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Emory University's Rose Library to Honor 50th Anniversary of the Negro Ensemble Company



Atlanta, Ga.: The Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library (Rose Library) and Theater Emory are proud to host the third and final touring celebration of the famed classic Negro Ensemble Company (NEC) and its visionary co-founders Robert Hooks, Gerald Krone, and Douglas Turner Ward.

The event will be held on October 24th from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., in White Hall 208, Emory University, and includes a 50th anniversary reunion of NEC alums who were involved with the NEC during Douglas Turner Ward's artistic leadership; excerpts from the NEC's award-winning and critically acclaimed canon of plays; and a moderated panel discussion about the innovative legacy and initiation of NEC with the company's three co-founders, members from the original repertory company, and other NEC alums. A special screening will be held of the Legacy Leaders of Color Video Project, a production of Theatre Communications Group and Project1VOICE that chronicles the stories of founding leaders of theatre of color, including Ward.

Douglas Turner Ward, African American actor and playwright, was born in Burnside, Louisiana, on May 5, 1930. In 1967, he co-founded the Negro Ensemble Company, which produced plays written and performed by black artists about

black life in America and the Caribbean. In 1992, funding problems forced the closure of the Company, but it reopened in 2005 and continues to operate in New York City.

“Douglas Turner Ward played a tremendous role in developing the actors and directors that came through the Negro Ensemble Company,” says Pellom McDaniels III, curator of African American collections at the Rose Library. “We’re fortunate to have an extensive collection of his papers that includes scripts, correspondence, Negro Ensemble Company records, photographs, and printed material.”

Scripts include plays, screenplays, and teleplays primarily produced by the NEC and written by such artists as Ray Aranha, Gus Edwards, Charles Fuller, Paul Carter Harrison, Leslie E. Lee, Barbara and Carlton Molette, Derek Walcott, Joseph Walker, and Douglas Turner Ward.

“The classic Negro Ensemble—under the firm artistic guidance of co-founder Douglas Turner Ward—nurtured, cultivated, and inspired generations of talented professionals from all backgrounds in all aspects of the entertainment industry and beyond,” says Erich McMillan-McCall, CEO/Founder of Project1 VOICE. He sees the event as celebrating “the robust future of the American theater by honoring, celebrating and acknowledging its richly diverse past.”

“Our theatre field and broader culture owe an enormous debt to the artistry and activism of these extraordinary leaders,” said Teresa Eyring, executive director of Theatre Communications Group. “We hope these videos and screening events not only honor these nine leaders, but raise awareness more broadly of the essential role played by theatres of color in our field.”

The Rose Library event represents an ongoing effort to connect the archives more deeply to the community and to engage more artists with the collections. Brent Glenn, artistic director of Theater Emory, calls the collections a “goldmine in our backyard.”

“The African American collection has given us the tools and materials to build something, and we’re having conversations now about how to engage our faculty and the greater Atlanta community more deeply with these theater resources,” says Glenn.

This NEC event is partially funded at Emory by the Richard Long Fund in support of African American collections. Long, who died in 2013, joined the Emory facul-

ty in 1987 as Atticus Haygood Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies in the Graduate Institute of the Liberal Arts. Known for his wide-ranging interests and scholarly pursuits, Long chaired the African American Collections Advisory Board at the Rose Library. He was known for both his erudition and generosity, according to Randall Burkett, research curator for African American Collections.

Project1VOICE, Inc. is a nonprofit performing arts service organization based in New York City. Its mission is to support and promote the American theater, specifically the narrative of and by people of African descent. Theatre Communications Group is the national organization for not-for-profit theatre in the U.S.

About the Rose Library

The Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, & Rare Book Library collects and connects stories of human experience, promotes access and learning, and offers opportunities for dialogue for all wise hearts who seek knowledge. Located in the Woodruff Library Building of Emory University, students, scholars, and other visitors can browse rare books, read original letters and manuscripts, and listen to rare recordings. The Rose Library's renowned collections span more than 800 years of human history—with particular depth in modern literature, African American history, Emory University history, and the history of Georgia and the South. To learn more visit <http://rose.library.emory.edu>.

For media inquiries, contact:

Holly Crenshaw

Phone: 404-727-0211

Email: holly.crenshaw@emory.edu

Elaine Justice

Phone: 404-727-0643

Email: elaine.justice@emory.edu