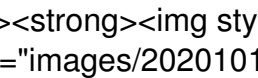


**Lean Ensemble presents an online reading of a new play by Aurin Squire**

November 1861. Union forces oust Confederates on Hilton Head Island during the Battle of Port Royal. Over the next few months hundreds of enslaved men, women and children flee plantations and seek protection at the Union army encampment. A year later the country's first self-governed town of freed Africans, now numbering 1500, would be established here. Its name was Mitchelville. Mitchelville would become a beacon for African Americans seeking freedom. And it would be a test: could the newly freed govern themselves? The answer was yes. Not only did the town elect its own officials, it built roads, housing, stores, a church, and established a school the first in the South requiring compulsory education for children ages six to fifteen. The town's success, however, made it a target for whites threatened by its very existence.

Award winning playwright and television writer Aurin Squire (*This is Us, Brain Dead*) turns the spotlight on this important but little known chapter in American Civil Rights history. He takes us from the present day when a Mitchelville descendant returns to the island to rediscover his roots and leads us back in time to the thriving Civil War-era African American community. Here we meet six formerly enslaved men and women as they work through the challenges and experiences of their new freedom.

Get your first look at this exciting new play, directed by Christopher Windom and read by a cast of actors from across the country. Talkback with the playwright and director to follow.

Lean Ensemble Theater, a professional performing arts company, is the Lowcountry's home for conversation-based theater. A full production of *Mitchelville* is planned for Lean Ensemble Theater's 2021-22 season.

*Mitchelville*: Airing October 29-November 1, 2020. For information and tickets: [leanensemble.org](http://leanensemble.org) 843.715.6676