



A RAISIN IN THE SUN

BY
LORRAINE
HANSBERRY

DIRECTED BY
GABRIELLE
RANDLE-BENT

COURT THEATRE



THE UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO

WELCOME

Dear Friends,

Welcome to Lorraine Hansberry's masterpiece, *A Raisin in the Sun*. Set just a few blocks from Court Theatre and written by one of the most significant voices in twentieth-century theatre, *A Raisin in the Sun* is an honest portrayal of a working-class American family building their lives in the face of the systemic racial oppression that defines this city to this day.

Its themes—of home; of family and inequity; of comfort and community; of solidarity in global struggles for liberation—remain as prevalent today as when the play premiered on Broadway in 1959. This year marks the sixtieth anniversary of Hansberry's passing, inciting reflection on her tremendous accomplishments, the rich significance of her legacy for the South Side of Chicago specifically, and what she might have achieved were her life not tragically cut short. And it is the first time Hansberry or *A Raisin in the Sun* has been staged at Court Theatre. As some of you may remember, Court staged the musical adaptation, *Raisin*, in 2006, but this presentation of the original work is a milestone for our organization and our mission of reimagining classic theatre to illuminate our current times. It is a homecoming.

A Raisin in the Sun is widely accepted as a touchstone of American realism, and it is also a personal touchstone for many, often taught in schools. We are grateful to continue that tradition by partnering with classes from both the University of Chicago and the Chicago Public Schools system, and we cannot wait to share Hansberry's work with over one thousand learners. That level of deep engagement will continue with our complementary public programs, building off the recent success of the 2024 Spotlight Reading Series focused on Hansberry's influence and work.

No matter your background with Hansberry or *A Raisin in the Sun*—no matter how you got here—you are welcome in the Younger family's kitchenette. Here, we invite you to let Lorraine Hansberry's language, the language of daily life on the South Side of Chicago, wash over you. It is a vernacular full of contradiction: contentment and joy, and aching for room to breathe. We hear this same language in our communities, now more than ever, and through this production, we hope to add our voice to the conversation.

We invite you to join that chorus, and we thank you for attending *A Raisin in the Sun*. Welcome home.

With gratitude,

Angel Ysaguirre
Executive Director

Gabrielle Randle-Bent
Director, Senior Artistic Producer

Heidi Thompson-Saunders
Senior Managing Producer

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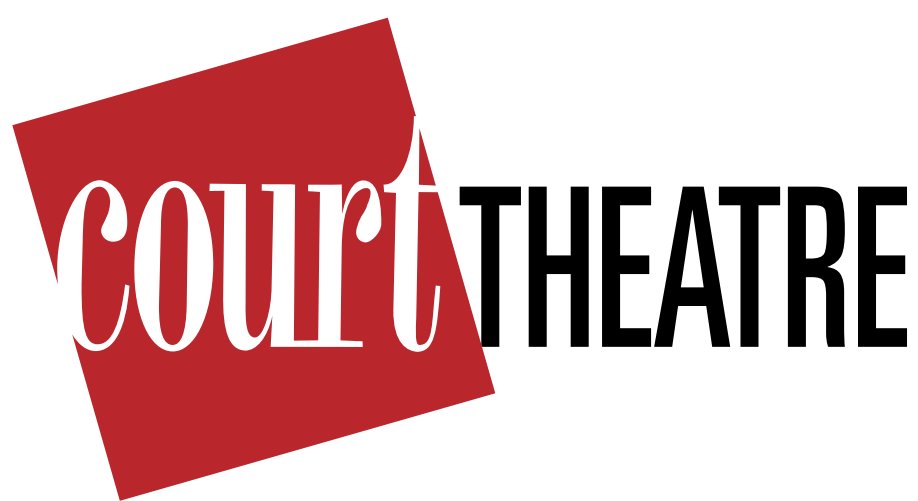
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Angel Ysaguirre
Executive Director

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Senior Artistic Producer

Heidi Thompson Saunders
Senior Managing Producer

JAN 31 - MAR 2, 2025

A RAISIN IN THE SUN

BY LORRAINE HANSBERRY

DIRECTED BY GABRIELLE RANDLE-BENT

Andrew Boyce U.S.A., Scenic Designer

Raquel Adorno U.S.A., Costume Designer

Maximo Grano De Oro, Lighting Designer

Willow James U.S.A., Sound Designer

Khalid Long, PhD, Production Dramaturg

Sheryl Williams, Culture and Consent Consultant

Sammi Grant, Vocal and Dialect Consultant

Becca McCracken C.S.A. and

Celeste M. Cooper, Casting

Kate Ocker,* Production Stage Manager

Jaclynn Joslin,* Assistant Stage Manager

Setting: Chicago's South Side in the early 1950s.

Please note: This production contains simulated smoking and water-based haze.

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Mesirow

The Marion M. Lloyd
Court Theatre Fund

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United Scenic Artists, Local USA-829 of the IATSE is the union representing scenic, costume, lighting, sound, and projection designers in Live Performance.

