

PLAYBILL®

Jitney



Presented in Italian
with English supertitles

by August Wilson

Directed by Renzo Carbonera



Pittsburgh 1977

In the midst of the steel industry crisis, for which the city is known worldwide, five drivers, *Becker, Youngblood, Turnbo, Fielding* and *Doub*, struggle to get by. Clinging nostalgically to the past, while seeing only the dark outlines of an uncertain future on the horizon.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, an alternative form of transport to buses and licensed taxis emerged in the predominantly African American neighborhoods of U.S. cities: the "*jitney*". In those neighborhoods, taxis did not circulate; they were too expensive and they refused to pick up Black passengers. The "*jitneys*" operated outside the boundaries of the law, but provided job opportunities for people like our five protagonists, while also offering an essential service to the community.

August Wilson, the most prolific and influential African American playwright of all time, is being translated for the very first time into another language (Italian) and staged with an entirely Black Italian cast.

The stage set is minimal and abstract, designed to focus the gaze on what is said and how it is said, on the shades of meaning enriched by the actors' double roles, on the cinematic side lighting, and on the projections displayed on two vertical, smartphone-like screens.

When Booster, Becker's son, is released after twenty years in prison for murder, a cathartic journey begins, intertwining the language of the street with the syncopated rhythms of jazz and with the classical language of tragedy.

By August Wilson

Directed by Renzo Carbonera

Cast: Miguel Gobbo Diaz,
Federico Lima Roque, Rosanna
Sparapano, Tomiwa Samson
Segun Aina, and Marcos
Piacentini

Assistant director: Leda Kreider
Dramaturgical consultant:
Fabrizio Arcuri
Translation: Angela Soldà
Technical direction: Giorgia
Mascia, Serena Trevisi Marceddu
Lighting: Yann Arthus Hamelin
Sound and video: Filippo Cossu

Produced by Sardegna Teatro,
La Piccionaia
In collaboration with August
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Pittsburgh – European Studies
Center, University of Padova –
DiSLL Department of Linguistic
and Literary Studies

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The Treelawn, The Black Rep,
The August Wilson House,
Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre,
Powerful Long Ladder.

- St. Louis The Black Rep /
Kirkwood Performing Arts Center
May 1st, 2nd and 3rd, 2026
- Powerful Long Ladder /
Treelawn Hall, Cleveland
May 5th and 6th, 2026
- Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre
May 8th, 9th and 10th, 2026

Jitney

Written by August Wilson

Directed by Renzo Carbonera

**Produced by Sardegna Teatro
and La Piccionaia**

**Presented in Italian with
English supertitles**

On Stage

It is early fall, 1977. We are in an illegal taxi stand in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, a *Jitney*. There is a blackboard on which the fares for different parts of the city and the daily numbers of the lottery are written down. Not totally legal.

Next to the blackboard:
Becker's Rules

1. No charging on fares
2. Keep the car clean
3. Don't drink
4. Be kind
5. Rearrange and clean the tools

There is a telephone, a small table with all kinds of magazines, board games, alcoholic beverages, notepads and calculators below; an armchair and a sofa, a few scattered chairs complete the setting.

Context

Since the early decades of the 20th century, an alternative transportation service grows in some predominantly Black American neighborhoods, especially in the northern cities.

It is different from the regular bus and taxi service, which are either too expensive, or don't serve those neighborhoods, or aren't willing to pick up Black people. They are called *Jitneys* or gipsy cabs and operate outside the law, but provide job opportunities and an important service for the local community, similar to the modern Uber. August Wilson takes us inside a *Jitney* station in 1977 Pittsburgh. The stories of the taxi drivers and their passengers alternate with the syncopated rhythm of jazz and street language, questioning how to heal the wounds of the past and have faith in an uncertain future. Through their voices, Wilson lets us discover the stories, conflicts and small victories of an African-American community that, despite the conquests of the civil rights movement, continues to be excluded from the so-called "American dream".

