INTERNATIONAL BLACK THEATRE FESTIVAL®

A NC Black Rep Experience

JUL 27 — WINSTON-SALEM, NC — AUG 1

2026

SEARCHING FOR WILLIE LYNCH

Layon Gray American Theatre Company

Tuesday, July 28, 2:00pm
Tuesday, July 28, 8:00pm
Wednesday, July 29, 2:00pm
Wednesday, July 29, 8:00pm

UNCS
Agnes de Mille Theatre

PHENOMENAL WOMAN, MAYA ANGELOU: A FIRESIDE CHAT • THE BIRTHRIGHT SESSION-LATE NIGHT WITH MATELYN ALICIA • HOLY GROUND • JITNEY • TOPDOG/UNDERDOG • BLOOMING IN DRY SEASON RUNNING FOR MY LIFE • IN THE BLACK • BERTA, BERTA • ART OF WISE SEARCHING FOR WILLIE LYNCH • PURLIE VICTORIOUS • FENCES • BEING BLACK ON BROADWAY • THE LEGEND OF BUSTER NEAL MICHAEL COLYAR'S LATE NIGHT COMEDY • THE TRIAL OF ONE SHORT-SIGHTED BLACK WOMAN VS. MAMMY LOUISE AND SAFREETA MAE • A FIDDLER'S TALE • TERRY STEELE SINGS LUTHER VANDROSS • STORIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE NATIONAL YOUTH TALENT SHOWCASE • MIDNIGHT POETRY JAM MARVIN: THE MARVIN GAYE REVUE • CROSS THAT RIVER • EVERYBODY JOE TURNER'S COME AND GONE • SIZWE BANZI IS DEAD • THE GREAT LOVER • THE BLUEST EYE • THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD ANATOMY OF AN OPERA: NIA IMANI FRANKLIN • STEAL AWAY HOME OUR STORIES...WE ARE, BECAUSE WE WERE • REIMAGINED VOLUME III: YOUNG THANG • PHENOMENAL WOMAN, MAYA ANGELOU: A FIRESIDE CHAT • THE BIRTHRIGHT SESSION-LATE NIGHT WITH MATELYN ALICIA HOLY GROUND • JITNEY • TOPDOG/UNDERDOG • BLOOMING IN DRY SEASON • RUNNING FOR MY LIFE • IN THE BLACK • BERTA, BERTA • ART OF WISE • SEARCHING FOR WILLIE LYNCH • PURLIE VICTORIOUS • FENCES • BEING BLACK ON BROADWAY • THE LEGEND OF BUSTER NEAL • MICHAEL COLYAR'S LATE NIGHT COMEDY • THE TRIAL OF ONE SHORT-SIGHTED BLACK WOMAN VS. MAMMY LOUISE AND SAFREETA MAE • A FIDDLER'S TALE • TERRY STEELE SINGS LUTHER VANDROSS • STORIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE • NATIONAL YOUTH TALENT SHOWCASE • MIDNIGHT POETRY JAM • MARVIN: THE MARVIN GAYE REVUE • CROSS THAT RIVER • EVERYBODY • JOE TURNER'S COME AND GONE • SIZWE BANZI IS DEAD • THE GREAT LOVER • THE BLUEST EYE • THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD • ANATOMY OF AN OPERA: NIA IMANI FRANKLIN • STEAL AWAY HOME • OUR STORIES...WE ARE, BECAUSE WE WERE • REIMAGINED VOLUME III: YOUNG THANG PHENOMENAL WOMAN, MAYA ANGELOU: A FIRESIDE CHAT • THE BIRTHRIGHT SESSION-LATE NIGHT WITH MATELYN ALICIA • HOLY GROUND • JITNEY • TOPDOG/UNDERDOG • BLOOMING IN DRY SEASON RUNNING FOR MY LIFE • IN THE BLACK • BERTA, BERTA • ART OF WISE SEARCHING FOR WILLIE LYNCH • PURLIE VICTORIOUS • FENCES • BEING BLACK ON BROADWAY • THE LEGEND OF BUSTER NEAL MICHAEL COLYAR'S LATE NIGHT COMEDY • THE TRIAL OF ONE SHORT-SIGHTED BLACK WOMAN VS. MAMMY LOUISE AND SAFREETA MAE • A FIDDLER'S TALE • TERRY STEELE SINGS LUTHER VANDROSS • STORIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE NATIONAL YOUTH TALENT SHOWCASE • MIDNIGHT POETRY JAM MARVIN: THE MARVIN GAYE REVUE • CROSS THAT RIVER • EVERYBODY JOE TURNER'S COME AND GONE • SIZWE BANZI IS DEAD • THE GREAT LOVER • THE BLUEST EYE • THEIR EYES

