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PHOTO BY SIERRA RICKARDS

Local high school students who are semifinalists this year's August Wilson Red Door Project are pictured with members of the Red Door team. On Monday, Feb. 27 at 7 p.m. at the Newmark Theater, downtown, the students will perform works by the master black playwright August Wilson and compete for a chance to perform at the August Wilson Theatre on Broadway in New York.

Unapologetically Ethnic

Students perform works by master black playwright

What does it mean to present an evening of theatre and music that is unapologetically ethnic? According to the August Wilson Red Door Project, you start with talented and determined Portland area high school students performing works from the master black playwright, then move to Hands Up, a series of monologues about law enforcement and the black community, and then weave through it all music that has helped forge a culture – from

blues to jazz to hip hop.

The August Wilson Red Door Project Monologue Competition will be held Monday, Feb. 27 at 7 p.m. at the Newmark Theater, downtown. The event is free, but reservations are required by visiting reddoorproject.org for tickets.

Red Door is a national showcase for high school age students who have the grit and spirit to embark on a challenging journey. Professional actors and directors train students to master Wilson's complex characters, lyrical language, and astute depiction of African American experience and culture.

At the Newmark, the students will

vie for a chance to perform at the August Wilson Theatre on Broadway in New York, competing against peers from 10 other cities, including major theatre centers like New York, Boston, Chicago and Seattle. Local and national contest winners receive cash prizes, exposure, and opportunities to continue their studies. In 2014, the national winners in New York met Denzel Washington, director and star of August Wilson's play, *Fences*, which is now enjoying tremendous critical and audience acclaim as a film.

"This is an important program for Portland especially," said Kevin Jones of Portland, the chief executive officer and artistic director of the Red Door.

"We have more millennials moving here than any other city in the country, and they're bringing a different paradigm. They don't think of race the same way older generations do. The fact that the AWMC celebrates a playwright of color and performers of all colors makes it not only about theatre—it's directly connected to equity and our city's future."

The Red Door Project's mission is to change the racial ecology of Portland through the arts. In 2016, they presented *Hands Up*, a series of seven monologues about law enforcement and the African American community, written by black writers and performed by black actors.