Director's Note

For the first time ever a play by August Wilson, one of the most important American authors and certainly the most prolific and decisive African-American playwright of all time, is translated from the original language into another language, specifically Italian, and most importantly gets staged with an entirely Black Italian cast. Wilson has experimented a lot with his language, African-American vernacular. His rhythm typically harks back to "jazz" and "hip-hop", both in the dialogues and in the long monologues. The rhythm and urban flavor of Wilson's words become an urban rhythm through musicality and sounds. Our experimentation extends the terms, because the stage language is the

one of the Italian translation, in whose adaptation Fabrizio Arcuri collaborated as dramaturgy consultant, but with the intention of getting closer to the street language, being aware of its political and social message. In Wilson, the important things are those who aren't visible, those which happen outside the scenic frame. This creates a strong connection and deepens what we want to pillory: the syndrome of encirclement, the lever of fear enhancing the isolation of minorities in certain communities, the widespread dizziness due to a lack of vision and inability to share, the thoughts that terms like community and isolation may provoke.

_Renzo Carbonera



Miguel Gobbo Diaz – Becker/Shealy

Miguel Gobbo Diaz was born in Santo Domingo, arrived in Italy at the age of three and studied at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia. He worked in theater playing *The Pass* by John Donnelly and acted in some short films and films, obtaining a leading role in *La grande rabbia* in 2016. Since 2018 he has been among the main characters in the Rai 1 TV series *Nero a metà*, alongside Claudio Amendola. In 2021 he plays Rico in the Netflix series *Zero*. He returns to the theater with *Arlecchino!* by Marco Baliani, performed over 120 times in Italy.

Characters

Youngblood,

jitney driver and Vietnam veteran — mid-late twenties

Turnbo,

jitney driver who is always interested in the business of others

Fielding,

jitney driver and former tailor, with a dependency on alcohol

Doub,

longtime *jitney* driver and Korean War veteran

Shealy,

numbers taker who often uses the *jitney* station as his base

Philmore,

local hotel doorman, recurring *jitney* passenger

Becker,

well-respected man who runs the *jitney* station — in his sixties

Booster,

Becker's son, recently released from prison — in his early 40's

Rena,

Youngblood's girlfriend and mother of their young son

Federico Lima Roque – Doub/Fielding

Federico Lima Roque is the first Black Italian actor who attended a national theatre school in 2009, the Silvio D'Amico in Rome and the first who attended a main role on a TV show, *Rex* in 2013. He worked in a dozen of film and TV productions and in over 20 theatre productions with the main Italian National Theaters: Rome, Naples, Genova, Palermo. He has a nomination at the Scenario Prize with *Katzelmacher* in 2013. The monologue *Lampedusa Beach* by Lina Prosa received several international awards and has been performed by Federico over 150 times all over Italy and Europe. He is currently on a Italian tour with a theatre adaptation of *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?*, produced by Teatro Quirino, playing what was Sidney Poitier's role.



Marcos Piacentini – Turno/Booster

Marcos Piacentini attended the Binario 7 acting school, the Centro Teatro Attivo acting school and the Accademia dei Filodrammatici in Milan. He acted in several film and television productions, such as *3/21* by Silvio Soldini, the three seasons of the TV show *Imma Tataranni – Sostituto procuratore and Brennero*. In theater he worked with Walter Malosti in *Cleopatra*, at the Opera Lirica in Florence becoming finalist for the Hystrio Vocal Award.



Rosanna Sparapano – Rena/Philmore

Rosanna Sparapano graduated in 2005 at the Piccolo Teatro School in Milan, working with Luca Ronconi in plays such as the Greek trilogy: *Prometheus Bound, The Bacchae, The Frog* and such as *Infinites* and *The Soldiers*. She was nominated for the Hystrio award in 2005, as the first Afro-descendant actress. In cinema she acted for Luca Lucini in *The woman of my life* and in *Anche se è amore non si vede* by Ficarra and Picone. In *Rwanda* by Riccardo Salvetti she plays the leading role, the film premiered at the Giornate degli Autori at the 75th Venice Film Festival, and won many international awards.