INTERNATIONAL BLACK THEATRE FESTIVAL®

A NC Black Rep Experience

Winston-Salem | The City of Winston-Salem salutes the 2026 International Black Theatre Festival.

SEARCHING FOR WILLIE LYNCH

Layon Gray American Theatre Company
Written and Directed by LAYON GRAY

Layon Gray American Theatre Company (LGATCO) is a dynamic ensemble of visionary artists dedicated to creating bold, socially relevant theatre. Based in New York with a presence in Los Angeles, the company develops and produces powerful new works that challenge audiences, spark dialogue, and illuminate the human experience.

Known for its innovative ensemble-driven approach, LGATCO pushes the boundaries of traditional theatre while fostering a fearless creative environment where artists can take risks and grow. The company is committed to telling authentic stories that explore the social, cultural, and political issues shaping America.

In addition to producing world premieres, LGATCO mentors emerging artists and provides opportunities for new voices to be heard. Through its work, the company continues to inspire, educate, and engage communities across the country.

Learn more at www.LGATCO.com.

TECH CREW

LAYON GRAY ..... Director/Writer

RYAN SETT ..... Stage Manager

KELLY DENNIS ..... Costume Design

LAYON GRAY ..... Choreographer

MITCHELL OST ..... Light Design

AIDAN COLE ..... Sound/Projections

CAST

(in order of appearance)

Davis Harlin.....DORIEN WILSON

Mo.....THADDEUS DANIELS

Cricket.....RODERICK RANDLE

Peanut.....LAMAR K. CHESTON

Basil.....LAYON GRAY

Charlene.....KENISHA PINCKNEY

Rahman.....DAVID ROBERTS

Phibe.....LUISA TURNER

Peter/Prince.....REGGIE WILSON

SETTING

The Foster Family Home
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— • —

ACT I — Morning

15-Minute Intermission

ACT II — Late Morning

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WHO'S WHO

Dorien Wilson (Davis Harlin) is a highly respected, award-winning actor and producer with over 100 film and television credits spanning more than three decades. With a commanding presence and effortless comedic timing, Dorien became a household name through standout roles across iconic television series, long before captivating audiences as Professor Stanley Oglevee on the hit sitcom "The Parkers". His work has earned him multiple award nominations and a NAACP Image Award win for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Comedy Series. Dorien's extensive television résumé includes acclaimed appearances on Friends, Seinfeld, The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air, Sister, Sister, Moesha, Living Single, Dream On, In the Cut amongst many more. On film, Dorien has also had a prolific career over the years and has found recent success with "The Wesley's" Christmas Film franchise. Dorien is currently working on two new Series set to premier 2027. Stay tuned! Known for his versatility and warmth, Dorien remains one of television's most beloved and enduring talents. Dorien is a classically trained performer from the Pacific Conservatory of the Performing Arts. His early foundation in stage performance helped shape a career known for both comedic timing and dramatic depth. Live theater has always been Dorien's first love. With an enduring commitment towards positive impact and meaningful storytelling the International Black Theater festival is a special event for Dorien. As a longtime supporter, he has performed in "Extremities", "South of Where We Live", débuted his one man show "Unringing the bell", and served as co-chair in 2013. Dorien is thrilled to be here for a fourth time with the talented cast of "Searching for Willie Lynch".

