



A Long Days Journey Into Black America: A Raisin in the Sun



By Ralph Malachowski

In the 1951 poem Harlem, by Langston Hughes, we are asked, “What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up/ like a raisin in the sun?” It was this poem which inspired the young Lorraine Hansberry to write her play, A Raisin in the Sun, which does all the things Hughes wrote: it festers, sags like a heavy load, and periodically explodes. A Raisin in the Sun appeared on Broadway in 1959, when Hansberry was only 29 years old. To our great loss, the playwright died in 1965 at age 34. Two River Theater in Red Bank, NJ, has mounted a spectacular production of Lorraine Hansberry’s play. It is a must see. You have until October 8 to see it.

This production of A Raisin in the Sun enjoys a team of actors who will leave you awestruck; No finer acting ensemble could be found anywhere. Each actor delivered a finely-tuned, emotionally charged, and true performance. This A Raisin in the Sun will stay with you for your whole life.

Unforgettable performances by the excellent trio of women: Jasmine Batchelor as Beneatha Younger; Crystal A Dickinson as Ruth Younger; and Brenda Pressley as Lena Younger are as strong and sure as their male counterparts in this outstanding ensemble. Brandon J. Dirden is the Walter Lee Younger of our time. As Beneatha’s two suitors, Charlie Hudson III as Asagai and York Walker as the wealthy George Murchison are fine actors, indeed. Young Owen Tabaka as the child Travis Younger was experienced and altogether believable. In smaller, yet pivotal roles, Nat DeWolf as Karl Lindner and Willie Dirden as Bobo gave strong performances. DeWolf

had the thankless role of being the man who tries to dissuade the Youngers from moving into all-white Clybourne Park. Extraordinarily, Willie Dirden, this production's Bobo, is the father of Brandon J. Dirden, who is married to Crystal A. Dickinson. Theirs is a family who could give the Redgraves competition.

Carl Cofield's direction inspired his acting ensemble to be their very best. Production values were all outstanding.

A Raisin in the Sun is as relevant today as it was nearly 60 years ago as both human drama and as an examination of the American Dream. It is well worth the trip to experience this American Theater classic beautifully presented.

A Raisin in the Sun is at the Two River Theater in Red Bank, NJ. Next on the main stage will be Oscar Wilde's The Importance of Being Earnest, which will run from November 11 through December 3. For more information, call 732-348-1400, or visit www.tworivertheater.org