



Returning to familiar ground, Pittsburgh Playwrights artistic director Mark Clayton Southers will direct August Wilson's Pulitzer Prize-winning masterpiece *Fences*, running May 1 – May 31.

The production will reconfirm Southers and Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company as among the foremost interpreters of the work of Pittsburgh's most famous playwright.

Set in the 1950s, *Fences* evokes the early rumblings of the civil rights movement. The central character, Troy Maxson, a middle-aged resident of Pittsburgh's Hill District, is unable to shed the legacy of his failure as a young baseball player. The play follows Troy's struggle to accept the generational changes that allowed his son to succeed in ways Troy never could.

The Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company presents:

Ubuntu Holiday

By Kim El
Directed By Mils James

This gentle but thought-provoking comedy, directed by Mils James, is set at a Kwanzaa celebration interrupted by a distrustful Christian guest. Rancor and controversy threaten to disrupt the otherwise festive atmosphere. However, in the end the joy and good feelings of the season win out.



Starring

Melessie Clark
Paris Crosby
LaMar Darnell Fields
Nadia Locust
Scott Nanji
Sundiata Rice
Nia Washington

December 19-30





From the Artistic Director Mark Clayton Southers

Drawing from my own experience of being fully exposed to theatre at the ripe age of 30, I've always considered theatre the perfect vehicle for change and a great platform to learn about issues and ideas. Kim El's Ubuntu Holiday gives us the audience the opportunity to fully learn about Kwanzaa and its principals in a relaxed theatrical setting where our collected emotions can take these lessons in for a better appreciation and understanding. This well-balanced cast under the meticulous care given by director Mils James has done a

great job bringing Kim El's words to life. Sit back and enjoy the show!

About Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company

Mark Clayton Southers founded Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company in 2003. We began as the resident company of Garfield's Penn Theater, and moved to a 75-seat space at 542 Penn Avenue in the downtown Cultural District in January 2005. In October 2011 we moved again, into the penthouse at 937 Liberty Avenue. Thanks to the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust for finding this exciting new space for us! This space has an elevator and is wheelchair-accessible.

The Mission of Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company

Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company is committed to developing and showcasing the works of local playwrights; from accomplished masters like August Wilson and George S. Kaufman to promising new talents. We seek to nurture a racially and culturally diverse community of playwrights, directors, actors and technical specialists to hone their craft and to network creative opportunities. Finally, we support a racially and culturally diverse management staff and board of directors who, together, promote audiences that reflect the rich variety of our Pittsburgh community. Through such sharing of talents, resources, perspectives and experiences we aspire to provide artistic enlightenment that will strengthen our civic community.

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To stay up on the latest from
Pittsburgh Playwrights

Production Staff

Producer	Mark Clayton Southers
Playwright	Kim El
Director	Mils "MJ" Henderson
Production Stage Manager	Tashia Terry
Assistant Stage Manager	Scott Nanji
Set Design	Mark Clayton Southers
Light Design	Madeline Steineck
Light Technician	Ashley Southers
Sound Design	Wayne Gaines
Sound Technician	Joyce Bell
Original Music	Mils "M.J." James
Track by	Tru Verret-Fleming
Costume/Makeup Design	Cheryl El-Walker
Prop Master	Austin Sills
	Eric A. Smith
Carpenters	Mark Clayton Southers
	Alvin Briskey
Scenic Painter	Alvin Briskey
Posters/Graphic Design	Eric S. Donaldson
Production Consultants	Marti Williams
	Renee Sorrell
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Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company Staff

Founder/Artistic Director	Mark Clayton Southers
Artistic Associate	Monteze Freeland
Managing Director	Eric A. Smith
Business Manager	Lorill Readie
Resident Costumer	Cheryl El-Walker
Resident Sound Designer	Mark Whitehead
Box Office	Carl Southers III
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From the Playwright of Ubuntu Holiday

