

## Jitney

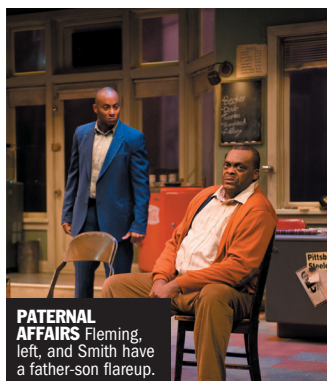


**Court Theatre** (see Resident companies). By August Wilson. Dir. Ron OJ Parson. With ensemble cast. 2hrs 35mins; one intermission.

The drivers of Becker's gypsy cab station (he'd prefer "car service") are always taking people to their destinations but can't seem to make any movement in their own lives. When the city decides to board up the station, the men are forced to consider the future, confronting past conflicts that continue to stand in their way.

August Wilson's 1982 drama, the first installment of his ten-play "Century Cycle," is a powerful examination of men in confused stasis. With the coming wave of urban renewal, the fate of the Pittsburgh Hill District is as uncertain as that of the jitney drivers. These men don't just live in the city, they are the city. Ron OJ Parson's production excels at capturing the extensive history this makeshift family has shared on the streets.

The relationship between Becker (A.C. Smith) and the older men of the station is relaxed and familiar, but the elder guys respond to the younger generation with a superiority that masks their fear of change. Switching seamlessly from charming to



**PATERNAL AFFAIRS** Fleming, left, and Smith have a father-son flareup.

threatening, Allen Gilmore's Turnbo exemplifies that shifting dynamic as he interferes with the life of rookie driver Youngblood (a forceful yet vulnerable Kamal Angelo Bolden).

When Becker's son Booster (Anthony Fleming III) arrives, newly released after 20 years in the penitentiary, the past between father and son explodes into the present with catastrophic results. Finally given the opportunity to express feelings that have boiled under the surface for more than two decades, Smith and Fleming take shots at each other with ruthless ferocity, yet leave their relationship in the stasis that has become so comfortable for these men.

—*Oliver Sava*

## The Woman in White



**Lifeline Theatre** (see Resident companies). By Wilkie Collins. Adapted by Robert Kauzlaric. Dir. Elise Kauzlaric. With ensemble cast. 2hrs 45mins; one intermission.

Whether or not you've read the source material, two aspects of Wilkie Collins's 1859 detective novel come through loud and clear in Robert Kauzlaric's new adaptation: the original's serialized publication and its epistolary format. Characters in Collins's complex, sensationalized tale of beautiful innocent Laura Fairlie (Maggie Scramton) and her mysterious white-clad doppelgänger (Scramton again) are constantly relating new information to one another via post, and there's a new mini cliff-hanger every other minute or so.

Walter Hartright (Nicholas Bailey), a dashing young artist, is retained to provide drawing lessons to Laura and her doting spinster half-sister Marian (Lucy Carapetyan). Walter finds Laura the spitting image of the raving woman in white with whom he's just had a rattling encounter; he and Laura fall in love, but she's promised to one Sir Percival Glyde (Robert Kauzlaric). The connections among Glyde, his menacing associate Count Fosco



**ART TO HEART** Bailey helps Scramton with her technique.

(Christopher M. Walsh) and Laura and her look-alike, and the necessity of Walter and Marian to come to Laura's rescue, flesh out the pulpy tale.

Elise Kauzlaric's staging employs clear, creative use of Alan Donahue's scenic design to delineate multiple settings, and her cast is terrific. Lifeline newcomers Bailey and Scramton make an appealing pair (or is that trio?) of ingenues, and Carapetyan helps turn a thankless role into an independent-woman prototype. Still, the script remains a bit static, modeled as it is on the letters' past-tense narration. The second act, following Collins in wrapping up first-act plot points one by one, feels overlong until a rousing climax. —*Kris Vire*

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