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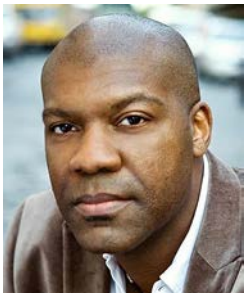

Thaddeus Daniels (Mo) Thaddeus is a native of Wilmington, NC and a UNC- Chapel Hill alum. He has done many plays in NYC, including Black Angels Over Tuskegee, Brothers From the Bottom and Same Train. Some NBTF credits: Before It Hits Home, Kings of Harlem, CowBoy, Feed the Beast. Some TV/Film credits: FBI, The Americans, OITNB, Blacklist, Manifest, Law & Order, SVU, White House Plumbers, The Post, Greta, Half Nelson, Hustle. Upcoming projects: The Gilded Age, Power Origins, Triumph of the Will.

Roderick Randle (Cricket) a Miami Gardens native and FSU graduate is honored to be here and a part of this production. Thank you to all the creatives that helped to bring this story to life. Thank you for coming and enjoy the show! Love you Squash!

Lamar K. Cheston (Peanut) was last seen on the NYC stage, in the Negro Ensemble Company's production of *No Ordinary Days*. Currently, you can see him on NETFLIX's "Beauty in Black," recurring as 'Dice' on the hit STARZ show, "BMF," and also guest starring on Season 2 of "The Game" streaming now on Paramount+. Other credits include: "Buried Alive and Survived," (Lifetime) "Law & Order: Organized Crime," (NBC) and "Godfather of Harlem" (MGM+). His stage resume ranges from classical theatre (*Romeo and Juliet, Much Ado About Nothing, Comedy of Errors, Henry V, Oedipus*) to regional theater (*The Music Man, Pipeline, One Night in Miami, Kim's Convenience*). He has also been a long-standing cast member of the NAACP Award-winning

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play *Black Angels Over Tuskegee*. Lamar uses all forms of art to express his creativity and believes that no matter your passion, always be sure to #mAxximizeyouRpoTential www.LamarKCheston.com

Kenisha Pinckney (Charlene) Kenisha, a Philadelphia native, is honored to appear in Searching for Willie Lynch at the International Black Theatre Festival. This production marks her second collaboration with acclaimed playwright and director Layon Gray following her debut in the award-winning play Girls of Summer. A Meisner-trained actress, Kenisha's credits include The Knock Shadow with Kevin Kilner, Divine Direction featuring Eric Roberts, Dorian Gregory, and Torrei Hart, and Bed Ridden alongside comedians Earthquake and Donnell Rawlings. She has also appeared on TV One and CNN Originals. Known for bringing strength, authenticity, and passion to her performances, Kenisha is grateful to her family, mentors, and supporters for their continued encouragement. She is excited to share this powerful story with audiences at IBTF. Learn more at KenishaPinckney.com

David Roberts (Rahman) (aka D-Black) is a 1st Generation American/Bronx-native who is an AUDELCO award winner for Best Dramatic Lead In A Play. He has starred in GRAVESEND, HARLEM, FBI: MOST WANTED, ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK, DAREDEVIL, THE BLACKLIST, BLUE BLOODS, WU-TANG: AN AMERICAN SAGA., & the off-Broadway sensations, Black Angels Over Tuskegee, Cowboy, & Castling. His poem, "I Apologize" hit over 10 million views on Facebook and is still climbing.

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International Black Theater Festival

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A NC Black Rep Experience

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Denise Price, Deputy County Manager
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WHO'S WHO

Luisa Turner (Phibe) is honored to be performing at the International Black Theatre Festival in Searching for Willie Lynch. Regional Theater: The Girls of Summer (Lucy Hicks, Delaware Theatre Company), A Tale of Two Cities (Madame Defarge, Classic Theatre of Maryland), The Crucible (Tituba, Classic Theatre of Maryland). Off-Broadway: Legacy The Musical (HERE Arts Center). Film: "Baltimore Hustle" (Streaming on Apple TV), "Cutter" (Best Actress Award at the Gothamite Film Festival). BFA: The New School, Graduate of the American Musical and Dramatic Academy. Immense gratitude and love to my family for their constant love and support.

