The Williams Project aims to foster civic dialogue around race and violence in the United States with James Baldwin’s searing 1964 play, *Blues for Mister Charlie*.

Award-winning theatre company partners with Emerald City Bible Fellowship and Franklin High School for two weeks of performances, Sept. 6 – 17, 2017.

**SEATTLE, WA (July 10, 2017)** – The Williams Project, in partnership with Emerald City Bible Fellowship and Franklin High School, presents James Baldwin’s classic American play *Blues for Mister Charlie*. Baldwin’s rarely produced masterpiece explores race and violence in the United States with honesty, music, dark humor, and compassion. *Blues for Mister Charlie* will run September 6 – 10, 2017 at Emerald City Bible Fellowship and September 13 – 17, 2017 at Franklin High School. Opening night is September 7, 2017. Each performance of *Blues for Mister Charlie* will be followed by a facilitated discussion, featuring leadership from the community hosting the performance and Williams Project artists. All tickets are Pay-What-You-Can and available for reservation now through the online box office at thewilliamsproject.org/tickets.

In a small southern town, a white shopkeeper kills a black musician. As white and black residents create their own versions of events and tensions rise, a Reverend, a journalist, and the shopkeeper’s
wife struggle to find and make sense of the truth. Written in 1964 and dedicated to the memory of Baldwin’s friend and civil rights activist Medgar Evers, the play is Baldwin’s response to the 1955 lynching of Emmett Till.

In Baldwin’s 1964 foreword to the published edition of *Blues for Mister Charlie*, he wrote about the play, “What is ghastly and really almost hopeless in our racial situation now is that the crimes we have committed are so great and so unspeakable that the acceptance of this knowledge would lead, literally, to madness. The human being, then, in order to protect himself, closes his eyes, compulsively repeats his crimes, and enters a spiritual darkness which no one can describe… We are walking in terrible darkness here, and this is one man’s attempt to bear witness to the reality and power of the light.”

“When I saw the workshop of this piece at Emerald City last summer, I was blown away by the story’s power to get people from different faiths, different races, and different generations talking, feeling, and thinking deeply together,” said Pastor Harvey Drake, senior pastor at Emerald City Bible Fellowship. “We are thrilled to partner to bring *Blues for Mister Charlie* back to Seattle. I know this piece can be a powerful avenue for entering into vital conversations.”

“I wish this play wasn’t relevant. It’s painful that a play written about Mississippi in 1964 resonates so powerfully in Seattle in 2017,” said Williams Project Artistic Director Ryan Guzzo Purcell. “But Baldwin’s insights into miscarriages of justice, failures of “well-meaning” white people, and the racial violence programmed into our American psyche were prophetic, and they are as true today as they were in 1964. Growing up in South Seattle, graduating from Franklin, and first examining racism and my own whiteness here, it’s important to me to continue engaging in that conversation here in this community.”


**FOR CALENDAR EDITORS**

**WHAT:**
Blues for Mister Charlie

by James Baldwin

directed by Ryan Guzzo Purcell

*presented in partnership with Emerald City Bible Fellowship and Franklin High School*

In a small southern town, a white shopkeeper kills a black musician. As black and white residents create their own versions of events and tensions rise, a Reverend, a journalist, and the shopkeeper’s wife struggle to find and make sense of the truth. The Williams Project partners with community institutions Emerald City Bible Fellowship and Franklin High School to bring James Baldwin’s rarely produced masterpiece to Seattle. Every performance of *Blues for Mister Charlie* will be followed by a post-show discussion.

**WHEN:**

**September 6 – 17, 2017**

Performance times: Wednesday-Saturday at 7 p.m.
Sunday matinees at 2 p.m.
Opening Night: Thursday, September 7, 2017 at 7 p.m.

**WHERE:**

Performances September 6 –10, 2017
**Emerald City Bible Fellowship**
7728 Rainier Avenue South, Seattle, Washington 98118

September 13-17, 2017
**Franklin High School**
3013 S Mt Baker Boulevard, Seattle, Washington 98144

**TICKETS:**

*All tickets Pay-What-You-Can – ON SALE NOW* at thewilliamsproject.org/tickets

Reservations for groups of 10+ can be made by emailing contact@thewilliamsproject.org.

Ticket reservations are welcome but not required. To reserve your ticket in advance, go online at: thewilliamsproject.org/tickets. All seating is general admission.

**PHOTOS:**
Production images will become available in the coming weeks. For available pre-production images or artwork, visit: thewilliamsproject.org/press.

SOCIAL:
facebook.com/williamsproject
vimeo.com/williamsproject

ABOUT THE WILLIAMS PROJECT

The Williams Project is a Seattle-based collective that strives to make theatrical excellence accessible to diverse and engaged audiences, while paying artists a living wage. Founded in 2014, The Williams Project has created and co-produced Tennessee Williams’s *Orpheus Descending* (Intiman Theatre, 2015) and *The Glass Menagerie* (Café Nordo, 2016) and developed workshop productions of Shakespeare’s *Henry VI*, Suzan-Lori Parks’s *In the Blood*, and James Baldwin’s *Blues for Mister Charlie*. *Orpheus Descending* was included on The Seattle Times’s list of the top ten theatre productions of 2015 and named the best play of the year by BroadwayWorld Seattle.

*This production is generously supported by the Seattle Office of Arts & Culture.*

For more information, hi-res images, interviews, or event access, please contact:

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