Kim El is an award-winning Pittsburgh-born playwright, wordsmith, actor, and educator who has a passion for storytelling. Her education includes studying Communications at Duquesne University where she earned a Bachelor's Degree in Journalism. She is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, The dramatist guild and the 2014 Flight Fellowship for Creative Development. In 2013 The New Pittsburgh Courier added Kim to their 50 Women of Excellence roster. Her extensive theatre experience developed from venues such as New Horizon Theater, Kuntu Repertory Theatre, Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre, No Name Players, The Shadow Lounge, Bricolage Production Company and the August Wilson Center. Kim El has

written twelve one-acts: Ubuntu Holiday, What Do You Ink?, King of Spades, You Must be Out of Your Mind, No Kiddin', Speakeasy, Retrospect, Just Fishin', The Sunday God Gave Me, Detention Wish, Habari Gani! Children Celebrating Kwanzaa, and When Souls Whisper. She is also the author of three full-length plays: The Poet's Corner (co-written with KL Brewer), Turnabout and Straightening Combs, her first solo stage performance. Kim is the award recipient for Best Play (2011), Best Director (2008) and Best Supporting Actress (2006) for her work done at the Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Festival in Black and White. In addition to performing and writing, Kim shares her artistic skills educating and mentoring youth at the Jeron X. Grayson Community Center After School Program in the Hill District.

Words from the Playwright

Ubuntu in the Xhosa culture in Africa roughly translates to, "I am who I am because we are who we are." It's like a cultural conscious connecting us to one another. In many parts of Africa, Ubuntu also means "the essence of human kindness". For the past 25 years I have acknowledged the philosophy of Ubuntu and applied it to my participation in Kwanzaa celebrations. It is my intention with this play, Ubuntu Holiday to, stimulate your minds and open your hearts to the true meaning of humanity during the holiday season. Each year the warmth of family Christmases and Kwanzaa memories reminds me that I am blessed to be inspired by my African culture, embraced by my community and uplifted by family and friends. Ubuntu!

Understanding Kwanzaa (First Fruits)

Nguzo Saba (n-GU-zo SAH-bah) refers to the seven principles upon which Kwanzaa is based. There is one principle for each of the seven days of Kwanzaa.

Day 1 - Umoja (oo-MO-jah) means unity.

Day 2 - Kujichagulia (koo-jee-chah-GOO-lee-ah) means self-determination

Day 3 - Ujima (oo-JEE-mah) means collective work and responsibility

Day 4 - Ujamaa (oo-jah-MAH-ah) means cooperative economics

Day 5 - Nia (NEE-ah) means purpose

Day 6 - Kuumba (koo-OOM-bah) means creativity

Day 7 - Imani (ee-MAH-nee) means faith

Habari gani (Ha-ba-ri ga-ni) is the question asked at the start of every Kwanzaa celebration. This is Swahili for "What is the news?" Celebrants answer with the Nguzo Saba (principle) of the day.

Harambee (hah-RAHM-beh) is a call of unity cried out at the end of each nightly celebration, meaning, "Let's pull together!"

Ubuntu Holiday

Act 1

December 25, Present Day
Home of Jean Allen

Act 2

December 26, Present Day
Home of Sharifa Owens

Cast

Jean Allen:	Paris Nakena Crosby
Dionna Allen:	Nadia Locust
Shani Owens:	Nia Washington
Markus Owens:	Sundiata Rice
Sharifa Owens:	Melessie Clark
Amiria Owens:	Lamar Darnell Fields
Winston “Uncle-Brother” Allen:	Scott Nanji

*There will be one 15-minute intermission after Act 1
Restrooms are located on the second floor*

The characters in Ubuntu Holiday are entirely from the imagination of the playwright. They are pure invention. Any resemblance to persons living or dead is coincidental.

Special Thanks to
Hill Dance Academy Theatre



www.5678hdat.org

Ubuntu Holiday Production Bios

Tashia Terry (*Production Stage Manager*) is making her debut as Production Stage Manager at the Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre. The past two years, Tashia has supported her children on their endeavors and never thought about seeking out other opportunities within the theatre. After having a conversation with the wonderful Mils James, she realized that although this job would be a challenge she would trust in her ordered steps and handle the tasks as they came her way. I would like to first thank Mils James, Kim El and the Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company for believing in me. Most importantly I thank my wonderful family for their unwavering support and always having my back at the drop of dime.

