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I would like to thank God for all that he has done for me at this point in life. I would like to thank my mother for being my greatest fan and motivator in the world. I would like to thank my wife Joni Wilson for standing beside me through thick and the thin and raising our five beautiful children while I was in graduate school working to provide a better life for our family. I would like to thank Mr. Luther Wells for not giving up after 16 years. Wow! I would also like to thank Dr. Pinkney for everything he has done and for pushing me to do my best and Yanci for helping to shape my voice. To my family, friends, supporters, and everyone not named, this show was for you.
In September of 2010 I was presented the task of performing the role of Solly Two Kings in August Wilson’s *Gem of the Ocean*. After reading the script, I quickly discovered that this character’s age was double my age. I also discovered that we shared similar backgrounds. My task for this production was to effectively utilize the techniques that I have gained in my graduate career while allowing the ancestral energy to guide me through most of my character discoveries. Portraying this character demanded many acting techniques. To ground my approach I began with Stanislavsky. I considered his use of given circumstances to find out everything that I could find out about Solly and his relationships with the other characters of the play. After finding the given circumstances, I was able to find the voice of Solly using Arthur Lessac’s method of exploring consonant, structure, and tonal energy; his movement using Alexander and Laban techniques; and his objectives using David Mamet’s approach. My mission in this production was to change the atmosphere every time Solly made an entrance. One of his final lines is “…the people gone know about Solly Two Kings.” With these techniques applied, his mission was accomplished.
Chapter 1

History of Gem of the Ocean

*Gem of the Ocean* is chronologically the first in a ten play cycle created by August Wilson to narrate the African American experience, although it was the penultimate of the author’s dramas. Set in 1904, it examines the transition from slavery to life as a free man. Wilson’s first play of the cycle was originally *Joe Turner’s Come and Gone*. In this play Harold Loomis searches for his identity and has visions of dry bones walking on top of the water. August Wilson believed that many of his African ancestors were at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean: “Somewhere in the Atlantic Ocean lie the bones of millions of Africans who died before reaching the New World. The flesh of their flesh populates the Americas from Mississippi to Montevideo” (Wilson, *Gem* xiv). He supported his theory with the Bible to show the connection of the African Americans with his Old-Testament prophecy:

> The hand of the Lord was on me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley it was full of bones. He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry… This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. (Ezekiel 37. 1-3,5,6)

Loomis represented the dry bones and did not find his identity until he cut himself, which showed his ability to bleed. In *Gem of the Ocean*, Solly speaks of the importance of bleeding: “Since then I ain’t never been afraid of losing some blood. I said they gonna
have to kill me. I can give up some blood all day long if it’ll keep coming back. Your
blood is like a river it don’t stop till you dead” (Wilson, *Gem* 59).

For *Gem*, Citizen Barlow does not cut himself to find his identity; instead he is
taken on a journey to the City of Bones. The City of Bones is the name of the location
where the bones of the slaves reside. It is not until Barlow travels to the city that he is
able to free himself of the self-instilled torment he is experiencing. He has to come clean
with himself and confess his faults. James 5:16 states that we must “confess our sins
before men.” It is after Barlow’s confession that he is able to enter into the City of
Bones. Christianity tells us that in order to enter into the Kingdom of God, a person has
to confess their sins. The City of Bones is the Africans’ heaven and the place that they
looked forward to after they died. Solly has a plan of being a gatekeeper to the City after
he dies. Aunt Ester anticipates the reunion with her mother after she arrives.

