

Warehouse presents a searing 'Lesson'



Courtesy photo

Calvin Thompson, left, and Shawn Simmons appear in "A Lesson Before Dying."

By Paul Hyde

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When stage director David Matthews first read "A Lesson Before Dying," the play kicked him in the gut.

"I was on a plane and as I read it, I thought, 'This is more like poetry. The words are so powerful,'" says Matthews. "By the end of it, I felt this knot in my throat and there were tears streaming down my face."

He adds: "A woman looked at me and said, 'Are you going to be OK?' All I could say was, 'It's a play about hope.'"

At that moment, Matthews knew he had to direct it.

"When something speaks to you that strongly, that's when you should direct it," he says.

Matthews gets his chance Friday as The Warehouse Theatre presents Romulus Linney's Off-Broadway adaptation of Ernest J. Gaines' much-honored 1993 novel "A Lesson Before Dying."

The play, running through April 23, centers on Jefferson, an innocent young black man condemned to death

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YOU CAN GO

■ **What:** "A Lesson Before Dying," adapted by Romulus Linney from Ernest J. Gaines' novel

■ **When:** 8 p.m. Friday-Saturday, April 14-16 and 21-23; 3 p.m. on Sunday and April 17

■ **Where:** Warehouse Theatre, 37 Augusta St.

■ **Tickets:** \$25 for adults, \$24 for seniors, \$15 for students and children

■ **Information:** 864-235-6948; www.warehousetheatre.com