Tomiwa Samson Segun Aina – Youngblood

Tomiwa Samson Segun Aina is born in Lagos, Nigeria, and raised in Parma, Italy. He trained as an actor in Rome, at the Silvio d'Amico National Academy of Dramatic Arts. Among the various theatre company directors he has worked with Motus, Claudio Tolcachir, Leonardo Lidi, Giovanni Ortoleva, and Chiara Malta.





August Wilson

Playwright

August Wilson has been described as “the theatre’s poet of Black America” for giving voice to those who had long gone unheard. He is widely regarded as the most important African American playwright of the twentieth century. A two-time Pulitzer Prize winner (in 1985 for *Fences* and in 1990 for *The Piano Lesson*), he stands as a towering figure in the landscape of American theatre. Passing away in 2005, Wilson left behind an extraordinary legacy, most notably through his *American Century Cycle*: a series of ten plays that offer a comprehensive, decade-by-decade portrait of the African American experience throughout the twentieth century, addressing themes such as exploitation, racial injustice, identity, migration, and discrimination. A cornerstone of Black cultural history, the *Century Cycle* continues to resonate today, with Wilson’s works being embraced by new generations of audiences.

Renzo Carbonera

Director

Renzo Carbonera is an Italian and German citizen and native speaker. He has written and directed about twenty documentaries for cinema and television, all distributed in theaters or broadcast internationally on the main Italian and European networks. His short film *La Penna di Hemingway* premiered at the Giornate degli Autori at the Venice Film Festival. His first feature film, *Resina*, was presented at over thirty international festivals, including 3 in FIAPF Category A (Montreal, Tunis/JCC, Mannheim/Heidelberg). It has been distributed in about twenty countries around the world including the USA, China, Korea,

UK, France, Germany. It is one of the most popular Italian movies in 2018, getting sixth in the annual ranking and collecting a nomination for the Golden Globes and the Golden Ciaks 2019. His second film, *Takeaway* was released in Italian theaters with Fandango and Rai Cinema in 2022. It premiered at the Rome Film Festival and got nominated for the Golden Globes 2022. Renzo has been nominated four times and won one Italian Video Game Award as the writer of the game *The Rude Awakening*. For *Jitney* he collaborated with Italian theatre greats Fabrizio Arcuri as dramaturg and Tindaro Granata as actor coach.

Fabrizio Arcuri

Dramaturgy Consultant

Fabrizio Arcuri, is Artistic Director of the City of Verona’s theatre seasons, since 2025. He worked as assistant director to Luca Ronconi from 2005 to 2008 and he has held leading roles in major Italian theatre institutions, including Teatro della Tosse in Genoa and Teatro Stabile di Torino; he has curated large-scale cultural projects for the City of Rome. His work as a director focuses on contemporary European dramaturgy and has been presented by institutions such as Teatro di Roma, the Venice Biennale, Volksbühne Berlin, and the Residenztheater Munich. He has received numerous awards, including the Ubu Award, the Hystrio Prize for Directing, and the Radicondoli “Masters of Theatre” Award. He is a theatre director and curator, founder and artistic director of *Accademia degli Artefatti*. From 2006 to 2020, he was Artistic Director of the Short Theatre Festival in Rome and has been director of the International Festival of Literature at the Forum of Augustus since 2009.

My *Jitney* Diary

1

April 2019. I'm on a tour in the United States to distribute my first film, *Resina*. Among the stops there is also the city of Pittsburgh. An unplanned stop, one I insisted on. In Italy we know what the national sport is, and it's also my passion—I go to the stadium every Sunday. But I also have another passion: American football. And I support the Pittsburgh Steelers. I'm one of the founders of the Italian Steelers Nation, a sort of long-distance ultras group that was created here in Italy. Why the Steelers? Well, in these cases people always say that you don't choose the team you support—the team chooses you.