Once someone travels to the City of Bones, they are given their freedom and
identity. August Wilson felt that he needed to write about the African experience in order
to keep the stories alive. The blues and Romare Bearden motivated him. “I saw the
blues as a cultural response of a nonliterate people whose history and culture were rooted
in the oral tradition. The response was to a world that was not of their making, in which
the idea of themselves as a people of imminent worth that belied their recent history was
continually assaulted. It was a world that did not recognize their gods, their manners,
their mores. It despised their ethos and refused to even recognize humanity” (Wilson,
*Gem* ix).
Chapter 2

Introduction of Solly

*Gem of the Ocean*, by August Wilson, is a play that contains historical information located in the text to help actors create their characters. Wilson wrote this play to begin his ten-play cycle after the first eight were already written and produced. He used names, numbers, and different items to symbolize events from the past. More importantly, Wilson wrote about the African American experience while incorporating biblical stories and characters that he learned at an early age. For example, Aunt Ester’s house address is 1839 Wylie Avenue. Historically, in 1839, the slaves aboard the Amistad rebelled and commandeered the ship. Also in 1839, 100 buildings were burned in Alabama, and the event was referred to as the “Great Fire of Alabama.” In the context of the play, the slaves’ rebellion and their willingness to fight, is what Aunt Ester, Eli, and Solly Two Kings expects from the new generation. Solly Two Kings setting fire to the mill directly symbolizes the “Great Fire of Alabama” because Alabama is Solly’s home.

Solly Two Kings was symbolic of King David and King Solomon. These were two very distinct characters in the bible that both had very rich histories. King Solomon’s spirit was shown through Solly’s wisdom and King David was recognized for his spiritual connections as a youth and willingness to fight. I Sam. 16 tells the story of King Saul and how a harmful spirit tormented him:

Now the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and a harmful spirit from the Lord tormented him. And Saul’s servants said to him, “Behold now, a harmful spirit from God is tormenting you. Let our lord now command your servants who are
before you to seek out a man who is skillful in playing the lyre, and when the harmful spirit from God is upon you, he will play it and you will be well…

Therefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, “Send me David your son, who is with the sheep…” And David came to Saul and entered his service. And Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor-bearer. And Saul sent to Jesse, saying “Let David remain in my service, for he has found favor in my sight.” And whenever the harmful spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand. So Saul was refreshed and was well, and the harmful spirit departed from him. (I Sam. 16. 14-18, 19, 21-23)

It is evident from this passage that David’s presence and his ability to play an instrument was all that was needed in order to calm Saul’s fear. Solly’s character shares this quality as well. The audience is first introduced to him while he is singing “I Belong to the Band.” Wilson was able to create him in such a way that every time he makes an entrance, he changes the mood of the house. He is shown to be very high-spirited and unafraid of anything or anyone. Citizen takes on characteristics of Saul for him in this situation. Citizen is haunted by the death of Garry Brown because of his contribution to the cause of Brown’s death.

Solly speaks to Citizen throughout the play on the importance of being brave and the ability to fight for what he believes in. These very intimate conversations revolve around the strength needed to gain importance as a black man as well as remembering the importance of religion. During one of these conversations, he tells Citizen how he changed his name from Alfred Jackson to Solly Two Kings. As he is speaking with him, Citizen asks him about the stick he is carrying. He replies; “Lots of people carry sticks.
Ain’t you never heard that “sticks and stones can break my bones but names can never hurt me.” This a bone breaker. I tried carrying stones but they was too heavy” (Wilson, Gem 27). This response shows the brilliance of Wilson’s writing in using the Bible as a reference. The story of David in the Bible includes a passage where he had to fight a giant:

When the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. And David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone and slung the Philistine on his forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the ground. So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. (I Sam. 17. 48-50)

Solly says that he used to carry stones. I understood this to show that as Solly aged, he matured more and more. He realizes that he does not have to fight head to head anymore. There was always a systematic way to get what he wanted without having to kill anyone in the process. The Biblical David eventually became King: “David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years” (II Sam. 5. 4). Solly first became free in 1857 at the age of twenty. He remains free until his death at the age of sixty-seven. His freedom came eight years before Abraham Lincoln emancipated the slaves in 1865. If we use the year of 1865, this would make his reign as a free man 39 years, which was nearly the same amount of time of King David’s reign.