Thank you to the Searching for Willie Lynch team for the gift of bringing Phibe to life. www.LuisaTurner.com
Instagram: @luisaoturner

Reginald "Reggie" Wilson (Peter/Prince) is an award-winning actor, director, playwright, and educator whose distinguished career spans stage, television, and film. A native of Tallahassee, Florida, Wilson began his professional journey in New York City as an intern with legendary producer Woodie King Jr. at the New Federal Theatre, where he developed the artistic foundation that would launch an acclaimed career.

Wilson first gained widespread recognition for his electrifying portrayal of Levee in Ma Rainey's Black Bottom, earning the prestigious AUDELCO Award for Lead Actor. He followed that success with an unforgettable performance as boxing legend Sugar Ray Robinson in Sugar Ray, receiving another AUDELCO Award for Best Solo Performance. In 2024, Wilson achieved another

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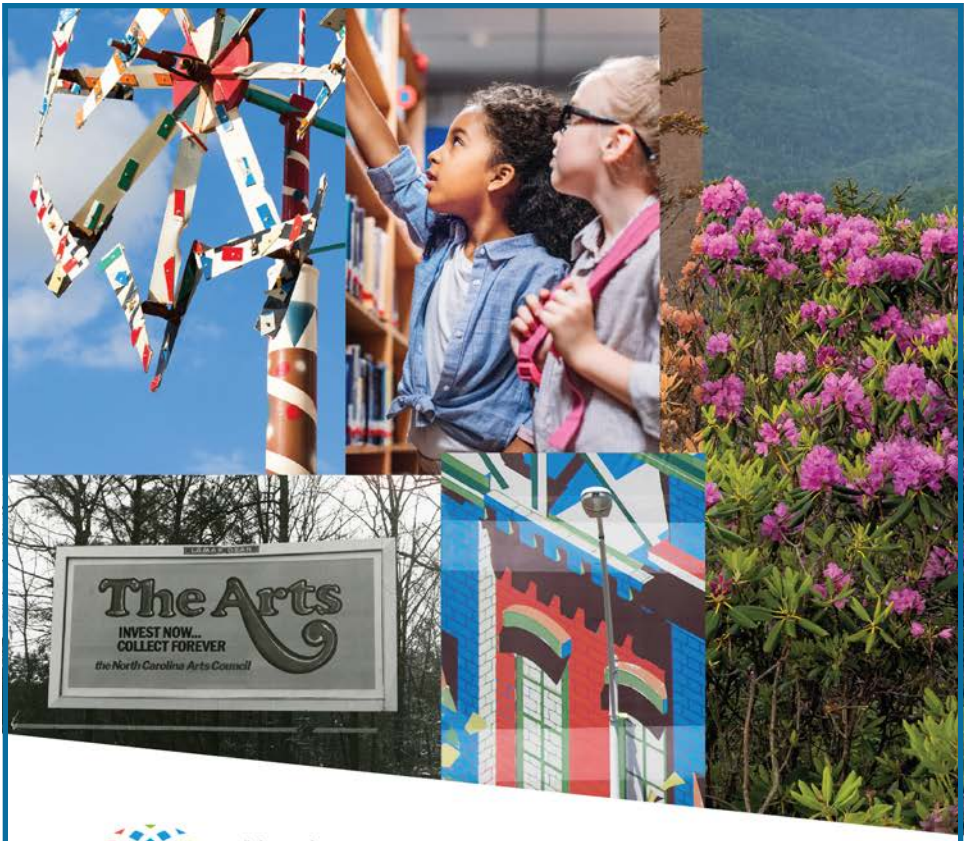
remarkable milestone by winning two additional AUDELCO Awards—Lead Actor and Best Supporting Actor—and was further recognized with a Special Achievement Award for his outstanding contributions to the theater.

