, April 17, April 18** and **April 24**) at **10:30 a.m.** Interested educators should email

[education@anoisewithin.org](mailto:education@anoisewithin.org).

Tickets to *King Hedley II* start at **\$29**. Student tickets start at **\$18**. Tickets to the previews on **Wednesday, April 3** and **Thursday, April 4** will be **Pay What You Choose**, with tickets starting at **\$10** (available online beginning at 12 p.m. the Monday prior to that performance). Discounts are available for groups of 10 or more.

**A Noise Within** is located at **3352 E Foothill Blvd., Pasadena, CA 91107**. *King Hedley II* is recommended for ages 14 and up. For more information and to purchase tickets, call **(626) 356-3100** or go to [www.anoisewithin.org](http://www.anoisewithin.org).

[Click here](#) to download high-resolution photos.

## Details for Calendar Listings 'King Hedley II'

### WHAT:

**A Noise Within** continues its commitment to August Wilson's "American Century Cycle" with *King Hedley II*, the ninth play in Wilson's extraordinary 10-play cycle that explores the Black experience in 20th century America decade-by-decade. After seven years in prison, King Hedley re-enters society eager to rebuild his life, but quickly confronts the inescapable challenges facing Black men in Reagan-era Pittsburgh. King's disenfranchisement comes into conflict with the stories he's been telling himself. Yet he continues to plant seeds where nothing can grow.

### WHO:

- Written by **August Wilson**
- Directed by **Gregg T. Daniel**
- Starring **Ben Cain, Aaron Jennings, Veralyn Jones, Gerald C. Rivers, Kacie Rogers, Evan Lewis Smith**
- Presented by **A Noise Within**, *Geoff Elliot and Julia Rodriguez-Elliott, producing artistic directors*

### WHEN:

*Previews March 31 – April 5*

*Performances April 6 – April 28*

- **Wednesday** at **7:30 p.m.**: April 3 ONLY (Preview)
- **Thursdays** at **7:30 p.m.**: April 4 (Preview); April 11\*; April 25 (dark April 18)
- **Fridays** at **8 p.m.**: April 5 (Preview); April 12<sup>o</sup>; April 19<sup>o</sup>; April 26<sup>o</sup>
- **Saturdays** at **2 p.m.**: April 13; April 20, April 27 (no matinee on April 6)
- **Saturdays** at **8 p.m.**: April 6 (Opening Night); April 13; April 20 (no 8 p.m. performance on April 27)
- **Sundays** at **2 p.m.**: March 31 (Preview); April 7<sup>\*\*\*</sup>; April 14<sup>o</sup>; April 21, April 28

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Pasadena, CA 91107

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**PHOTOS:**

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**HOW:**

[www.anoisewithin.org](http://www.anoisewithin.org)  
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