For his protection Solly always carries a walking stick. In addition to the stick, he also carries a piece of iron that was once around his ankle during the time of his slavery. He carries the iron with him everywhere he went as a reminder of his days as a slave and
his time as a free man. In II Sam. 23, David is quoted as saying, “But worthless men are all like thorns that are thrown away, for they cannot be taken with the hand; But the man who touches them arms himself with iron and the shaft of a spear, and they are utterly consumed with fire” (6,7). This again shows how Wilson was using biblical research in his development of these characters in order to remain as true to life as possible, in a fairy tale land.

King Solomon’s contribution to Wilson’s character came in the form of wisdom. King Solomon was King David’s son who inherited the throne of Israel after David. King Solomon pleased God and for this he was granted anything that he wanted:

And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude. Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?” It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. And God said to him, “Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what his right, Behold I do now do according to your word. Behold I give you a discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you. (I Kings 1. 7-12)

Solly does not care about the riches of the world. He sells dog feces because of its purity, but eventually quits because of the need for leaders throughout the black community. He
feels that the people were suffering because of the law. He believes that the law was written to keep the black man suppressed and he is to have no part of it. He understands that freedom will come at a high price and that someone has to pay it. He is not afraid of death. He believes that after death life began again and he is on a winning side as long as he fights for his rights.

Wilson also married black culture with the Bible by using King Solomon. King Solomon writes in Solomon 1. 5, and 6A: “I am dark, but lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the curtains of Solomon. Do not gaze at me because I am dark…” Like King Solomon, Solly does not believe that he should be treated any differently because of his skin tone. He feels that his history is rich and must not be forgotten. He feels that the fight for freedom is a continual fight resulting in a lot of blood shed. “And the battlefield’s bloody! The field of battle is always bloody. It can’t be no other way” (Wilson, Gem59). He dies on the battlefield, a death that is honorable and remembered as a death in the fight for freedom and equality.
Chapter 3

Solly’s Voice

To create a voice for Solly, I relied heavily on Arthur Lessac’s *Use and Training of the Human Voice*, as well as using my own vocal qualities that I gathered from receiving from a very southern upbringing. My southern accent is strong and for this production I made sure to utilize it. Solly is from Alabama, therefore it was beneficial for him to have a southern inflection when he spoke.

Lessac believed that there were three types of energies needed to speak effectively, structural, tonal, and consonant-led. Structural and tonal energy deals with the vowels while consonant energy deals with the consonants. “The term structural action is to be taken literally and dually: It means both the muscular actions that control the adjustable sound box—the oral cavity, cheeks, and lips—and the kinesthetic action of perceiving these muscular actions and controlling them through sensory recall” (Lessac 56). This required my face and the mouth to be working simultaneously in order to produce great sounds. This also provided the means for proper articulation and ensured that all of Solly’s words would be heard, as long as I structured all of his words to reach the audience.

The second type of energy Lessac stresses is tonal energy. “The vibrations of the vocal sound waves transmitted through bone conduction—and it means our action of feeling those tonal vibrations and controlling them through sensory recall. These actions are of primary concern in the development of both the speaking and the singing voice” (Lessac 79). Wilson uses specific words to explain to the audience how Solly feels. “And the battlefield’s bloody! The field of battle is always bloody. It can’t be no other way.”
(Wilson 59) The tonal options would be in the words “field”, “is”, “always”, “no”, and “way.” Feeling the bone vibrations while saying these words helped me to “taste” the words and convey the meaning with the call. Using these words helped me to attend to the action at hand instead of falling into a fraudulent state of showing emotions in order to cause the audience to feel an emotion.

The third type of energy Lessac stresses is the consonant energy.

