

Emory Team Puts Music To 'Piano Lesson'

Dwight Andrews and William Ransom, faculty members in Emory University's Department of Music collaborated musically on the Pulitzer Prize-winning August Wilson play, "The Piano Lesson," that opened April 16 at the Walter Kerr Theatre in New York, less than a week after receiving the prestigious award for drama.

"The Piano Lesson" focuses on the Black experience in America as seen through a prism of conflict between a brother and sister over their family's slavery-era heirloom

piano. The play toured the nation to large audiences before its Broadway debut.

Andrews, an ethnomusicologist at Emory University, composed the score for the play, his fourth such collaboration with Wilson, having previously scored Wilson's "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom" (1983), Pulitzer Prize-winning "Fences" (1985) and "Joe Turner's Come and Gone" (1986).

As in all Wilson plays, the motif in "The Piano Lesson" is the music, particularly the blues, serving as a

repository for Black heritage.

Arranger, composer, music director and jazz artist, Andrews credits Wilson with helping him appreciate music he was not familiar with. An avid classical music and avant-garde jazz lover, Andrews began to explore early 20th century Black music with Wilson's nudging, though he had spent a lifetime studying music.

Andrews met the playwright while studying at Yale, where Wilson has launched all his plays.