



Rose Maxon (Nikki Fayton) leans over her husband, Troy (Chester Dunton) after he is knocked to the ground by their son. Tension arose when Troy confronted his wife with his infidelity.

Play portrays chaos of a world without black inventions

By Evonne Martyn

Did you know that air conditioners, weight scales, irons, incandescent lamps, mops, and street sweepers were all invented by African Americans?

A play at College of the Albemarle on Feb. 12, *1,001 Black Inventions* is a comedy production that tells the story of Black-Americans who had the ingenuity to make improvements to their existence.

Other inventions by African Americans include: jump ropes, traffic lights, fire extinguishers, pencil sharpeners, elevators, and fountain pens.

Pin Point, the company that presented the play, gave a lively performance through both acts. The characters came to life under their direction and portrayals.

Act I introduces three prominent Black inventors: Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, who performed the first open heart surgery; Jan Ernst Matzeliger, who invented the machine to make shoes; George Washington Carver and his innovations with the peanut, sweet potato, and pecan; and Benjamin Banneker, who made the first clock.

African-Americans also invented ironing boards, folding chairs, dust pans, horsehoes, refrigerated trucks, and refrigerators.

Act II presents an average American family: mom, pop, and the required two children. The family is going through the dinner routine and using the many black inventions.

The stage goes black as the father

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enters the Twilight Zone.

The same scene is played over again with the father trying to live in a world with no black inventions. The only problem with this is, when he tries to explain to his family how his day went, they don't understand. You see, they never lived in a world with black inventions.

You can imagine the results. Total chaos. No one understands the other and the family thinks the father is off his rocker.

Underneath the comedy the play makes a serious point: You really can't exist in a world without black inventions, which also include oil stoves, machine guns, lawn sprinklers, lawn mowers, golf tees, and fire escape ladders.

Pin Point grabbed the audiences' attention and kept it through the whole play. The audience sympathizes with the father when he almost gets run over by a car because there were no traffic lights. Pin Point is a five member production company founded by Ersky Freeman. Freeman is also director and resident playwright.

Freeman and his company have also performed, *Portraits In Black*, a drama illustrating the lives of Marian Anderson, Martin Luther King, and Joe Louis.

Pin Point productions have been viewed on stage, televised in 47 states, and in over 700 schools, they have won numerous awards for "Excellence in the Arts."

U. Players turn in fine performances in Wilson's *Fences*

By Tarsha White

The University Players' February presentation of August's *Wilson's Fences* was a gripping drama about the pain of being black in America. *Fences*, set in Pittsburgh in 1957, tells the story of a black family's struggles and hardships. The action revolves around the egotistical and bitter character of Troy Maxon, played by Chester Dunton. Maxon, a former star of the Negro baseball league, now finds himself working as a garbageman.

The story opens with Troy and his friend Bono (Bobby Lewis) sitting in the yard drinking gin and talking about the events of the day.

Troy and Bono's relationship has spanned thirty-some years. Bono's long-time admiration of Troy's honesty and strength is the basis of their friendship.

In the first few scenes, Troy and his wife Rose (Nikki Fayton) seem to have a great relationship. But as the action unfolds it is clear that something had gone wrong somewhere. Rose is actually afraid of Troy and everything she does is only to please him.

Rose, the strongest figure in the play, has a great love for her family and is always the one who settles disputes.

There is tension, too, between Troy and his sons, Lyons (David Scott Gibson), and Cory (Eric Skinner). Being very ambitious and athletic, Cory strives to become a professional football player. Because of this, Cory could never see eye-to-eye with his father.

"The white man ain't gonna let him get nowhere with that football," says Troy when the subject is brought up.

Troy is also disappointed in Lyons, who wants to become a musician.

Lyons, who doesn't like taking orders, refuses to work for someone else. "I don't wanna be punching nobody's time clock," he says.

Then there is Troy's younger brother, Gabriel. Injured in World War II he has a metal plate in his head. Gabe carries an old trumpet tied around his waist and believes with every fiber of his being that he is the Archangel Gabriel.

The plot thickens when Troy finds out that the woman he has been carrying on an affair with, Alberta, has become pregnant with his child. He finally decides to tell Rose about her and expects her to help him take raise the child.

Later, Rose and Troy find out that Alberta died while giving birth to the baby girl, Raynell, and Troy is forced to take the child. He then pleads with Rose to give the child "a mother." Rose finally gives in out of pity for the child and

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decides to keep it.

"From right now.... this child got a mother. But you're a womanless man," says Rose, and from then on Rose and Troy's marriage is one of bitter silence.

Chester Dunton turns out a great performance in *Fences*, displaying consummate skill in both comedy and drama. Dunton is remembered for his fine performances in *Fortinbras*, *Bus Stop*, and *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*.

Nikki Fayton's portrayal of the self-sacrificing Rose was credible and appealing. With such acting credits as *The King and I*, *The Sound of Music*, and *The Killing of Satan's Wife* at Norfolk State University it is no surprise that Fayton was a favorite to many of the viewers of *Fences*. Fayton has received "Best Actress" nomination from *Folio*, a major entertainment magazine,

Eric Skinner and David Scott Gibson both make their acting debut in *Fences*. Skinner performed brilliantly in this demanding role of Cory, acting out a broad range of emotions toward his father.

Gibson's performance as Lyons was equally good, although his character was somewhat less demanding than Skinner's.

Bobby J. Lewis, a biology professor at ECSU, performs his second role with the University Players in *Fences*. He is also remembered for his role as the Judge in *Hedda Gabler*.

Cordell Garrett performs his first acting role in *Fences*, as well. Garrett's character, Gabriel, added humor to the play. Garrett did an outstanding job of playing such a difficult role, since Gabriel is a mentally unstable character.

Debra Armstrong performed her role as Raynell with ease.

Randy J. Berry is to be commended for his work on the professionally executed scenery and lighting, which was appropriate for the time of the play. It was realistic and the lighting seemed flawless during the performance.

Fences author August Wilson is the winner of the 1990 Pulitzer Prize for *The Piano Lesson* and the 1987 Pulitzer Prize for *Fences*. His other plays produced on Broadway are *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* (produced by the Players in 1990) and *Two Trains Running*.

Soon after its Broadway opening in 1987, *Fences* earned the praises of major critics in New York. The play was also the recipient of the Tony, the New York Critics Circle award, and The Pulitzer Prize for Best Play of the Year.