Consonants are the interpreters that convey the meaning of speech—they make the spoken word intelligible. Consonants are the instruments that provide musical accompaniment to speech—they produce rhythmic patterns, melodies, and sustained tonal colors. Consonants provide contrast and variations—to the single sustained note of the vowels, they bring percussion and sound effects. (Lessac, Practical Approach 129)

If Solly was to be heard then it was important for him to be understood. Wilson used consonant combinations that were both percussive and sustainable to help Solly manipulate the language. Though the line “Dark was the night and cold was the night” (Wilson 56), has structural energy, it is not until the consonants are given their full value that the sentence becomes alive. The words “dark”, “cold”, “and”, and “ground,” all have double energy options that can be played. The “f” and the “d” in “cold” went from a sustainable consonant to a percussive, the “n” in “and” and the “d” in “and” went from a sustainable to a percussive, in addition to the “n” in “and” the “d” in “ground”. This line is so strong in Solly’s text that the director decided to add musical accompaniment to follow the story that Solly tells in memory of his slavery days. Using Lessac’s approach made this line very effective in setting the mood for the environment that Solly
Lessac believed strongly that these three types of energy are needed in order to effectively speak and be understood. He felt that as long as you properly trained your vocal muscles, the energies would increase.

If you use the three energies with full vibratory, kinesthetic, and orchestral feeling, you will find that you have at your command the ability to add to your own speech any one or all of the admirable qualities inherent in these other languages and cultures; yet you will not, to the slightest degree, sound like an imitator of British, French, Italian, or Russian Speech. You will sound like an American whose speech is thoroughly indigenous while at the same time a product, a reflection, and an intrinsic part of your individual culture and personal pride. (Lessac, Practical Approach 23)

Whenever Solly speaks, he demands to be heard. He likes to tell stories and those around him enjoy listening to him. My goal was to make his speech melodic and exciting. He is introduced while singing I Belong to the Band. While telling a story of the current events that are happening at the mill, he mentioned that the “people” had refused to return to work. This excites him and the consonants in his text helped me to convey his excitement: “Look like every Negro in Pittsburg down there.” “Look” ends in “k” which is a percussive that required me to stop temporarily. The “k” in “like” was connected to “every” which allowed me to play on the tonal energy in “Negro” before sustaining the “n” in “in,” as well as the “n,” in “down.” I was given the option to play on the “s” in “was,” however I did not feel as if it was a strong enough option. To type the sentence for meaning would look like this: “Look like every NegrO in Pittsburg
The creation of Solly’s character would have been nearly impossible for me if I had not learned the techniques of Arthur Lessac. I knew that I had the responsibility of setting and changing the moods in each scene in which Solly appeared. While learning the lines I would often sing my words to help me enjoy the speech. I also presented the text as if I was a southern preacher or Dr. Martin Luther King. Dr. King did a remarkable job of leading his people through the sound of his voice. He colored his words. If he enjoyed the taste of a word he made sure to sustain it as long as possible in order to show his congregation that the word had meaning. Dr. King had a dream and he made sure to make it known through his use of language. Solly Two Kings also has a dream; he wants all black people to stand up for what they believe in. He speaks loudly and does not care who hears him. As he and the other characters take Citizen Barlow on the journey to the City of Bones, Wilson wrote a song for Solly to sing. Although Solly sings a song at the beginning of the play, I felt it was not as important for Solly to sound like a professional singer as it was for him to be understood. The task was for him to sing the song as an underscore to what is being discussed between Aunt Esther and Citizen Barlow. The words to the song are, “I got a home in the graveyard, remember Me, Going down to the graveyard, Remember Me. Going down to the Graveyard, remember me. I got a home in the graveyard, remember me.” (Wilson, *Gem* 65) As Lessac remarks, “Singing is sustained speaking. Anytime you voice a well-executed call and sustain it on various pitches, you are singing—you are making beautiful, artistic tones” (Lessac *Practical Approach* 128). I played my vowels both structurally and tonally. “I got a home in the graveyard” paints a story that is capitalized by the energy given to each word. “I” is a
structural vowel #6, “got” uses the structure #4, “home” uses the structure #21, as well as being tonal, and “graveyard” uses the +y as in “grave”, which is also tonal as well as the #51 in “yard”. Paying close attention to the energies of these words helped me to sing them and color them all together.
Chapter 4
Solly’s Physical Composition

