

A tribute to African American History through the Arts
“Two Trains Running”

On a beautiful spring-like afternoon in February, many sorors of the Wilmington (DE) Alumnae Chapter, along with friends and family members, met at the Grand Opera House. They were there to see the play, “Two Trains Running” written by August Wilson. The play, a tribute to African American history, was sponsored by Kappa Mainstream Leadership, Inc. and Delta Outreach and Education Center, Inc., in recognition of Black History Month.

Plays by August Wilson always give searing portraits of African American life in Pittsburgh, PA in the sixties. They tell complex stories of the inner lives of ordinary people at an explosive turning point in America. “Two Trains Running” focused on an owner of a thread-bare diner in a dying Pittsburgh neighborhood. It takes place during the Civil Rights movement, which seemed like an impractical dream. It explores the social and psychological manifestations of how race relations are changing from the view of urban Blacks.

The owner finds himself caught between idealism and brutal reality, intertwined with the lives of the regular customers of the restaurant. He is torn between negotiating an urban-renewal buyout or selling his building to a predatory businessman. Throughout the play you hear the owner saying “Well, there’s two trains runnin’ but there’s not a one that’s goin’ my way. You know there’s one train runnin’ at midnight and the other one leaves just fo day.” This metaphor may be his speaking of going back to better times in his hometown “down south.” Though some critics have pondered that it also speaks of life versus death and north versus south, as well as past versus present. This is why the play is so powerful as the meaning is left each person’s interpretation.

The play, “Two Trains Running”, was a wonderful Sunday afternoon event. The Black Spectrum Theatre Group gave us an outstanding performance. An all African American cast depicting a story of the past is not rare in New York City, but very unique for the city of Wilmington, so we were ecstatic to be a part of the audience. The warm weather and warm interaction of all who went to the Grand Opera House made for a marvelous afternoon!

Submitted by
The Chapter Outings Committee