Anyway, I'm in Pittsburgh and my driver is taking me from the hotel to the cinema for the screening of *Resina*. We pass by a house and he says to me, "This is the house where August Wilson was born!" Silence. "Do you know who August Wilson is?" ... Awkwardness. "No..." What do you mean no?! "He's the greatest Black playwright of all time!" I take the hit. The screening goes well, almost 500 people. Afterwards the organizer asks me what I want to do the next day before catching my flight. There's the African American Cultural Center, the August Wilson Center, or... the Steelers stadium. Well, obviously the Steelers stadium—I have to buy at least a T-shirt! But this Wilson guy, the driver mentioned him too... maybe on the way to the airport we could stop by a bookstore and see if I can find something? OK, OK.

The next morning she picks me up. "Come on, we're late. I think we'll only manage to go to the stadium. But I found this for you—it's his first play." And that's how, on the plane from Pittsburgh to Detroit, I read *Jitney* by August Wilson in one sitting.

2

November 2021. For three days now, flights between Italy and the USA have started again, after almost two years of shutdown due to Covid. I've just arrived in Pittsburgh. In the meantime I've met *La Piccionaia*, I've created a connection between the University of Pittsburgh and the University of Padua. Together with their language studies departments we translated *Jitney* into Italian.

I returned to Pittsburgh to see Wilson's personal archive, which in fact is not yet open to the public but was made accessible to me thanks to the kindness of his widow. I was the first person allowed to peek into his boxes. It's one of those things that makes your heart leap into your throat—you feel like you're violating something very intimate and private, yet once you start you can't stop yourself.

This time I'm in Pittsburgh right in the middle of football season. The whole city is decorated in the black and yellow colors of the Steelers. You can really feel that football here is a religion. Due to an unfortunate coincidence, I won't be in town on the days of the home games, so I console myself by watching one at the house of Sala Udin, a childhood friend of Wilson's, with whom he founded his first company and the first actor to play the role of Becker in *Jitney*. Wilson later wrote nine more plays, all set in the Black community, all except one in The Hills. Sala, on the other hand, became a civil rights activist.

3

To get to Sala's place, who has moved back to live in the old neighborhood of The Hills, I take a public bus. But now it's late at night and Sala refuses to let me go out on the street alone. What to do? He would take me to the hotel himself, but he can't see well in the dark and his wife flat-out refuses. Well, the time has come for my first ride in a *Jitney*. Six dollars for a taxi ride that would have cost at least 20, plus the life story of the driver, who never expected he'd be driving a white guy around The Hills, and who tells me how driving a *Jitney* saved him from certain prison. He had to wait a long time—you can't become a *Jitney* driver unless you quit your job or another driver quits or dies... a bit like gondoliers in Venice. And now he earns more than he did when he was dealing drugs on street corners.

October 2022. For the third time I visit Pittsburgh, after a road trip from Los Angeles. I cross deep America, Native American reservations, national parks. In Pittsburgh I meet Constanza Romero Wilson, August Wilson's wife. She invites me to eat at the William Penn Hotel, where he took her the first time to impress her. I eat a fish sandwich, like the ones Wilson loved to eat so much at the Oyster House, an old-fashioned place right in the city center, where it feels like being catapulted back to the 1950s, into a workers' social club of the steel mills.

In this place, still today frequented mostly by White people, in his autobiographical monologue *How I Learned What I Learned*, Wilson describes an episode of discrimination he suffered about 50 years ago—complete with the owner pulling a shotgun out from under the counter. I go to the Oyster House too, and I have to say, the fried fish sandwiches are spectacular. Then a middle-aged man walks in, and I feel like I'm reliving the scene described by Wilson, only this time the shotgun doesn't appear. Some things really don't want to change.

The next day, I finally manage to see a Steelers home game. Against Tom Brady's Tampa Bay team, a narrow 20–18 victory after four straight losses. A release and a sigh of relief for the whole city.