Solly’s physical appearance was of utmost importance for me. I felt that the most effective way to bring him to life was to create specific physical ailments to help show the effects of old age. It was also important for me to apply makeup that would be believable. To aid with the makeup, I grew out my hair, beard and mustache. Growing my hair helped me to age it more easily with grey hair coloring. I heightened the intensity of my natural wrinkles to make me look older. To help with physicality I utilized Alexander and Laban techniques as well as drawing on the mannerisms of my grandfather.

In order to establish physicality for Solly I used constructive conscious control. I remained aware of the Alexander Technique’s injunction to take “responsibility for the intelligent use of the self through the application of inhibition and direction.” (Gelb 164) I decided to make Solly a very active person whenever he was on his feet. In the text, he is a very active person who roams the city finding and selling “pure.” Every time I sat down I made sure to massage my joints to show how his joints would ache from immobility. This also helped to show the effects of numerous trips from Alabama to Canada. Solly speaks about being bitten by dogs as well, so I also massaged the areas where the dogs might have torn through the muscle. I would also massage my hands to help smoothen out the aches that are associated with arthritis. Whenever I massaged my hands and joints, I made sure to make my movements very subtle, almost unconscious.

It is clear throughout the play that there is tension between Caesar and Solly. At the end of the play, Solly attacks Caesar and Caesar retaliates by shooting and killing...
him. The use of the Alexander techniques allowed me to not end-gain but to attend to the means-whereby. By end-gaining, “grasping for results without thoughtful attention to process” (Gelb 164), I would rob the audience of feeling the tension build up to the point that Solly attacks Caesar. Instead I made sure to attend to the means-whereby, “attention to the focus on the appropriate process to achieve a goal” (Gelb 164). Each time Caesar and Solly were on stage together, I used this as a perfect opportunity to help support the means-whereby and build the tension. In Act I Scene 3, Caesar makes his entrance yelling and screaming about the riot that happened at the mill. Moments before his entrance, Solly has come in and told the story about the mill riot. Caesar’s description differs from the report of Solly. Instead of having Solly demonstrate his unhappiness with Caesar, I had him focus on the bowl of beans, totally ignoring Caesar. This showed a level of disrespect towards Caesar when he demanded respect more than anything else.

For my psychological gesture I used the techniques of Laban. Laban created a method of efforts that helped me to connect with the psychology of Solly through his actions. Solly’s character is direct, strong and sustained. According to the Laban Techniques a direct, strong, and sustained approach would be a type of “press.” Every time Solly spoke and moved it was imperative for him to remember to press his way through. For example, Solly’s line, “They tried to chain me down but I beat them on that one” (Wilson, Gem 57) is an example of Solly’s perseverance and willingness to press his way through all situations.

During the summer of 2010, I had the opportunity to use my grandfather as a primary source for the study of Solly. My grandfather is 88 years old and full of energy. On one occasion, I went over to his house to cut his grass. As I was cutting his grass, he
stood in his driveway and told me exactly how he wanted it cut. He did not care how I
had planned to cut it; he wanted it to be done his way. I found this to be a direct parallel
to the elders of the house in *Gem of the Ocean*. The characters all feel that Black Mary is
stubborn for the simple fact that she wants to do things her way. After I cut his grass, my
grandfather asked me to go and buy him some chocolate milk. When I returned with the
milk he decided to sit me down and talk about the old days. He had great pride in
reliving the stories of the past. He would smile and visualize the story before he would
start to tell it. I used this approach every time Solly gave Citizen a life lesson. I also
noticed that when he drank his milk he would prepare his mouth for the sensation that the
milk would give him as he opened his mouth to receive its sweet taste.

