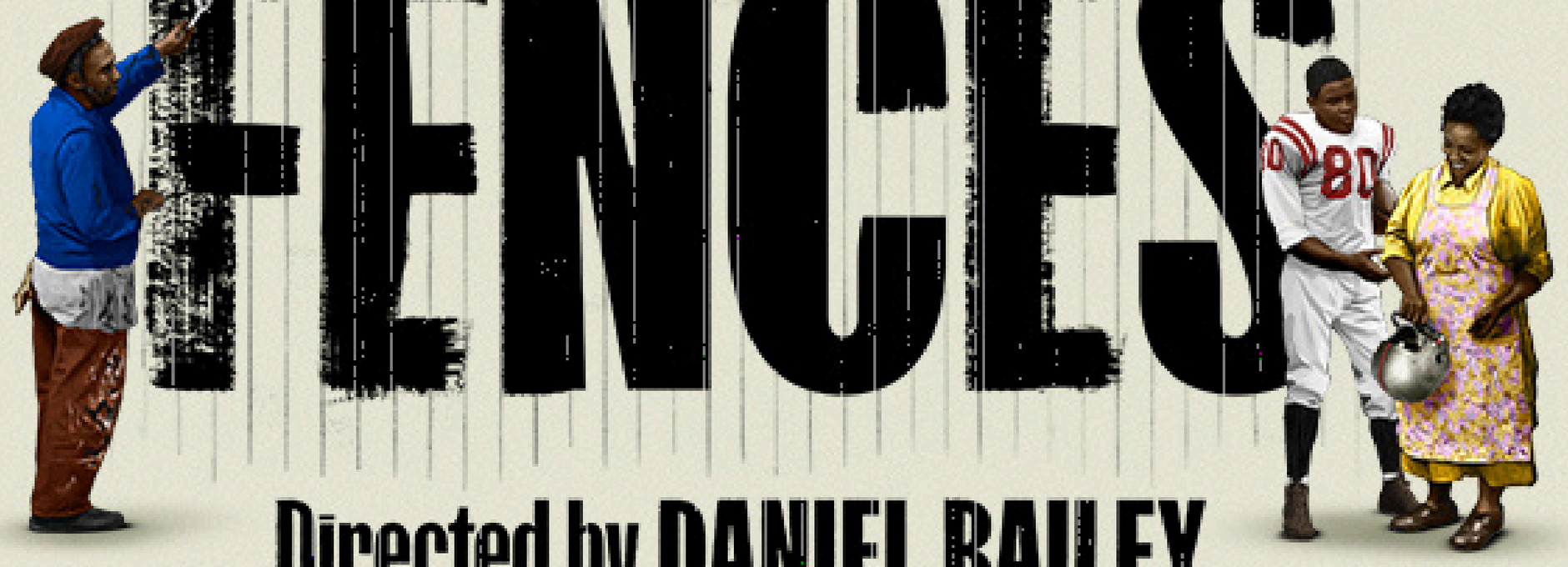
AUGUST WILSON's FENCES



Directed by DANIEL BAILEY

SCHOOLS RESOURCE

DIRECTOR'S INTERPRETATION

Set in 1957, August Wilson's *Fences* follows Troy Maxson, his wife Rose, and their children as a Black American family on the cusp of middle-class stability, only to find their unity fractured by buried dreams, enduring love, and the weight of masculinity. For the director, the play is fundamentally about how trauma is inherited across generations, with Troy's son Cory striving to break free from the same self-limiting patterns that shaped both his father and grandfather. As a father himself, Daniel Bailey is particularly drawn to the play's exploration of what parents pass on to their children—and what they hope not to.

Wilson wrote *Fences* to humanise the Black experience and place it on a global stage, illuminating the realities of Black life in America and across the diaspora. The director believes the play remains urgently relevant today, speaking to ongoing conversations about race, family, gender, social justice, and the role of men in society. While movements such as Black Lives Matter echo many of its themes, *Fences* also asks audiences to look backwards in order to understand the present. Through the character of Raynell, Wilson offers a vision of renewal and possibility—a new generation asking how we can learn from the past and create a better future.

QUESTIONS

Responding to the directors interpretation , what are some additional themes you feel the play explores?

How are these themes relevant to the time period the play is set in?

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SET DESIGN by Lily Arnold

The set is inspired by the real architecture, colours and textures of Pittsburgh in the 1950's when the play is set but it also has a more expressionistic aspect to it as the entire house revolves. The exterior of the house is naturalistic looking but inside is a more abstract space where characters can become more expressive, often though playing music.

Most of the scripted scenes in the play take place in the space downstage of the house, but it is in the transitional moments Between scenes, where the house revolves and music plays, that we get a glimpse into the private emotions of the Characters.

The revolving house makes sense with our production as there is a strong musical aspect to the show, the house becomes like a spinning record - the music is the Driving force behind the characters, and also a vehicle for them to escape into and sometimes from, themselves.

