



For Immediate Release
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History Theatre is proud to present

The Highwaymen

A searing look at the price of progress premieres February 4, 2017

SAINT PAUL, MN – History Theatre presents ***The Highwaymen***, written by Josh Wilder and directed by Jamil Jude. This powerful new drama, premiering February 4-26, 2017, will explore the dynamics surrounding the decision that shattered the lives of thousands of middle-class residents and changed the face of Saint Paul forever.

It's 1956. The construction of Interstate 94 destroyed the thriving, tight-knit Rondo neighborhood where homes, stores and business one stood. The new freeway tore through the heart of St. Paul's largest African-American community.

An expressway linking the Twin Cities' downtowns was long desired. In the end two routes were considered. The first was along St. Anthony Ave., running through the Rondo neighborhood. The second was located further north. Even though the Rondo option required the removal of far more residential buildings, the St. Paul City Council approved this route in 1947. This practice—tearing down Black neighborhoods for “urban renewal” or freeway construction—was repeated in many American cities in the 1950s. (Minnesota Historical Society)

“The history of Rondo is a beautiful, hopeful, tragic and necessary,” said Wilder, a native of Philadelphia. “It's the other side of history that's not taught nationwide. To some it's just a footnote, but it's essential and deserves a place on the American stage – especially knowing how the construction I-94 took so much away. Most Minnesotans, young and old, aren't fully aware of the memories they drive over when they commute on I-94 and quite frankly, it's a huge problem. I couldn't turn away from why Rondo had to change so drastically when there were options for the placement of the highway. Rondo didn't have to be torn apart, but it was.”

As one of the nation's brightest young playwrights, Wilder wanted to reveal the decision-making process and question why the community was virtually excluded from it. “This search for the truth is at the heart of *The Highwaymen*. The lens is switched around and it examines the men behind the closed doors that impacted Rondo forever and the community leaders of Rondo who did their very best to save it.”

Although the story is now more than 60 years in the past, this is one of the most controversial subjects in Minnesota history. “The play couldn't be more relevant as communities of color continue to be left out of the decision-making process,” shares Ron Peluso, History Theatre Artistic Director.

Jude says the play is about the invisible process of city planning and public policy, about the people who were kept out of the room. “They were made to feel invisible, about the homes that were destroyed and literally made invisible.”

The cast features **Kevin D. West**, **Rex Isom, Jr.**, **Darrick Mosley**, **E.J. Subkoviak**, **Peter Thomson**, and **Jim Detmar**. Design team includes **Trevor Bowen** (costumes), **Wrara Plesoiu** (set), **Wu Chen Khoo** (lighting), **Topher Pirkl** (sound), and **Abbee Warmboe** (properties).

The Highwaymen runs February 4-26. For more information, visit www.historytheatre.com.

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The Highwaymen

(See page 3-4 for complete performance calendar listing and special events).

Opens: Saturday, February 4, 2017 Closes: Sunday, February 26, 2017

TICKETS:

Adults: **\$30-\$40**; Seniors (60+ years): **\$28-\$38**. Adults (Under 30): **\$30** (offer good by phone only);

Students (college ID): **\$15** (offer good by phone only); Children (up to 18): **\$10**

Discount rates are available for groups of 10 or more. Call 651-292-4320 or groups@historytheatre.com

History Theatre Box Office at 651-292-4323 or www.historytheatre.com/tickets/

Location: History Theatre, 30 East 10th Street, St. Paul, MN 55101

For directions and parking information visit: http://www.historytheatre.com/directions_and_parking/

PLAY DESCRIPTION:

1956. The construction of Interstate 94 destroyed the thriving, tight-knit Rondo neighborhood where homes, stores and businesses once stood. The new freeway tore through the heart of St. Paul's largest African-American community. This powerful new drama explores the dynamics surrounding the decision-making process that shattered the lives of thousands of middle-class residents and changed the face of St. Paul forever.

Production Photos are available by request. Email pr@historytheatre.com

ABOUT RONDO:

In the 1930s, Rondo Avenue was at the heart of St. Paul's largest African American neighborhood that was displaced in the 1960s by freeway construction. African Americans whose families had lived in Minnesota for decades and others who were just arriving from the South made up a vibrant, vital community that was in many ways independent of the white society around it. The construction of I-94 shattered this tight-knit community, displaced thousands of African Americans into a racially segregated city and a discriminatory housing market, and erased a now-legendary neighborhood. While the construction of I-94 radically changed the landscape of the neighborhood, the community of Rondo still exists and its persistence and growth are celebrated through events like Rondo Days and the Jazz Festival.

About History Theatre

Since 1978, History Theatre has been one of the nation's most prolific incubators of original plays. In recent years, History Theatre has staged new works by Jeffrey Hatcher, Lee Blessing, Melanie Marnich, Craig Wright, Kim Hines, Dorie Baizley, John Olive, Kira Obolensky, and more.

From the celebratory *Wellstone!* to the dark, complex *Piece of the Rope* about Minnesota's first public execution and the hilarious *Glensheen: The Musical* about an infamous Minnesota murder, History Theatre has moved Minnesotans to rediscover, relive, and respect every piece of their history. More than 200,000 students have connected with history through matinee performances and theatre arts residencies led by History Theatre actor/teachers.

