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NOTED D.C. DIRECTOR TO HELM AUGUST WILSON REP

San Diego, CA - Cygnet Theatre is proud to present the San Diego debut of Washington D.C. Director **Jennifer L. Nelson**. Nelson will direct the upcoming Season XIV productions of August Wilson's ***Seven Guitars*** and ***King Hedley II***. 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 during the twentieth century decade by decade.

Nelson has worked for more than 40 years as an actor, playwright, administrator, professor and director. She began her career as a performer in the Living Stage Theatre Company, the former community outreach program of Arena Stage, and rose to the position of Associate Artistic Director. She next served for eleven years as Producing Artistic Director of the African Continuum Theatre Company (ACTCo), the only professional African- American theatre in Washington, and directed more than twenty productions and readings, including several world premieres.

Nelson was particularly drawn to Wilson's work and the opportunity not only of drawing more African-American audiences to the theatre, but also drawing diverse audiences eager to engage with previously unheard voices. Her experience with the Century Cycle is deep. With the completion of these two works, she will have directed all but two (*Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* and *Radio Golf*.) "Wilson provided a fresh theatrical lens through which to view the African American experience. He gave us not only the humor and frustration, but the yearning, the caring and the poetic pathos of characters we might have only seen under lesser light." In relation to these two works in particular, Nelson added, "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."

Cygnet Theatre has made a mark presenting shows in repertory, a challenge and creative opportunity for the cast and artistic team. "I've not done a Rep like this before, but the challenge is attractive and daunting. One reassuring factor is that Wilson's *métier* provides enough structure and shape to rely on. In casting, I will particularly be looking for actors with enough readily available versatility to be able to be adept at switching characters expeditiously."

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Nelson is currently Resident Director at Mosaic Theater and serves as Senior Advisor for Special Programming at Ford's Theatre. She was most recently adjunct lecturer at Georgetown University where she taught Theatre for Social Change, encouraging young artists and scholars to put their creative intelligence in service to communities in need. She is past president of the League of Washington Theatres and served on the Board of Directors of the Theatre Communications Group.

***Seven Guitars* and *King Hedley II* will be presented in rotating rep from September 28-November 6, 2016.**

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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.