August Wilson House - Pittsburgh

The August Wilson House was derelict when August visited in 1999 and still derelict when he died in 2005. It was landmarked and initial restoration stopped the decay. Eventually Pittsburgh foundations and government supported restoration of the outer shell, and programming began. Our guiding principle comes from August himself, who often said he didn't want the house to be a museum. If it was going to be preserved, he said, it should be "useful." Thus our mission to celebrate the literary and personal legacy of August Wilson and serve as an arts center to nurture the historic Hill District community and arts practitioners and scholars influenced by his work. The August Wilson House aims first to celebrate the rich store of personal memory and community history into which August dipped the ladle of his transforming art, and second to extend his legacy by advancing the art and culture of the African diaspora and impacting the cultural landscape of the Hill and beyond. Local and national artists and scholars will be provided immersive work, research, and community exchange opportunities in return for partnering with Hill District organizations and Pittsburgh arts groups and universities.

<https://augustwilsonhouse.org>

Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre - Pittsburgh

Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre was established in 2003 at the Penn Theater by Mark Clayton Southers. In 2005, we opened a 75 seat theater in the Cultural District of Downtown Pittsburgh, and after staging plays in a variety of settings from dedicated downtown theatre spaces to empty lots, hillsides and even on film, in 2022 we moved to our current space in Pittsburgh's historic Hill District. We have produced 23 seasons of plays that serve two roles, to focus on local playwrights, both past masters like August Wilson and contemporary writers, and to use the stage to examine the Black experience.

<https://www.pghplaywrights.org>

Powerful Long Ladder - Cleveland

Powerful Long Ladder was founded in 2017. The theatre company is based in Cleveland Ohio. Since its inception, they have produced over 10 productions in the Cleveland area and have also been part of programming in surrounding States. Artistic and producing director Terrence Spivey has been the artistic director of Karamu House, the first Black Theatre in America with over 130 years of history, for over a decade. Key Programs: The Ultimate Reach-Youth after-school Program: Students experience the fun and creativity of Theatre Games, movement and imagination. Specialized programs such as "Hip Hop Aesop" and "Mime-chella" allow students to tell their own stories using music, costumes, and spoken word.

The Black Rep - St. Louis

The Black Rep, a 45-year-old legacy Black arts organization, is committed to producing, re-imagining, and commissioning work written by Black playwrights and creating opportunities for new voices and youth. Founded by Producing Director Ron Himes, the vision for The Black Rep continues: a more equitable distribution of opportunities and resources for Black professionals and students in the theatre; improved representation on and back-stage in the theatre industry; and a fostered community culture of support and mentorship for those who will follow. In 2017 Ron Himes is awarded The Larry Leon Hamlin Producer Award at the National Black Theatre Festival, an award that recognizes the great contributions made by producers to the American Theatre and the entertainment industry. By 2020 the Black Rep is presented with the August Wilson American Century Cycle Award, honoring companies that have staged all 10 of Wilson's works. With that production *The Company* has now produced seven of the plays in chronological order, three of which have completed the cycle twice.

<https://www.theblackrep.org>

Sardegna Teatro - Cagliari

Teatro di Sardegna (TDS) is the only TRIC (Theatre of Relevant Cultural Interest) in Sardinia and one of Italy's leading cultural institutions, internationally recognised for its role in contemporary theatre production. Accredited by the Italian Ministry of Culture in 2015, TDS supports artistic creation through extended rehearsal periods, enabling artists to experiment across multiple languages, media and socio-cultural contexts. Alongside *Macbettu* by Alessandro Serra—on international tour for eight consecutive years and recipient of numerous awards—many TDS productions have achieved global recognition. These include *WILD / SELVAGEM* by Marco Martins, an international co-production awarded the *Globo de Ouro* for Best Theatre Production (Portugal), and *Vizita* by Davide Iodice, winner of major prizes in Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina. In 2024, *Tragudia*, created entirely in Paulilatino, premiered at Arena del Sole in Bologna and received prestigious European awards at the MESS International Theatre Festival in Sarajevo. TDS operates through a network-based, participatory governance model and is an active partner of international production and cooperation networks, developing long-term partnerships that support co-productions, artistic mobility and knowledge exchange. Based in Cagliari (TAB Sa Manifattura) and active across the island, TDS acts as a platform for artistic research, cultural innovation and dialogue between territories, communities and global artistic practices.

<https://sardeginateatro.it>

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