His extensive New York theater credits include *Blues for Mister Charlie*, *Fences*, *Zooman and the Sign*, *Unentitled*, *Miss Julie*, *Stockholm Savings*, *Black Angels Over Tuskegee*, *Haiti's Children of God*, *The Whistle in Mississippi*, *The Meeting*, and *Watch the Throne*. Regionally, Wilson has appeared in acclaimed productions of *Flyin' West* (St. Louis), *Pipeline*(Portland), *Fences* (Pittsburgh), *Radio Golf* (St. Louis), *Newberry* (Gainesville), *Cowboy* (Miami), *Feed The Beast* (Pittsburgh), and *Searching for Willie Lynch* (Pittsburgh).

An accomplished director, Wilson served as Assistant Director for NEC's award-winning remount of *A Soldier's Play* and directed *Dearly Departed* at Mars Hill University. As a playwright, he has authored *Scrambled Eggs*, *Da Rapture*, and *Platinum Grilled and Spirit Filled*, powerful works that examine domestic violence and family dynamics with compassion and unflinching honesty. Wilson earned his Bachelor of Arts from Florida A&M University and his Master of Fine Arts from University of Florida. He is represented by Gabrielle Holder at Gill Talent Group.

Mitchell Ost (Light/Set Designer) a San Francisco Bay Area lighting, scenic, and projection designer and an Assistant Professor of Lighting Design at Santa Clara University. He has designed all over the globe including for many years in New York City at Joe's Pub at The Public Theatre. He is the resident designer for M Ensemble Company in Miami, FL and has designed at every IBTF since 2015. Most recently, his work has been seen at Opera San Jose, North Carolina Black Repertory Company, and New Horizons Theatre in Pittsburgh, PA. Proud member of United Scenic Artists Local 829. www.mitchellost.com



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The North Carolina Arts Council is a division of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

WHO'S WHO

Ryan Sett (Stage Manager) is an actor, singer, stage manager and developing screenwriter. A few stage credits: *Black Angels Over Tuskegee, Medea, The Last Hour, Dante* with an upcoming television episodic in the works. He gives gratitude to MTC where his training was grounded. Please enjoy the show!

Aidan Cole (Sound/Projection Designer) is delighted to serve as the Sound and Projection Designer for Searching For Willie Lynch at the International Black Theatre Festival**.** A longtime creative collaborator with playwright and director Layon Gray, Aidan has helped bring several acclaimed productions to life, including Black Angels Over Tuskegee**,** Cowboy**,** and Kings of Harlem**.** His innovative soundscapes and dynamic projection designs enhance the storytelling experience, creating immersive theatrical worlds for audiences. Aidan **i**s grateful to continue his artistic partnership with Layon Gray and thanks his family, friends, and collaborators for their continued support. Thank you for supporting live theatre. Enjoy the show!

Kelly Dennis (Costume Designer) serves as the Costume Designer for Searching For Willie Lynch**.** She has previously designed costumes for three of Layon Gray's plays—Black Angels Over Tuskegee**,** Cowboy**,** and Kings of Harlem, and is honored to continue helping bring his powerful stories to life through her creative designs. She is excited about being at the 2026 International Black Theatre Festival**!**

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WHO'S WHO

Layon Gray (Writer/Director/Basil) Layon Gray is an award-winning playwright, director, producer, and actor dedicated to creating powerful theatrical works that illuminate overlooked stories and celebrate diverse cultural movements. Originally from Louisiana, Layon relocated to Los Angeles in 2000 and quickly established himself as one of the nation's most accomplished theatre artists, earning more than 60 awards and nominations throughout his career.

His honors include the 2024 NYC Audelco Special Achievement Award, the 2019 Detroit Distinguished Playwright Award, the 2018 Carbonell Awards for Best Director, Best Ensemble, and Best Production, the inaugural Broadway League Fellowship in 2016, the 2012 NYC Inspire Award, the Al Sharpton Man of Vision Award, the PCTF Award for Best Director, the 2009 NAACP Award for Best Ensemble, and the Hollywood ADA Award for Best Ensemble. In 2008, he was named MATCH-LIFE Artist of the Year.

