



For Immediate Release: February 10, 2016
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CAST SET FOR AUGUST WILSON REP

San Diego, CA - This fall, Cygnet Theatre will present the San Diego artistic debut of Washington D.C. Director **Jennifer L. Nelson**. Nelson, who will direct the upcoming Season XIV productions of August Wilson's ***Seven Guitars*** and ***King Hedley II*** was in San Diego recently to audition and cast the actors - each playing two roles.

These two San Diego Premiere productions, presented in rotating repertory, continue Cygnet's commitment to staging all ten plays in Wilson's Century Cycle that examines African American life in the United States decade by decade, during the twentieth century.

"In casting, I look for actors with enough readily available versatility to be able to be adept at switching characters expeditiously," explained Nelson, who has worked for more than 40 years as an actor, playwright, administrator, professor and director. "These two plays give a unique view of two generations of the same family. It's an exciting challenge to think of how to mine the characters and contexts for continuity of familial traits," she added. Nelson will be heading back to DC on September 16 and freelance director Lydia Fort, who will be with the cast from the beginning, will take the helm as Associate Director.

Not only do the actors have to embrace two roles, they need to be adept at switching eras. *Seven Guitars* takes place in the 1940s while *King Hedley II* is set in the 1980s. The cast of seven versatile actors includes several Cygnet Theatre and August Wilson veterans, as well as some new to the Cygnet stage.

Ro Boddie, whose powerful performance in *Stupid F**king Bird* last season had critics raving, will return to the stage in Old Town to portray Floyd/Mister. He received a San Diego Critics Circle Award for his stirring portrayal of Martin Luther King in *Blueprints to Freedom* (La Jolla Playhouse). Joining him are several veterans of Cygnet Theatre and past stagings of Wilson's Century Cycle. San Diego native **Laurence Brown** (*Piano Lesson*, *Gem of the Ocean*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Motherf**ker with the Hat*), **Grandison Phelps III** (*Piano Lesson*, *Fences*, *Gem of the Ocean*) and **Antonio TJ Johnson** (*Piano Lesson*, *Gem of the Ocean*, *Fences*) appeared together several times. In addition, Johnson has appeared locally in his self-penned one-man show, *Walking in the Shadow of August Wilson*. This Cygnet Theatre outreach presentation has toured area schools, museums and military bases.

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After a successful Off-Broadway run, Critics Circle Award Winner **Yolanda Franklin** (*Our Town*), returns to San Diego and Cygnet Theatre to play Vera/Tonya. Making her Cygnet Theatre debut is author and actress **Milena Phillips**. Rounding out the cast is **Yvonne** as Young Ruby.

The production team features costume design by **Veronica Murphy**, set design by **Sean Fanning**, lighting design by **R. Craig Wolf**, sound design by **Melanie Chen** and properties design by **Syd Stevens**. **Craig Campbell** will stage manage.

Performances are September 28 - November 6. Show times are Wednesdays and Thursdays at 7:30pm, Fridays at 8:00pm, Saturdays at 3:00pm, and 8:00pm, and Sundays at 2:00pm and 7:00pm.

For more information regarding tickets, please contact the box office at **619-337-1525** or visit www.cygnettheatre.com. Tickets may be purchased in person at the box office located at 4040 Twiggs Street. Discounts are available for students, active-duty military, seniors and groups of ten or more.

FACT SHEET

WHAT: SEVEN GUITARS AND KING HEDLEY II

WHERE: Cygnet Theatre
4040 Twiggs St. in Old Town San Diego State Historic Park

WHO: Playwright: **August Wilson**
Director: **Jennifer L. Nelson**
Associate Director: **Lydia Fort**
Set Designer: **Sean Fanning**[°]
Costume Designer: **Veronica Murphy**[°]
Lighting Designer: **R. Craig Wolf**[°]
Sound Designer: **Melanie Chen**
Prop Master: **Syd Stevens**
Stage Manager: **Craig Campbell***

CAST: Seven Guitars/King Hedley II

Ro Boddie* - Floyd/Mister
Laurence Brown - Canewell/King Hedley
Yolanda Franklin* - Vera/Tonya
Antonio TJ Johnson**[°] - Hedley I/Stool Pigeon
Grandison Phelps III - Red/Elmore
Milena Phillips - Louise/Ruby
Yvonne - Young Ruby

*Member of Actors' Equity Association, [°]Resident Artist

DATES: Previews begin: Thursday, September 28, 2016

Press Opening - *Seven Guitars*: Saturday, October 8 at 8:00 pm
Press Opening - *King Hedley II*: Sunday, October 9 at 7:00 pm
Closes: Sunday, November 6, 2016

Performance Schedule:
Wednesday - Thursday at 7:30pm
Friday at 8:00 pm
Saturday at 3:00 pm and 8:00 pm
Sunday at 2:00 pm and 7:00 pm

CYGNETURE EVENTS:

- 10/7 - Social Media Night (*King Hedley II*)
- 10/12 - Out Night (*Seven Guitars*)
- 10/14 - Theatre on Tap & Friday Forum (*Seven Guitars*)
- 10/27 - Wine Night (*King Hedley II*)

PRICES: Prices start at **\$36**
(Discounts are available for preview performances, children, seniors, students, active-duty military, under 30 & groups)

HOW: Phone: (619) 337-1525
Online: www.cygnettheatre.com
In Person: 4040 Twiggs St., San Diego, CA 92110

Photos and PDF versions of recent press releases can be downloaded from the Cygnet Online Media Center. Visit www.CygnetTheatre.com for more information.

ABOUT CYGNET THEATRE

Cygnet Theatre Company produces a year-round season of professional Off-Broadway-style theatre as well as thought-provoking and engaging educational programming. Cygnet is committed to maintaining high standards of artistic and fiscal integrity, and serves more than 40,000 patrons annually from San Diego and beyond. Cygnet performs its mainstage productions at the state-of-the-art theatre in Old Town San Diego State Historic Park. An active member of the San Diego community, Cygnet has outreach programs serving tens of thousands of students and community members annually. For more information, visit www.cygnettheatre.com.

CYGNET THEATRE MISSION STATEMENT

Believing in the power of theatre to startle the soul, ignite debate and embrace the diversity of the community it serves, Cygnet Theatre Company is fearlessly committed to the dissection, examination and celebration of the human story through the medium of live theatre.