Applying the techniques of Alexander and Laban as well as integrating the
mannerisms of my grandfather were the main movement skills I utilized. It was
important that I did not manufacture ailments that were not sustainable or believable.
These movements in conjunction with properly applied makeup, helped me to create
Solly’s look.
Chapter 5

Solly’s Performance

To perform the role of Solly, I chose to work in a manner that included many different methods. I did not score my script. I feel as though Shakespeare’s text is the only text that makes scoring mandatory. I believe that scoring takes away from an actor’s ability to fully experience the world of the character. Konstantin Stanislavsky teaches us that a character has objectives, obstacles and tactics. The objectives are what the characters want most in the play, with the tactics being the actions that are performed to achieve the objectives. I believe this wholeheartedly. However, I also believe that the obstacles are not important and are merely factors that imprison an actor and refrain him from having constructive use of self while on stage. David Mamet replaces the obstacle with the “as if.” I used Stanislavsky’s method for the analysis of the script, Mamet’s approach for the analysis of the scene, and improvisational rules for the delivery of the text and the actions. To analyze the script, I read it every day in hopes that discoveries would happen.

Stanislavsky, as well as his disciples, believed that the actor’s job was to slowly transform into the character that he is playing. Lee Strasberg expounded on Stanislavsky’s method with the belief that an actor must experience an emotional recall. However, the idea has been misunderstood. “The basic idea of affective memory is not emotional recall but that the actor’s emotion on the stage should never be really real. It always should be only remembered emotion. An emotion that happens right now spontaneously is out of control… Remembered emotion is something that the actor can create and repeat; without that the thing is hectic.” (Brestoff 110) With emotional recall
the ability to improvise is hampered. Repeating emotions is synonymous with trying to recreate a moment on stage. During the production, Dr. Pinkney repeatedly told us to not try to recreate the previous rehearsal but to “allow the ancestors to be present and with us.” This is impossible with the use of emotional recall.

With Mamet’s approach I was able to effectively attend to the duties of the character. Method acting teaches the actor to do an extensive analysis of the character. It is my belief that once an actor has fully analyzed the character he has done himself a disservice. Throughout my career I have been taught to discover and create a background for my character. This has taught me about the character; however, it also subsequently caused me to stay in my head during the performance. With Mamet, I have learned to release the imaginary back story of the character and utilize myself and my wants and desires.

The first thing that was needed was for me to dissect the script in a manner that would make the entire production about Solly Two Kings. I decided to change the title to “The Love Story of Aunt Ester and Solly.” I devised a way to make this apparent every time I appeared on stage. Wilson also supported my theory with the line: “I would marry her if I wasn’t in love with somebody else.” Whenever Solly is in the house and Aunt Esther enters, she makes sure to speak to him. Pleasing Aunt Ester became my primary objective. Solly wants her and she becomes the primary reason for his visits. After establishing my relationship with Aunt Ester, I had to explore Solly’s bonds with the other cast members.

Eli is Solly’s best friend. Wilson systematically detailed the nature of their
relationship. Although Solly is one of the loudest characters, Eli never delivers his most famous line to him, “This a peaceful house.” Solly and Eli are both conductors of the Underground Railroad. They are responsible for leading many slaves to freedom. They are two characters being played by actors half their age. It was most imperative for me to establish traits for Solly that were distinctly different from Eli as well as incorporate similarities that would show how the two characters matured together through life. After finding Solly’s voice, I had to find chronic ailments in his body that would show signs of life in a different manner than Eli. The actor playing Eli decided to give his character a walking cane. Once I saw him with the cane, I used Solly’s line “I’ve been bit nine times by dogs,” to show the pain from the bites. I also used Eli’s line about the journey being 800 miles to show the wear and tear in Solly’s knees. The actor that played Eli made me believe. His delivery was not as if he was delivering lines but as if his best friend actually died.