Madeleine Steineck (*Lighting Designer*) graduated from Temple University in 2011 with a degree in Theatre: Lighting Design. This will be the third show she has designed for Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company as she designed lights for last season’s productions of *Sold: Renn Woods* in Concert and *Poe’s Last Night*. She also designs lights for various high school and middle school musicals, including *Curtains*, *Hello Dolly!*, *Lucky Stiff*, *Seussical*, and *Man of La Mancha*. She is the resident lighting designer for Mercyhurst University Theatre, having designed *Urinetown: The Musical*, *The Laramie Project*, and *You’re A Good Man, Charlie Brown*. She has designed for Morgantown Dance Studio. She worked as a Master Electrician for Pittsburgh Irish and Classical Theatre last summer and was the Master Electrician for Opera Theatre of Pittsburgh’s Summerfest this past summer.

Wayne Gaines (*Sound Designer*) was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Wayne is a skilled designer/technician with 21 years of experience in audio/visual design and production for television programs, commercials, radio, theatres, feature films, documentaries, arenas/auditoriums and churches. He began his career in sound design and technology with Braddock Films in Pittsburgh, PA. Among his credits is the award-winning documentary, ***Struggles in Steel***. He is also the 2006 Onyx Award winner for his sound design for ***Seven Guitars***, the 2007 winner for ***Sarafina*** and the 2008 winner for ***Good Black Don’t Crack***, all productions staged by Kuntu Repertory Theatre of Pittsburgh, PA. Wayne is pleased to be working with Pittsburgh Playwrights.

Cheryl M. El Walker (*Costume Designer*) is an award-winning costume designer and make-up artist who is also a veteran stage actor from Pittsburgh. Her creative work has been seen in Kim El’s “Straightening Combs” and she has earned several Onyx Awards for Best Costume Design, Best Make-up and Leading Actress, all from the African American Council for the Arts (AACTA). She also received the 2012 Legacy Award from the Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company. Cheryl’s stage performances include the Wilksburg Arts Theatre, New Horizon Theatre, Kuntu Repertory Theatre, PPTCO and most recently with the B.U.S. 8 Tour with Bricolage. Cheryl is an alumna of Point Park University.

Joyce Bell (*Sound Technician*) is making her debut with the Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre as Sound Tech. Joyce has acted and worked as Light Tech with the Kuntu Repertory Theatre. She has also acted in many of Donna Perkins Productions’ theater productions and has performed at the Little Lake Theatre. She gives thanks to Pittsburgh Playwrights Theater, Miles MJ James, Wayne Gaines and God for this opportunity.

We at Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company would love to give special thanks to the following for their continued support:



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From the Director of Ubuntu Holiday

Mils (M.J.) James, a Pittsburgh PA native by way of Washington DC, currently resides in Brooklyn, New York, where he has spent the last nine years. He is a product of the Pittsburgh High School of Creative and Performing Arts and Point Park College. This singer, actor, dancer, choreographer, and director has performed on stages across the world, with credits including "Ramp To Paradise" with Walter Rutledge (Thelma Hill Performing Arts), "Legend of the Venus Hottentot" with Jahari Mayfeild (Emoves/Harlem Stage),

"Going the Distance" (Smithsonian Discovery theatre), "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom" (Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company), "Into The Woods" (Howard Rep.), "The Wiz" directed by Tony award winner and national recording star Billy Porter, "Do Lord Remember Me" directed by Eileen J. Morris (New Horizon Theatre), "Being Beautiful" directed by Reggie Kelley (Karamu House), national of tour of "Lord I'm Coming Home" with Sherman Hemsley and Gabrielle Dennis (of "The Game"), and was featured in the movie "The Temptations". Mils has also had the wonderful opportunity to work with the likes of Dr. Vernell A. Lillie, August Wilson, Rob Penny, Woodie King, Hinton Battle, Paul Carter Harrison, and Jovan Johnson, just to name a few. M.J. just performed with the world-renowned Sandra St. Victor and is currently teaching with Reed Dance and preparing to launch his own company Reflection Theatre Co-op. in the fall of 2015 in NYC.

Thoughts from the Director

Fear and doubt will always reap havoc. Once upon a time someone gave me a chance to "Live" just as someone once gave our great playwright a chance to explore her talents. Just as the characters in this play are given the chance to learn, grow, and reconnect. The same courage that it takes to dream, or to give someone or something a chance, is the courage it takes to admit that you're wrong and decide to make it right. Kwanzaa's principles make this holiday bigger than just 7 days. The values are to be carried 365 days. Although African-based, love and community are colorless. Despite the temperature of the world today, I hope the messages you receive encourage you to be a better person, love harder, and believe with Imani more than you ever have before. Every day we wake up is another chance to get it right. Find your strength in knowledge; find your strength in love.

