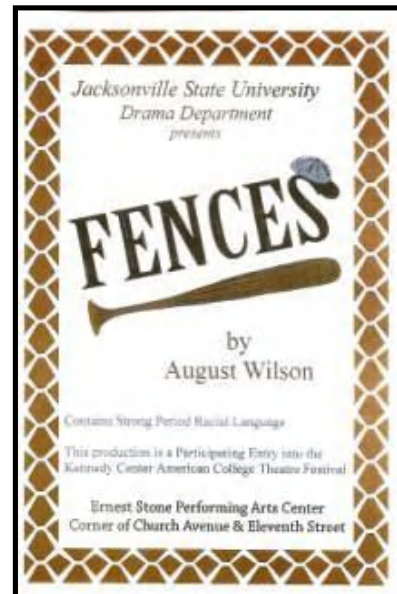


FENCES by August Wilson

To begin is to first consider the playwright, August Wilson. Born essentially into poverty in 1945, August (real name “Frederick August Kittel”) was a portrait example of someone able to rise above racism and discrimination. To see his play, “Fences”, is to quickly relate his own *real life* experience with the drama, the setting, and even family dynamics.

Rather than condense the plot (or information available on-line), I will describe each of these aspects above.

First, the **drama** involves an aging man who laments his losses pertaining to baseball; he thought that his chances to play (as a career) were lost due to his color and not his abilities. Bitter over the matter and some time in prison, he wears a monumental *chip on his shoulder*. Though he loves his present wife and child, he has been cheating on her and eventually must tell her that his mistress is going to have his child. At the same time, he is dealing with his first child (now, a grown man) from a separate relationship. It seems that in all his family relations, none are in good order – which does not seem to bother him too much – as he is occupied with his bitterness over the lost opportunity to play ball...and to be somebody. As it is, he is a garbage collector trying to make *ends-meet*.



Second, the **setting** seems to emulate what August may have experienced growing up: a low-rent or cracker-house setting in a major metropolitan such as Chicago or New York. Of course, his “castle” is nothing like he wants or envisioned – which may explain why he spends so much time away, fraternizing with another woman. Besides his physical (and emotional) distancing himself from his present wife, the aging man has become jealous of his second son (born of this wife) who is very athletic and has the potential for a football scholarship. So envious of this boy and his potential, the aging father actively goes all-out to thwart the boy’s chances by *pulling him* from his high school team. Of course the boy is upset and, not understanding the attitude and action of his father, ends-up running off and joining the military. Not only the boy, but several

@BCL@74039162

members of the family or cast have been disenfranchised by the father – his bitterness...and its consequences.

Third, the **family** includes the aging man, his present wife, there own son who is a teen, his oldest child (by another woman) who is an adult man, and a long-time friend of his who works or the city as well. In the course of the play, another entry to the cast is the child born to his mistress.

I saw the play at the local university theater; and I thought the cast did an excellent job in portraying the drama and setting of this time and setting. A touching moment was when the present wife elected to take the newborn (out-of-wedlock) child into her home – after the mother (and mistress) died during child birth. Although very angry with her husband (the aging man), **she felt compassion for the child** and essentially raised her as though her own.

“Fences” was one of ten plays featured under the title of “**The Pittsburgh Cycle**”. This series was aimed at portraying the “black American experience” All but one of the plays was in a setting much like his own (growing-up) in the Pittsburgh Hill District; but the date or timing of the series occurred over many years – again, to capture “the experience”. This particular play received a Pulitzer Prize for Drama – with similar and related recognition given to the many of his other works extending from 1985 to 2005.

To learn more about August Wilson, refer to Wikipedia.org.