

from the FOOTLIGHTS

FALL 2021

"Life shouldn't be all work and no plays."

footlightsdc.org

December 15th: Footlights Zoom Discussion of August Wilson's *How I Learned What I Learned* with Avant Bard Theatre's DeMone Seraphin and Christopher Henley

Please join Footlights at **6 pm, Wednesday, December 15th** for a virtual discussion of August Wilson's *How I Learned What I Learned*.

Almost twenty years ago in 2003 Wilson's writing took a sharp turn and he started working on something totally different from his epic stories. Instead, he started pondering about his own beginnings, his roots and his process, developing ideas for the script *How I Learned What I Learned*, the memoir of his coming-of-age in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, the setting for his cycle of stories.

In a D.C. Theatre Scene article, Christopher Henley shared that an early possible title for the show was *Move Over, Chris Rock*, among others. ([Learning from August Wilson. Todd Kreidler remembers his friend and mentor \(dctheatrescene.com\).](http://dctheatrescene.com)) This gives you an idea of how fluid August Wilson's process was as he was working through his ideas, digging into his own journey and sharing with the world.

Some of us who saw a rendition of *How I Learned* at [Round House](#) in 2017 will recall that the script is mostly chronological and targets crucial points in his childhood. We vividly remember how his early writing efforts were nearly thwarted by teachers who didn't

believe he had actually written his assignments. They were incredulous that he could express brilliant ideas of such clarity, and he was just as baffled by their bewilderment! Wilson provides honest images of his family dysfunction, including his father's absence and neglect, life on the streets trying to survive, dropping out of high school to teach himself in the library (self-schooling), all the while listening to and heeding the drumbeat of the African American experience. It's all reflected in his ten-play cycle, known as The Pittsburgh Cycle, for which he received two Pulitzer Prizes for Drama. Each play set in a different decade, is filled with keen insights and crucial legacy of the African-American experience in the 20th century. *How I Learned What I Learned* gives us glimpses of the man behind the amazing words and visceral messages. With his "special storytelling sensibility," Wilson was truly one of a kind.

Footlights has held discussions for eight(!) of Wilson's plays in the cycle, plus a special retrospective session on his work. (We are missing *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* and *King Hedley II*.)

Copies of the *How I Learned* script are available from Concord Theatricals - \$9.95 or Amazon Prime - \$11.95.

Our Guests:



DeMone Seraphin, one of Avant Bard Theatre's five new Producing Partners and Director for *How I Learned What I Learned*.

Christopher Henley, Artistic Director Emeritus & Founding Ensemble Member, Avant Bard Theatre. Christopher is someone we've known and loved over the years, making his eighth visit with us.

Debbie Jackson will be facilitating.



See *How I Learned What I Learned*

Avant Bard Theatre is mounting the show which will run December 1-19. Performances are held at the Gunston Arts Theater, 3700 S. Four Mile Run, in

Arlington, VA. Shows are Thursday, Friday, Saturday at 7:30pm, and Saturday and Sunday 2pm matinées. Visit [Avant Bard Theatre](#) for dates and to purchase tickets. A date for a talk-back discussion post-performance at Avant Bard may be forthcoming.

As theatres return to in-person presentations, we are encouraged that healthy safety protocols have been consistently enforced, and we'd like to support them in any way we can. We all look forward to the wondrous experiences of attending live theater again and hope you will be able to join us at this production.

Zoom Link for How I Learned Discussion

Please join us via Zoom at 6 pm on Wednesday, December 15th. Reservations not required.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84473913592?pwd=dVJ4bk5SL1NSS05oMHA2c29aaWYvQT09>

We will send you a reminder of the link before our meeting. For now, mark your calendars!

About Footlights

To subscribe to our email list send any message to FootlightsDC+subscribe@groups.io. See our website at www.Footlightsdc.org.

Donations to Footlights may be sent to Robin Larkin, 5800 Nicholson Lane, Apt. L-07, Rockville, MD 20852.

See you soon at the Footlights!