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Ubuntu Holiday Actor Bios



Sundiata Rice

Sundiata Rice is thrilled to be making his Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre debut with Kim El's production of *Ubuntu Holiday* as Marcus, under the outstanding direction of Mils James! He is currently a freshman at Pittsburgh CAPA. Sundi, as his family calls him, was featured as O, age 12, in *Blood First*, a NaRa Films production which released this year and has theatre credits in *A Raisin in the Sun* (Bricolage Theatre), *Soldier's Heart* (Pittsburgh Playhouse), *Academy of Superheros*, (ACT Theatre). Sundi is very thankful for this opportunity and all the support from his family, friends and the Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre.



Lamar Darnell Fields

Lamar Darnell Fields was born and raised in Pittsburgh PA. Fields began acting in his early teens, but after going to school for, and working in, the music business, he rekindled his love for acting in his late twenties, and made the decision to act full time. Fields has worked with several theatre and film companies working on multiple plays and films, two of which released this year, "The Other Side" and "Blood First", and notable commercials including the "Debt Monkey" commercial, and the "Rosedale Technical Institute" commercial. Fields is continuing to work very hard on furthering his acting career, with multiple projects in the works. He won Best Actor for his performance in the 2012 Black and White Theatre Festival, and was nominated for Best Actor in the 2013 Black and White Theatre Festival.



Melessie Clark

Melessie Clark is thrilled to be making her Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company debut! She is a senior musical theatre major at Point Park University pursuing her Bachelors in Fine Arts. Melessie was last seen in Point Park Conservatory's "21". Other credits include *Hecuba* (Hecuba) and *Chess* ("Walter" Anderson), Pittsburgh Playhouse Jr.'s *The Wind in the Willows* (Chief Weasel), *Huck Finn* (Trio member) and *Yo, Vikings!* (Zinzi). She was also seen in Pinnacle's production of *Tick, Tick...BOOM* and KB Productions' *Hair*. Melessie is the 2014 National American Miss Pennsylvania and was crowned Miss Steeltown at the 2012 Miss Point Park Scholarship pageant, a preliminary to the Miss America Pageant. Melessie would like to thank MJ for the opportunity to tell this story. She would also like to thank her friends and family for their unconditional love and support, and God for His continued blessings and faithfulness.



Nia Washington

Nia Washington is a Pittsburgh native and a senior at Pittsburgh CAPA. She is proud to be in her third production by Kim El under the outstanding direction of Mils James. Nia's credits include *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Just Fishing*, *Straightening Combs*, and *I am Artist*. Nia embraces the opportunity to perform with the Ubuntu ensemble, and thanks Pittsburgh Playwrights for another opportunity to pursue her passion.



Scott Nanji

Scott Nanji was born and raised in Pittsburgh PA. He recently received his Bachelor's Degree in Biological Sciences from the University of Pittsburgh. He is also training at Donna Belajac Actors Studio.

Scott is making his theatrical debut in this production as Brother. Scott loves inspiring others to pursue their dreams and greatest versions of themselves. Telling people to be who they are, chasing after their dreams, he loves performing and bringing joy, humor and love to everyone's life. Special thanks to all of my supporters!



Paris Nakena Crosby

Paris Nakena Crosby was born and raised in the heart of Pittsburgh's Hill District. Paris is a woman known for her plethora of talents and gifts. As a life coach, inspirational speaker, spoken word artist, makeup artist, and singer she danced around the idea of acting. After taking acting classes at Point Park University, she then accepted the challenge of giving oneself to the words of others and bringing characters to life. Paris makes her debut as an actress with the Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre in a Kim El play, under the outstanding direction of Mils James. In conclusion, Paris would like to THANK everyone for their continued support. Her signature says it all: "A touch of Paris, she is Beauty, Love, and Inspiration."



Nadia Locust

Nadia Locust is a 12th grade student known as a color pencil artist, and new to the Pittsburgh Playwrights stage. As a matter of fact this is her first time performing on any theater stage. Nadia wants to thank Mils James for his guidance, discipline and love. To the cast, thank you for being support outside of family. Nadia currently attends Lincoln Park Performing Arts School and hopes to be an evangelist using her art form to bring hope to the world. She would like to thank Kim El for sharing her creative experience and everyone who had some part in support of Ubuntu Holiday.