Accessibility

History Theatre is equipped with an FM hearing enhancement system. We offer ASL interpreted and Audio Described performances. We have complimentary wheelchairs for those patrons who need extra assistance into the building. The handicap-accessible entrance is on Cedar St. Just inside the entrance is an elevator that will take patrons to the theatre level. Patrons are asked to indicate any special needs that when ordering tickets.

The Highwaymen

Performance Schedule, February 4-26, 2017

Location: 30 E 10th Street, St. Paul MN 55101

Box Office phone: 651-292-4323

Website: www.historytheatre.com

Thursday, February 2	PREVIEW	7:30 p.m.
Friday, February 3	PREVIEW	7:30 p.m.
Saturday, February 4	Pre-show Reception OPENING Post-show Reception	6-7:15 p.m. 7:30 p.m.
Sunday, February 5	<i>Afterthoughts: From Page to Stage</i>	2:00 p.m. 4:00 p.m.
Thursday, February 9		10:00 a.m. 7:30 p.m.
Friday, February 10		7:30 p.m.
Saturday, February 11		7:30 p.m.
Sunday, February 12	<i>Afterthoughts: Road to 94</i>	2:00 p.m. ASL/AD 4:00 p.m.
Thursday, February 16		7:30 p.m.
Friday, February 17		7:30 p.m.
Saturday, February 18		7:30 p.m. OC
Sunday, February 19	<i>Afterthoughts: Behind the Scenes</i>	2:00 p.m. OC 4:00 p.m.
Thursday, February 23		7:30 p.m.
Friday, February 24		7:30 p.m.
Saturday, February 25		7:30 p.m.
Sunday, February 26	CLOSING <i>Afterthoughts: Keeping Rondo Alive</i>	2:00 p.m. 4:00 p.m.

AD/ASL = Audio Description & American Sign Language interpreted performance
OC = Open Captioning

Special Events – The Highwaymen

February 4, 6-7:15pm: Opening Night Pre-Show Reception

Co-sponsors: History Theatre and Twin Cities Radio Network

In celebration of Black History Month, public is welcome to join a reception with music and conversation about the play and Rondo neighborhood. Neighborhood and community groups have been invited.

Afterthoughts (February 5, 12, 19, 26)

A lively post-show talk after Sunday 2 p.m. matinees.

February 5: From Page to Stage

Playwright Josh Wilder and Director Jamil Jude

Jamil Jude is a freelance director and producer in the Twin Cities. Locally he has directed for Park Square Theatre, Theatre in the Round, History Theatre, Daleko Arts and Freshwater Theatre and has assistant director credits at the Guthrie, Pillsbury House, Children's Theatre Company and Mixed Blood Theatre.

Josh Wilder is a playwright from Philadelphia. His work has been developed at The Fire This Time Festival, Playwrights' Center, Pillsbury House+Theater, History Theatre, New York Theatre Workshop, The Drama League, Company One, Oregon Shakespeare Festival and The O'Neill National Playwrights Conference. He is a former Jerome Fellow and Many Voices Fellow at The Playwrights' Center and has been in residence at The Royal Court Theatre. Josh is a MFA candidate in Playwriting at Yale School of Drama.

February 12: Road to 94

Commissioner of Transportation Charles A. Zelle and Marvin Anderson, co-founder of Rondo Ave. Inc. and former Minnesota State Law Librarian

They will discuss the construction of I-94, its positive and negative impacts, relevance to the Rondo community. The discussion will focus on construction of I-94, its positive and negative impacts, relevance to the Rondo Community.

At the Remember Rondo ceremony two years ago, Commissioner Zelle shared: "You know I stand before you on behalf of the state and the many people of the Department of Transportation to actually commit to a new era where we do put people ahead highways, and community ahead of cars," Zelle said.

Charles A. Zelle was appointed Commissioner of the Minn. Department of Transportation on Dec. 15, 2012 by Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton. He began the job on Jan. 15, 2013. MnDOT is the Minnesota state agency charged with managing and maintaining the state's multi-modal transportation system.

Marvin Roger Anderson grew up in the western end of Rondo Avenue in St. Paul. His organization, Rondo Ave. Inc., along with other people who grew up in the neighborhood, decided they wanted to move forward as they celebrate Rondo Days, so they organized a ceremony designed to help do that.

February 19: Behind the Scenes

Cast of *The Highwaymen*

February 26: Keeping Rondo Alive

Frank White, Old Rondo resident, Community Advocate, Author of "They Played for the Love of the Game, Untold Stories of Black Baseball in Minnesota"

Frank grew up a half block from Western and St. Anthony. He watched the construction workers tear down homes, the large earth movers shape what would become I-94 and change the southern slope of Rondo. In 2013, Frank worked with the City of St. Paul and St. Paul Historical Preservation to install Old Rondo signs at Ravoux and St. Anthony and Marion and St. Anthony, Frank has many stories, growing up playing baseball at Ober Boys Club and had a paper route as a teenager.

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