As a Broadway League Fellow, Layon worked alongside Broadway producers Sue Frost and Randy Adams during the development of the Tony Award-winning Broadway musical *Come From Away*. His acclaimed body of work includes *Black Angels Over Tuskegee*, *Searching for Willie Lynch*, *The Girls of Summer*, *Feed the Beast*, *Meet Me at the Oak*, and *Cowboy*.

His signature production, *Black Angels Over Tuskegee*, tells the inspiring story of the Tuskegee Airmen and has become an international success, touring extensively throughout the United States and abroad. The production has also been presented privately for several National Football League teams, including the New York Jets, Buffalo Bills, and Los Angeles Chargers.

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WHO'S WHO

Layon's groundbreaking play *Cowboy*, based on the life of Bass Reeves—the first Black U.S. Deputy Marshal—ran for ten months Off-Broadway and became the first full-scale Western produced On or Off-Broadway in nearly eighty years.

Currently, Layon is developing a new musical, *New Orleans*, in Manhattan's prestigious BMI Musical Theatre Workshop. He is also preparing *Foxx/Pryor*, a two-man play imagining a historic meeting between comedy legends Richard Pryor and Redd Foxx, with a workshop production planned for Fall 2026.

In 2025, Layon was selected for a prestigious residency on the French Riviera by the La Napoule Art Foundation and La Maison Baldwin, becoming one of only four Black writers worldwide chosen for the program. For more information, visit www.LayonGray.com or follow @LayonGray on Instagram.

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I wrote *Searching for Willie Lynch* from a place of curiosity, about history, about memory, and about the things we think we know versus the things we've been told. The title itself echoes the Willie Lynch letter, a name that has lived in conversation for generations, carrying questions that still linger today, particularly conversations about division, including the division within African American communities and where that division may come from.

Some stories don't sit quietly in the past. They move with us. They shift, they echo, and reveal themselves in unexpected ways. This play was born out of that idea, that time is not as distant as it seems, and that truth is often more complicated than we imagine. The play moves through three important years in African American history, reminding us that time changes, but some questions remain the same.

We are also living in a time of deep division in this country, a political and social climate where people, regardless of race, are often pulled further apart instead of brought together. That reality made this story feel even more important for me to tell, and even more necessary to explore through the lens of theater.

We are living in a moment where questions matter. Looking closer matters. Where listening can change what we believe to be fixed.

I am excited for you to experience this show and to sit with it in your own way. However it speaks to you, wherever it takes you, that journey is yours.

Thank you for being here.

Enjoy the show.
Layon Gray

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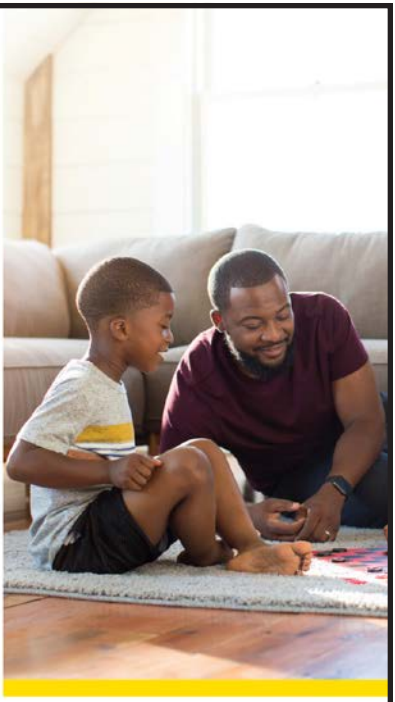