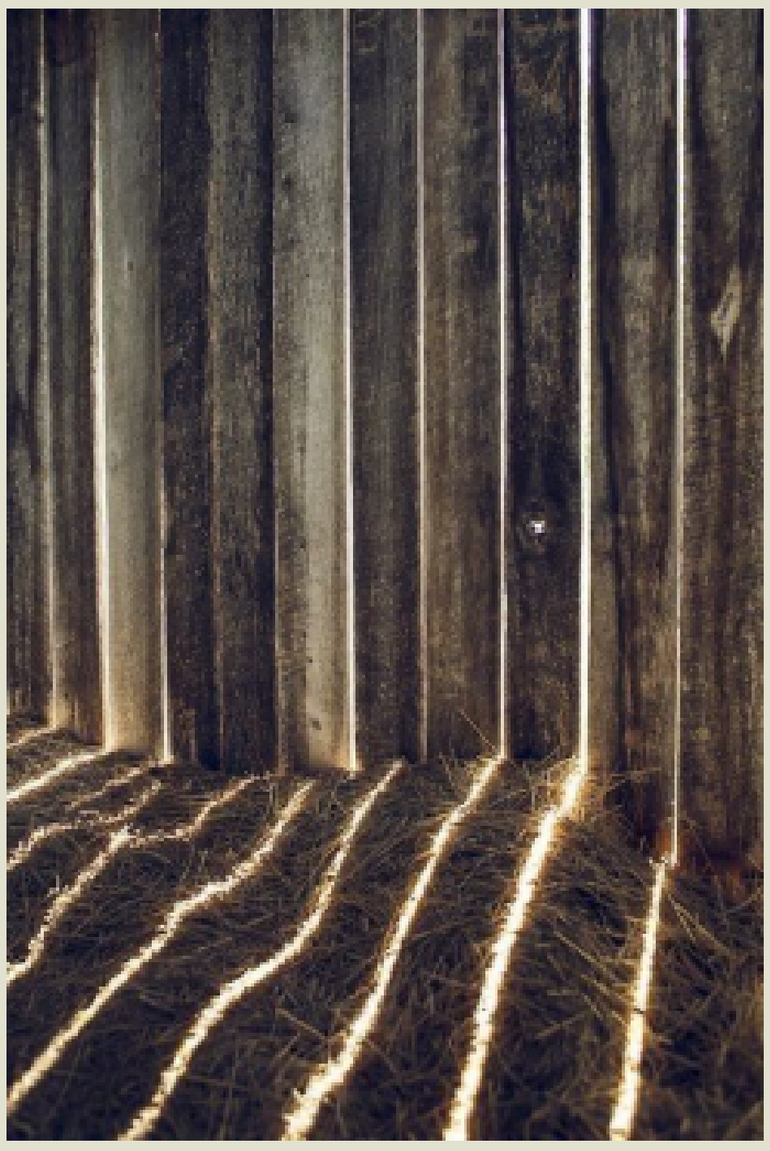
Responding to the Director's interpretation how have the themes and ideas been explored in the Designer's image board and design.

Looking at the Designer's mood board images - what 5 images would you add to build the mood board? How do these images connect to the play?

Looking at the Designer's mood board images - what 3 themes do you feel the images represent?

QUESTIONS & TASKS

Designer's image board



Designer’s image board cont.

Designer’s White card (early) set design

MUSIC by Khalil Madovi

Composition No.1: Blue Song
Composed by Khalil Madovi

The song, which celebrates the virtues of an old hunting dog called Blue, is a memorialization of the unconditional devotion and obedience of the creature so commonly styled “man’s best friend.” When Cory and Raynell, two of Troy’s three children, sing the song together after Troy’s death, they are not only connecting to one another through a shared childhood memory of their own father, they are also remembering and reifying his value of the characteristics, exhibited through the idealized attributes of Blue, that bolster Troy’s sense of himself as a man.

Listening to this song - what other characteristics might you choose to describe Troy?
What are the emotions or feelings it inspires?

In groups - Create a still image / freeze frame that best represents this feeling. Use as many characters as possible from the play to create this image.

QUESTIONS & TASK

Composition No.2: Jesus Be A Fence
Composed by Khalil Madovi

TASK

Listening to the song, respond to the music by writing a dramatic speech inspired by the feeling the music inspires in you.
This can be from the perspective of any character in the play.

Headlong

We're Headlong.
We make theatre with the power to move.
Big, exhilarating productions that use the unexpected to connect everyone we reach, right across the nation.

Whether a work is old or new, there are always different questions we can ask. So our productions are an invitation: to come and see something in a new way.
Join us.

Previous Headlong productions include *A Midsummer Night's Dream, A Raisin in the Sun, Jitney, The House Party, People, Places & Things* and *Enron.*

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