Black Mary is stubborn and Solly admires this about her. On Solly’s first entrance, he comes in and has a friendly dispute with her about dog feces. Solly knew that Black Mary does not want the “pure” to be in the house, but more importantly, he sees this as a way to tease and play with her. Solly needs her to read and write for him because of his lack of formal education. She also does his laundry for him. Wilson wrote Solly in as a type of comedic relief and he uses Black Mary for the center of his jokes. Solly sees promise in Black Mary and knows that she is in the house to carry on the legacy of the new black woman, a woman with attitude.

As soon as Solly lays eyes on Citizen Barlow he sees promise in him. Solly loves to teach and share his experiences. Citizen is a young version of Solly. My choice was
to make him Solly’s son. Citizen is a fighter and Solly admires this about him. They share similar backgrounds; they are both from Alabama and they are both running from the law.

Caesar is Solly’s antagonist. Solly dislikes him strongly, but he is smart about the way he shows it. Caesar wants for everyone to fear him as well as respect him. Solly respects him but fears no one. It was important for me to show that Solly did not fear Caesar. The best opportunity came when Caesar tries to intimidate. When Citizen pushes the coin back to Caesar, Solly laughs. This is normally a time to build tension on stage between the actors; however, I felt that this was an ideal time to show Caesar that no one feared him. Solly eventually injures Caesar, with the knowledge that Caesar will retaliate and the wisdom of knowing that Citizen is ready to stand in his place.

Solly never has much interaction with Selig; nevertheless, it is obvious that Solly trusts him. Selig visits the house frequently and brings things for the house members. Selig is also willing to take Solly out of reach of Caesar. It is my belief that Selig was the only white man that Solly had any dealings with.

Knowing Solly’s relationships with each of the cast members was the most important information that was needed in order to find out his wants needs and desires. August Wilson wrote in all of the given circumstances that were needed for Solly and made them very obvious by having Solly to tell his life story throughout the entire production. When all of the text is joined with the voice, movements and research of the character, an actor is then ready to bring Solly to life.
In conclusion, the character of Solly required a lot of research both book knowledge and personal experience. Wilson created a deep character with roots to Biblical characters. In order to prepare for this role, Lessac, Alexander, Laban, Stanislavsky, and Strasberg were all studied in order to make the best character possible. Specific choices, such as rubbing my joints to show old age, were made to shed light on the hard life of Solly. Wilson was able to tie historical events to the story to make it more realistic. This concept allowed the audience to relate and evoke emotions from Solly in every one of his scenes. The audience showed its acceptance of Solly by giving him an ovation any time that he exited the stage. The truest form of support came when Solly died. The energy as I lay on the table was overwhelming. I could feel the hurt that the cast members and the audience were experiencing from the loss of a loved one. Overall, I felt that I created a very believable character who was welcomed by everyone he encountered.
Photos

By TF Guntrup

Top Picture: Standing-Eli (Ryan Johnson-Travis), Kneeling-Citizen Barlow (Troy McCray) Seated-Solly Two Kings (Reginald L. Wilson) Bottom Picture: Left-Solly Two Kings (Reginald L. Wilson) Right-Aunt Esther (Anedra Johnson)
Bibliography


Biographical Sketch

Reginald “Reggie Lee” Wilson is a 3rd Year MFA candidate for acting at The University of Florida. He received his undergraduate degree from Florida A&M University (FAMU) where he majored in Theatre Performance and minored in Spanish.

His show credits at FAMU include A Soldier’s Play, Dearly Departed, Zooman and the Sign, Lysistrata, Medea, Jitney, My Emperor’s New Clothes, and Home. His show credits at UF include Aghëdidi, George Washington’s Boy, Glengarry Glen Ross, Streamers and 2 semesters with The Signs of Life. While at UF he also directed his original play, Scrambled Eggs, as a work in progress and starred in the independent project entitled Chronophobia. His film credits at UF include Space Has No Idea, Crazy, and Queen of Hearts. He is thrilled to have another opportunity to tell one of August Wilson’s stories.