

Stunning performance, brilliantly written

by [Cecil Bothwell](#) on 03/31/2007

Approximately 69,700 Ashevilleans were in the wrong place Thursday night (March 29). Only about 300 folks showed up for **Mike Wiley's** performance of *Dar He: The Lynching of Emmett Till* at Diana Wortham Theatre.

The story is that of the black 14-year-old Chicago youth who was murdered during a visit with relatives in Mississippi in the summer of 1955. The youngster allegedly whistled at a white woman, was kidnapped, beaten, murdered, mutilated and dumped in a river. His white-supremacist murderers, acquitted in short order by an all-white jury, admitted their guilt and described their crime in grisly detail to a reporter for *Look* magazine less than a year later. The article raised a firestorm of revulsion and spurred the modern civil rights movement, but the admitted perpetrators remained free.



Wiley wrote the one-man show, part of a series of black history plays he has composed and performed around the country. His acting is superb, displaying an ability to create and maintain distinct characterizations of both genders and both races in a range of emotions from sweet innocence to vitriol and violence. A scene in which the whites beat and tortured Till was gut wrenchingly taut and another in which Till's mother described the corps shipped back to Chicago conveyed utter heartbreak. **Serena Ebhardt** directed Wiley's superb performance.

The show will return to Asheville at an as yet unannounced date. Don't miss it.

Applause. Applause. Applause.

— *Cecil Bothwell, staff writer*

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