

TAPROOT THEATRE



C O M P A N Y

Scott L. Nolte
Producing Artistic Director

Mailing Address
P.O. Box 30946
Seattle, Washington 98113

Administrative Office
312 North 85th St., Suite 103
Seattle, Washington 98103
206.781.9705
(Fax) 206.297.6882

Box Office
204 North 85th St.
Seattle, Washington 98103
206.781.9707
(Fax) 206.706.1502

E-mail
info@taproottheatre.org

www.taproottheatre.org

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CONTACT:
Daytona Strong
Communications Manager
206-529-3676
daytona@taproottheatre.org

TAPROOT THEATRE OPENS 2009 SEASON WITH REGIONAL PREMIERE OF *GEE'S BEND*

**Critically-acclaimed play highlights African American journey
of the past century during Black History Month**

SEATTLE – December 31, 2008 – Taproot Theatre Company opens its 2009 Mainstage season in January with the regional premiere of Elyzabeth Gregory Wilder's celebrated play, *Gee's Bend*. A story of courage and hope spanning over 60 years in the African American community of Gee's Bend, Alabama, *Gee's Bend*, directed by Karen Lund, opens on January 30 and runs through February 28, with low-price previews on January 28 & 29, plus a Pay-What-You-Can performance on February 4.

Taproot Theatre is hosting a series of special events during the run of *Gee's Bend*, including a special appearance by several quilters from Gee's Bend, Alabama, at the post-play discussion on February 18; behind-the-scenes preview events at the Greenwood library (January 17) and the Northwest African American Museum (January 24); and post-play appearances by the Pacific Northwest African American Quilters (Wednesdays, February 4-25), who built a quilt that will be seen at Taproot Theatre. That association is also providing several other quilts to be displayed and auctioned off during the run of *Gee's Bend*.

Corresponding with Black History Month, *Gee's Bend* captures the rich story of the women of Gee's Bend, Alabama, where discarded rags, scraps and bits of thread are pieced into works of art. Their compelling stories, like the spirituals they sing and the quilts they create, form a striking patchwork of the African American journey of the past century.

"I think this play comes at the perfect time in our country's history... especially with the tough economic issues ahead for everyone," said Lund. "The people of Gee's Bend faced these same issues repeatedly and have prevailed. With President Obama

being sworn in, it's also a great time for us to look back at the tragedy of our past racial relations and begin to celebrate how far we've come."

About *Gee's Bend*

Gee's Bend is the celebrated play that won the playwright the 2008 M. Elizabeth Osborn New Play Award from the American Theatre Critics Association. It premiered at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival in January 2007, and has received strong positive audience response.

The play speaks to the courage and hope of people who've fought for equality in times of segregation, and those who've persevered through economic difficulties. During the time the play is set, the people of *Gee's Bend* are so poor they reuse scraps of fabric to create quilts and put newspaper on their walls to keep out the drafts. The main character, Sadie, is inspired when she encounters Martin Luther King, Jr., and is determined to take a stand for equality, no matter the cost.

"It's very encouraging to see that this community has repeatedly faced challenges and triumphed over them, and that this small rural area has become world renowned for the way the people stand up against every type of problem—from slavery to economic depression to racial discrimination, and even now to modernity and how they're dealing with modern times," said Lund.

Gee's Bend features a talented cast of Taproot newcomers and familiar faces, including Samantha Rund as Sadie; Tracy Michelle Hughes; Geoffery Simmons, last seen at Taproot Theatre as Jim in last summer's *Big River: The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*; and Faith Russell, who will be remembered for her role in Taproot's production of *Doubt: A Parable*. The production team includes scenic and sound designer Mark Lund, costume designer Sarah Burch Gordon and lighting designer Richard Schaeffer. Anne Hitt serves as stage manager and Katrina Moore as dramaturg. Edd Key is the musical director.

Gee's Bend is sponsored in part by the Tacoma Art Museum; their generous support is providing the resources for the women of *Gee's Bend*, Alabama, to be present at Taproot Theatre's post-play discussion on February 18. *Gee's Bend* is staged in partnership with the Northwest African American Museum. Support for Taproot Theatre's 2009 season is generously provided by 4Culture; ArtsFund; The Charles Simonyi Fund for Arts and Sciences; PONCHO; and Washington State Arts Commission. Thanks to Romeo's Pizza and Pasta, our Special Thursday Pizza Nights sponsor.