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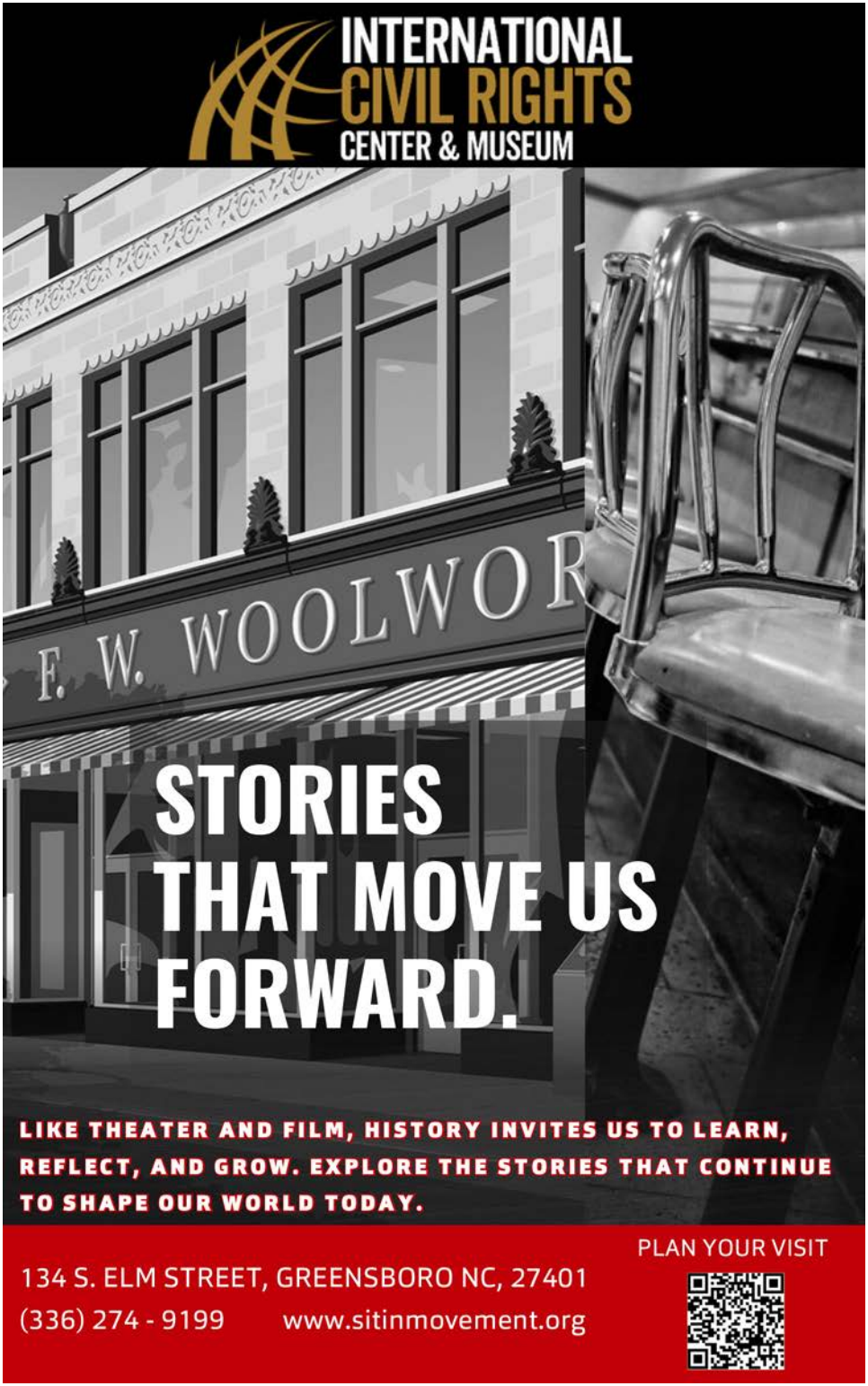
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Nico Amortegui, *Be a Wildflower*, 2025. © 2025 Nico Amortegui. Courtesy of the artist.

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The North Carolina Museum of Art, Winston-Salem (formerly SECCA) is pleased to announce a new exhibition and program space, now open in the heart of downtown Winston-Salem.

