One of America’s most powerful and original dramatists, August Wilson offered an alternative history of the twentieth century, as seen from the perspective of black Americans. He celebrated the lives of those seemingly pushed to the margins of national life, but who were simultaneously protagonists of their own drama and evidence of a vital and compelling community. Decade by decade, he told the story of a people with a distinctive history who forged their own future, aware of their roots in another time and place, but doing something more than just survive. Wilson deliberately addressed black America, but in doing so he discovered an international audience. Alongside chapters addressing Wilson’s life and career, and the wider context of his plays, this Companion dedicates individual chapters to each play in his ten-play cycle, ordered chronologically and thereby demonstrating Wilson’s notion of an unfolding history of the twentieth century.

Christopher Bigsby is Professor of American Studies at the University of East Anglia and has published more than thirty books covering American theatre, popular culture and British drama, including Modern American Drama (Cambridge, 1992), Contemporary American Playwrights (Cambridge, 2000), Arthur Miller: A Critical Study (Cambridge, 2005) and Remembering and Imagining the Holocaust: The Chain of Memory (Cambridge, 2006). He is co-editor, with Don Wilmeth, of The Cambridge History of American Theatre, which received the Barnard Hewitt Award for Outstanding Research from the American Society for Theatre Research. He is also an award-winning novelist, has written plays for radio and television, and is a regular radio and television broadcaster.

A complete list of books in the series is at the back of this book
THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO

AUGUST WILSON

EDITED BY

CHRISTOPHER BIGSBY
CONTENTS

List of contributors vii
Note on the text viii
List of plays ix

1 August Wilson: the ground on which he stood
   CHRISTOPHER BIGSBY 1

2 Been here and gone
   JOHN LAHR 28

3 August Wilson’s relationship to black theatre: community,
   aesthetics, history and race
   MARY L. BOGUMIL 52

4 Music and mythology in August Wilson’s plays
   KIM PEREIRA 65

5 Gem of the Ocean and the redemptive power of history
   HARRY J. ELAM, JR. 75

6 Joe Turner’s Come and Gone
   SAMUEL A. HAY 89

7 Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom: cutting the historical record,
   dramatizing a blues CD
   ALAN NADEL 102

8 A piano and its history: family and transcending family
   FELICIA HARDISON LONDRE 113
CONTENTS

9 The tragedy of Seven Guitars
   BRENDA MURPHY
124

10 Safe at home?: August Wilson’s Fences
   MATTHEW ROUDANÉ
135

11 Two Trains Running: blood on the tracks
   STEPHEN BOTTOMS
145

12 Jitney, folklore and responsibility
   DAVID KRASNER
158

13 King Hedley II: in the midst of all this death
   JOAN HERRINGTON
169

14 Radio Golf: the courage of his convictions – survival, success and
   spirituality
   MARGARET BOOKER
183

15 Critics on August Wilson
   DAVID K. SAUER AND JANICE A. SAUER
193

16 An interview with August Wilson
   CHRISTOPHER BIGSBY
202

Index
214
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Before his death in 2005, August Wilson completed his cycle of ten plays, each set in a different decade of the twentieth century. They were not written in sequential order beginning with the 1900s, but for the purposes of this book they are presented chronologically so that it is possible to follow the unfolding story of that century as seen from the perspective of a man now recognized as America’s most powerful and successful African American playwright.

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The interview with August Wilson originally appeared in the first volume of *Writers in Conversation with Christopher Bigsby*, which I edited for the Arthur Miller Centre for American Studies at the University of East Anglia in 2000.

Christopher Bigsby
LIST OF PLAYS

The following list of the ten plays that make up August Wilson’s ‘Pittsburgh Cycle’ indicates the decades in which they are set and the year of first production.

- *Gem of the Ocean* 1900s (2003)
- *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* 1910s (1986)
- *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* 1920s (1984)
- *The Piano Lesson* 1930s (1987)
- *Seven Guitars* 1940s (1995)
- *Fences* 1950s (1985)
- *Two Trains Running* 1960s (1990)
- *King Hedley II* 1980s (1999)