



Wallace Stegner, left, and Wallace Thurman.

**W**ALLACE STEGNER AND Wallace Thurman share little in common except a first name and a hometown. Stegner grew up white and heterosexual. Thurman experienced life as an African-American bisexual. Stegner championed the greatness of America's unspoiled wilderness. Thurman, a writer, editor and publisher, embraced urban life, entertain-

■ SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

## A Tale of 2 Wallaces

ing the Harlem Renaissance elite in what they themselves called his “Niggerati Manor.” Stegner became a renowned Pulitzer-winning writer of literature about the West. Thurman has been all but entirely forgotten. Nonetheless, Salt Lake City’s **Plan-B Theatre**

**Company** is bringing the stories of these two local figures together in a show called *Wallace*, which runs March 4–14. The piece is a synthesis of a pair of one-man shows by writers Debora Threedy and Jenifer Nii.

Threedy, whose day job is as a professor of contract law at Utah University, was inspired to write her play on Stegner, *Where I Come From*, when her school was celebrating

the centennial of Stegner’s birth. As an environmentalist and as a writer, says Threedy, what Stegner ultimately did was “capture the contradictions between the mythic West, the dream of limitless opportunity, and the actual West where hardship and aridity are common and the cost of belief in myth is enormous.”

A musician and journalist by trade, Nii was commissioned by Plan-B to create a piece about the barrier-breaker Thurman. Nii’s piece, *Fire!*, named for a short-lived incendiary journal published by Thurman, seeks “to capture his person: his charisma, his loves, his humor and passion. He was an evangelist of excellence,” explains Nii, “and also incredibly funny, naughty and human.”

—Nicole Bournas-Ney