Open Wednesday through Sunday, the space invites visitors to interact with art and artists, generate ideas and connections, and support our state's creative ecosystem.

GALLERY HOURS

WEDNESDAY	1PM	→	5PM
THURSDAY	1PM	→	7PM
FRIDAY	1PM	→	5PM
SATURDAY	11AM	→	5PM
SUNDAY	1PM	→	5PM

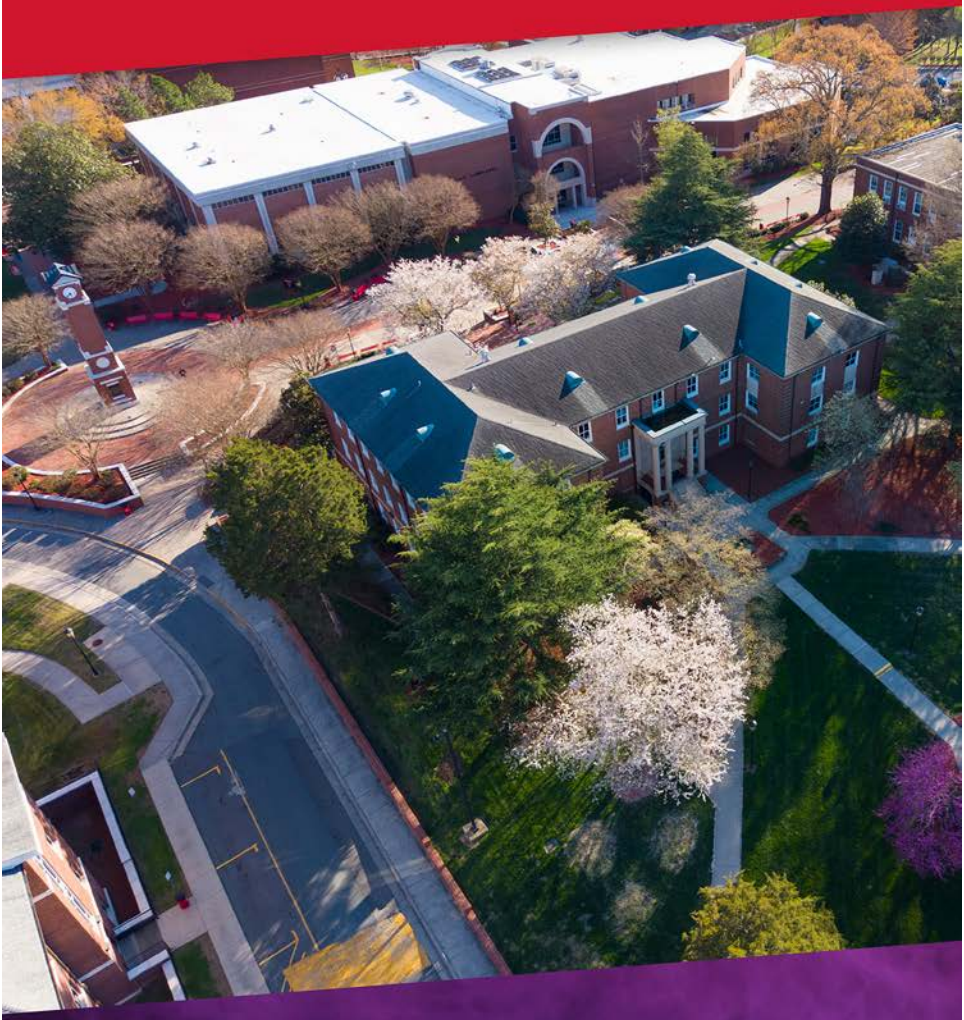
NCMA Winston-Salem Downtown is centrally located at
400 W Fourth St, Suite #130

Admission is free and open to the public. Learn more at
www.ncmawinstonsalem.gov

WINSTON-SALEM STATE UNIVERSITY

welcomes

the INTERNATIONAL BLACK THEATRE FESTIVAL



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