

NEWS FROM PENUMBRA THEATRE

For Immediate Release

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2009-2010 Season Announcement

May 11, 2009; Saint Paul, MN: Penumbra Theatre Company, the nation's preeminent African American theatre, proudly announced its 2009-2010 Season.

- ◆ ***Radio Golf*** by August Wilson, directed by Lou Bellamy
October 1 through October 25, 2009
- ◆ ***Black Nativity: A Season for Change*** by T. Mychael Rambo & Lou Bellamy
Directed by Dominic Taylor
December 3 through December 27, 2009
- ◆ ***Black Pearl Sings!*** by Frank Higgins, directed by Lou Bellamy
February 18 through March 14, 2010
- ◆ ***Two Old Black Guys Just Sitting Around Talking***, by Gus Edwards, directed by Lou Bellamy
April 29 through May 23, 2010

Tickets on sale May 1, 2009 through the Penumbra Theatre Box Office at 651-224-3180 or at www.penumbratheatre.org.

Founder and Artistic Director Lou Bellamy stated, "While we take inventory of the collective progress made as a nation, history has taught us to take nothing for granted. At Penumbra, we take pride in representing the African American experience throughout our country's past and present, looking towards the future. Ultimately, what we find is that history lives in the people. We must care for our history and more importantly care for the people who have carried it for us. This season's lineup explores change, the notion of progress, and the role of individual and collective stories in the creation of history."

Penumbra's 2009-2010 Season

Radio Golf by August Wilson
Directed by Lou Bellamy
Presented by Cargill

October 1 – October 25, 2009

It's 1997 and Harmon Wilks wants to become Pittsburgh's first black mayor. His ticket to win the election rides on redeveloping the "Hill District," the neighborhood he grew up in. But when the past begins to catch up with him, secrets get revealed that could be his undoing. Harmon discovers that victory will come with a price. Join us for this timely look at race and American politics.

Black Nativity: A Season for Change
By T. Mychael Rambo and Lou Bellamy
Directed by Dominic Taylor

December 3 – December 27, 2009

This contemporary gospel musical celebrates the bonds of family, the power of faith and the appreciation of what money can't buy—the gift of love. Rejoice with the best jazz and gospel singers of the Twin Cities and members of TU Dance as they join Grandma Walker and her family to ring in the holiday season.

Black Pearl Sings! by Frank Higgins
Directed by Lou Bellamy

February 18 – March 14, 2010

It is 1935 and Susannah, a white researcher, is on a quest to find authentic slave songs and secure a professorship. On a Texas prison farm she meets Pearl, an incarcerated woman with a silky voice and a steely spirit. Each has a hidden agenda, and the two women form a thorny and surprising friendship as they venture into the bright lights of New York City.

Two Old Black Guys Just Sitting Around Talking
By Gus Edwards
Directed by Lou Bellamy

April 29 – May 23, 2010

Henry and Abe can't stand each other, but like magnets the elderly duo is drawn to the same park bench every day. Having once jockeyed for the love of the same woman, their cantankerous rivalry has grown through the years. Now, in the twilight of their lives, they find themselves more intertwined than either had ever imagined.

Box Office | 651-224-3180 | www.penumbra theatre.org

The 2009-2010 Season continues Penumbra's commitment to produce the entire **August Wilson Twentieth Century Cycle** that traces black American life decade by decade from 1900 to 2000. Penumbra launched the cycle in 2007-2008 with *The Piano Lesson* at Penumbra and *Gem of the Ocean*, presented at the Guthrie Theater. In 2008 - 2009, Penumbra staged *Fences* at home on the Penumbra stage. The 2009-2010 Season proudly opens with the regional premiere of *Radio Golf*.

Anointed as a definitive interpreter of August Wilson, Lou Bellamy has been rigorously recruited to direct at theatres around the country. Penumbra joined forces with the Guthrie Theater to stage the upper Midwest premiere of *Gem of the Ocean* in 2007. Bellamy's New York City debut of August Wilson's *Two Trains Running* at the Signature Theatre in 2006 received an Obie Award for Best Direction and a Lucille Lortel Award for Best Revival. In the same year, Bellamy also directed a sold out run of *Jitney* at the Kansas City Repertory Theatre, a production that also went to the Arizona Theatre Company in Phoenix and Tucson.

In honor of Penumbra's 20th Anniversary, Wilson stated, "We are what we imagine ourselves to be and we can only imagine what we know to be possible. The founding of Penumbra Theatre enlarged that possibility. And its corresponding success provokes the community to a higher expectation of itself. I became a playwright because I saw where my chosen profession was being sanctioned by a group of black men and women who were willing to invest their lives and their talent in assuming a responsibility for our presence in the world and the conduct of our industry as black Americans. It was one of, if not the only field endeavor, I saw being sanctioned by blacks. It was a platform from which we might investigate ourselves, our manners and way of life, our history, our failures and our triumphs. Penumbra is fortunate to have Lou Bellamy to guide and encourage that investigation, and to open avenues for its growth and expansion. To provide that platform is no small accomplishment."

Penumbra Theatre was founded in 1976 by Lou Bellamy to make socially responsible art. At a time when roles for black artists were limited to stereotypes and comical representations, Penumbra produced theater that roared with authenticity through the unrestrained and rich voice of black artists and playwrights. This respect for cultural authenticity became Penumbra's signature style – and demand for it has reached new heights from theatres around nation, fostering collaborations, new productions, tours and awards. Penumbra has achieved a national presence with the 2006 tour of *Grandchildren of the Buffalo Soldiers*, co produced with Trinity Repertory Theatre, and with presentations at Roundhouse Theatre in Bethesda, Maryland, the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Cleveland Play House, in Cleveland Ohio, and with Arizona Theatre Company in Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona. For the latest news and updates, visit www.penumbra theatre.org.

The 2008-2009 Season will mark the 33rd year of Penumbra Theatre Company, one of the few surviving professional African American theatres in the nation borne of the Black Arts Movement. Penumbra is fueled by the belief that the ethics and aesthetics of an artist must be one. Out of this comes mission driven art, art for social change, art that

is critical, forceful and demands response – the kind of art that creates and sustains a community. For 33 years, Penumbra has provided a consistently clear message that the African American experience is rich, dynamic and critical to the American theatre canon.