ABOUT TAPROOT THEATRE COMPANY

Taproot Theatre Company is a professional, non-profit theatre company with a multi-faceted production program. Founded in 1976, Taproot Theatre serves the Pacific Northwest with Mainstage Productions, Touring Productions and Acting Studio. Taproot exists to create theatre that explores the beauty and questions of life while bringing hope to our search for meaning. Taproot Theatre Company is a member of Theatre Communications Group (TCG), Theatre Puget Sound (TPS), and the Greenwood-Phinney Chamber of Commerce.

***Gee's Bend* Fact Sheet**

WHAT:

Gee's Bend
By Elyzabeth Gregory Wilder
Directed by Karen Lund

January 30-February 28
Previews January 28 & 29

PLAY DESCRIPTION: This critically-acclaimed play captures the rich story of the women of Gee's Bend, Alabama, where discarded rags, scraps and bits of thread are pieced into works of art. Their compelling stories, like the spirituals they sing and the quilts they create, form a striking patchwork of the African-American journey of the past century.

WHEN: Friday, January 30, through Saturday, February 28, with low-price previews January 28 & 29. Pay-What-You-Can (PWYC) performance on Wednesday, February 4. Opening Night with Reception on Friday, January 30.

WHERE: Taproot Theatre, 204 N. 85th St. in Seattle.

TICKETS: Wednesday and Thursday evenings and Saturday matinees, \$26-28; Friday and Saturday evenings, \$30-33; preview performances, \$20-22; Student/Senior discount of \$2 off per ticket; ages 25 and under, \$10. Senior matinee performance on February 4 is \$20.

For tickets contact Taproot Theatre's box office at (206) 781-9707 or call Ticketmaster at (206) 292-ARTS. Group rates are available. For groups, call (206) 781-9708.

Tickets for the Pay-What-You-Can performance on February 4 go on sale at 5:00 p.m. day of show at the box office. In addition, a limited supply of \$10 tickets will be offered from 12:00 to 5:00 p.m. for that evening's performance.

SCHEDULE: Wednesday and Thursday, 7:30 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 8:00 p.m.; Saturday matinee, 2:00 p.m.

CALENDAR:

Sat.	January 17	5:00 p.m.	Behind-the-scenes look at <i>Gee's Bend</i> at the Greenwood Library
Sat.	January 24	5:00 p.m.	Inside <i>Gee's Bend</i> at the Northwest African American Museum
Wed.	January 28	7:30 p.m.	Preview
Thurs.	January 29	7:30 p.m.	Preview
Fri.	January 30	8:00 p.m.	Opening Night
Sat.	January 31	2:00 p.m.	
Sat.	January 31	8:00 p.m.	
Wed.	February 4	2:00 p.m.	Senior Matinee
Wed.	February 4	7:30 p.m.	PWYC Performance, Post-Play Discussion (<i>featuring quilters from the Pacific Northwest African American Quilters</i>)
Thurs.	February 5	7:30 p.m.	
Fri.	February 6	8:00 p.m.	
Sat.	February 7	2:00 p.m.	
Sat.	February 7	8:00 p.m.	

Wed.	February 11	7:30 p.m.	Post-Play Discussion (<i>featuring quilters from the Pacific Northwest African American Quilters</i>)
Thurs.	February 12	7:30 p.m.	
Fri.	February 13	8:00 p.m.	
Sat.	February 14	2:00 p.m.	
Sat.	February 14	8:00 p.m.	
Wed.	February 18	7:30 p.m.	Post-Play Discussion (<i>featuring women from Gee's Bend, AL, & quilters from the Pacific Northwest African American quilters</i>)
Thurs.	February 19	7:30 p.m.	
Fri.	February 20	8:00 p.m.	
Sat.	February 21	2:00 p.m.	
Sat.	February 21	8:00 p.m.	
Wed.	February 25	7:30 p.m.	Post-Play Discussion (<i>featuring quilters from the Pacific Northwest African American Quilters</i>)
Thurs.	February 26	7:30 p.m.	
Fri.	February 27	8:00 p.m.	
Sat.	February 28	2:00 p.m.	
Sat.	February 28	8:00 p.m.	Closing Night