

AUGUST WILSON MONOLOGUE COMPETITION GUIDE





WHAT IS THE AUGUST WILSON MONOLOGUE COMPETITION?

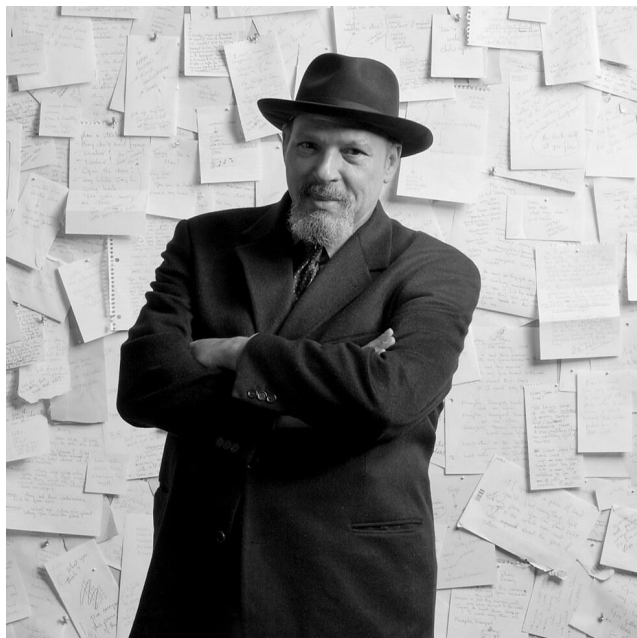
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Open to Chicago area high schoolers, the competition gives students an opportunity to explore and share the richness of August Wilson's Century Cycle. The competition is in 12th year and serves over 300 students annually with competition, master classes and college scholarships.

Goodman Theatre and Derrick Sanders, in collaboration with the League of Chicago Theatres, are proud to partner in presenting Chicago's August Wilson Monologue Competition.

“HAVE A BELIEF IN YOURSELF THAT IS BIGGER THAN ANYONE’S DISBELIEF.”

–August Wilson



Who Is August Wilson?

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August Wilson, original name Frederick August Kittel, (born April 27, 1945, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, U.S.—died October 2, 2005, Seattle, Washington), American playwright, author of a cycle of plays, each set in a different decade of the 20th century, about Black American life.

Wilson grew up in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, a lively poor neighbourhood that became the setting for most of his plays. Together with five siblings, he was raised by his mother, Daisy Wilson, after his father, Frederick August Kittel, left her and their children. Daisy Wilson later remarried, and in 1958 the family moved to a suburb of Pittsburgh. The complexity of Wilson’s experience of race while growing up would be expressed in his plays. His mother was Black, his father white, and his stepfather, David Bedford, Black. The Hill District was mostly Black, and the suburb, Hazelwood, was predominately white. Wilson and his family were the target of racial threats in Hazelwood, and he quit school at age 15 after being accused of having plagiarized a paper. He turned to self-education, reading intensively in a public library and returning to the Hill District to learn from residents there. He changed his last name from Kittel to Wilson, and in the late 1960s he embraced the Black Arts movement.



CAREER

In 1978 Wilson moved to St. Paul, Minnesota, and in the early 1980s he wrote several plays, including *Jitney*, which was first produced in 1982. His first major play, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, opened on Broadway in 1984 and was a critical and financial success. *Fences*, first produced in 1985; received a Tony Award for best play, and a film adaptation was released in 2016.

Wilson's chronicle of the Black American experience was called the Century Cycle. This continued with *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, first produced in 1986 and *The Piano Lesson*, first produced in 1987. *Two Trains Running*, was produced in 1990. *Seven Guitars* was produced in 1995 as the seventh play of the cycle. Subsequent plays are *King Hedley II* and *Gem of the Ocean*, first produced in 2003. Wilson completed the cycle with *Radio Golf*, first produced in 2005. These plays resulted in what is called the Century Cycle. Music, particularly jazz and blues, is a recurrent theme, and its cadence is echoed in the lyrical, vernacular nature of his dialogue.

Wilson received numerous honours during his career, including seven New York Drama Critics' Circle Awards for best play, Guggenheim and Rockefeller fellowships. Shortly after his death, the Virginia Theater on Broadway was renamed in his honour. The August Wilson Center for African American Culture opened in Pittsburgh in 2009.

THE MONOLOGUE COMPETITION

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Students must be currently enrolled in a regional high school. They may either compete as an individual or in a group with their school. All students will be adjudicated separately. The competition is divided into Preliminaries, Semi-Finals and Finals.

Preliminaries

Spanning 3 days; hundreds of students are invited to an audition location with their school or individually. Locations vary to ensure that travel is not a barrier to access for schools and students. Students will perform their August Wilson monologues in front of a group of judges who will assess their performance (please see page [1](#) for more information). At the completion of the week, 60 students with the top scores will advance to Semi-finals.

Semi-Finals

The 60 students then compete in front of a different group of judges. These judges will assess students on the same monologue that they used for Preliminaries. At the end of the day judges will choose 20 students to advance to Finals. Students will receive an email notification with instructions on the guidelines for finals as well as inviting them to a mandatory Saturday Masterclass.

Finals

The 20 students will compete at the Goodman Theatre in front of an audience. Each student can invite anyone they would like to support them! They will be assessed on the same criteria as well as a technical score (please see page [1](#) for more information). At the completion of the monologues the judges deliberate. They will choose the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners who will win a scholarship amount of \$250, \$500 and \$1000 respectfully.

“Some kids who never thought they’d get opportunities, get a shot at college and they learn something about themselves in the process.”

–Derrick Sanders



THE COMPENDIUM & JUDGING CRITERIA

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COMPENDIUM

All students that compete must select a monologue from the Compendium. Only monologues contained within it are approved for competition. Students may not make changes to the chosen monologue, including:

- Cuts or rearranging of the text,
- Changing pronouns or names
- Adding portions of text.

These changes affect the rhythm and cadence that is intended by August. Furthermore students who make changes will be disqualified for breaking these rules.

THE DESIGN COMPETITION

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Students must be currently enrolled in a regional high school. All students will be adjudicated separately. The design competition is divided into Semi-Finals and Finals. Students must choose a monologue from the August Wilson Compendium, and create a work of art such as a collage (i.e. Romare Bearden), assemblage (i.e. Betye Saar), or drawing or video inspired by the chosen text.

Guidelines

- Your work of art must include at least [3 Principles of Design](#)
- Works of art must be digital or easily transportable (no larger than 18" x 18" x 18") or a maximum of 90 seconds for video
- Submit a written Design Statement (see prompt below) along with your Design

Design Statement Guidelines

Write 1-2 Paragraphs (up to 200 words total) about the thematic focus of your design submission. What are the key themes of the monologue? What are the key themes of the play? Why is this play still relevant now? What does this person want in life? What is this person fighting for?

Then write a description of how your projects use the Elements & Principles of Design to support those themes. (ex. I used faded black and white images, except for the central color image of Aunt Esther, to emphasize the importance and power of connecting with the ancestors.)

Semi-Finals and Finals

After receiving all design submissions, 60 students with the top scores will advance to Semi-finals. After students present their design, their pieces will be adjudicated. An upwards of 20 students will advance to the Finals. Design Finalists' work will be displayed at the Finals at the Goodman Theatre.