*Denotes a member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

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Court Theatre operates under an agreement between the League of Resident Theatres and Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States. Court Theatre is a constituent of the League of Resident Theatres and the Illinois Humanities Council. Court Theatre is a constituent of Theatre Communications Group, the national organization for the American Theatre, and the League of Chicago Theatres.

This project is partially supported by a CityArts Grant from the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs & Special Events. Court Theatre acknowledges support from the Illinois Arts Council.



The Director is a member of the
STAGE DIRECTORS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS
SOCIETY, a national theatrical labor union.



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CAST

<i>Lena Younger (Mama)</i>	Shanésia Davis*
<i>Walter Lee Younger</i>	Brian Keys*
<i>Beneatha Younger</i>	Martasia Jones*
<i>Ruth Younger</i>	Kierra Bunch*
<i>Travis Younger</i>	Jeremias Darville
<i>Travis Younger, alternating</i>	Di'Aire Wilson
<i>Joseph Asagai</i>	Elliott Johnson*
<i>George Murchison</i>	Charles Andrew Gardner*
<i>Bobo</i>	Julian Parker*
<i>Karl Lindner</i>	Vincent Teninty*
<i>Mrs. Johnson</i>	J. Nicole Brooks*

Understudies

Maya J. Abram (*Beneatha Younger*)

Mehmet Bakir (*Karl Lindner*)

Kaylah Marie Crosby (*Ruth, Mrs. Johnson*)

Jordan Gleaves (*George Murchison, Joseph Asagai*)

Monty Kane (*Walter Lee Younger, Bobo*)

RjW Mays (*Lena Younger (Mama)*)

*Denotes a member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

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PRODUCTION CREW

Assistant Director	Danielle Davis
Literary Fellow	Marissa Fenley
Quad Research Scholar	Jo Selmeczy
Assistant Scenic Designers	A Inn Doo, Alayna Klein, Lauren M. Nichols
Scenic Artists.....	Michael A.C. Besancon U.S.A., Sarah Lewis U.S.A.
Carpenters	Cordell Brown, Jeffrey Goulet, Vanessa Rago
Properties Artisan	Persephone Lawrence
Associate Costume Designer	Jeanette Rodriguez
Costume Shop Assistant	Jessica Donaldson
Draper.....	Eric Guy
Wardrobe Technician/Deck Crew	Sebastian Van Horn
Wig Coordinator.....	Megan E. Pirtle
Wig Knotters	Hannah Andruss, Finnegan Chu, Jennifer Lightfoot, Dylan Rodriguez
Assistant Lighting Designer	Sierra Walker
Assistant Lighting Supervisor	Emily Brown
Electricians	Kenneth Martin, Ian C. Weber, Jonah White
Assistant Sound Designer	Neel McNeill
Sound Engineer.....	Ian C. Weber
Floor Manager	Ashton Goren
Young Performer Supervisor	Carissa Greene



Scenic Artists identified by U.S.A. are members of United Scenic Artists, I.A.T.S.E. Local USA829, AFL-CIO, CLC.

Special thanks to Kenneth W. Warren and Adrienne Brown.

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"A MASTERPIECE" - CHICAGO TRIBUNE

AN ILIAD

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DIRECTED BY CHARLES NEWELL
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“HARLEM”

BY LANGSTON HUGHES (1901 - 1967)

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

“Harlem” by Langston Hughes is in the public domain;
retrieved from [poetryfoundation.org](https://www.poetryfoundation.org).

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ON LORRAINE HANSBERRY'S *A RAISIN IN THE SUN*

BY KENNETH W. WARREN; DEPARTMENT CHAIR,
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO DEPARTMENT OF
ENGLISH; FAIRFAX M. CONE DISTINGUISHED
SERVICE PROFESSOR



Lorraine Hansberry at her apartment in New York, 1959 (Photo by David Attie/Getty)

When Sidney Poitier escorted 29-year-old Lorraine Hansberry to the stage in response to calls of “Author! Author!” from an enthusiastic audience that had just witnessed the 1959 Broadway opening of *A Raisin in the Sun*, the young playwright was as yet uncertain which play her admirers were applauding. Had they been mesmerized by a story that appeared to affirm the vitality of the American dream of homeownership by dramatizing the injustice of the racism that denied many Black Americans access to that dream? Beguiled by a play that, despite compelling portrayals of three complex Black women, had made the redemption of its major male figure the goal of its plot resolution? Perhaps captivated by a vision of race group pride and identity eclipsing a pursuit of mere material prosperity? Or maybe charmed by a well-crafted play about an American family, who happened to be Black, navigating their version of the challenges facing most mid-20th-century Americans?

Judging from the myriad responses to *A Raisin in the Sun* immediately upon its production and across decades of revivals, film adaptations, and scholarly studies, the power of Hansberry’s drama—which was awarded the 1959 New York Drama Critics’ Circle Award for Best Play, beating out plays by such luminaries as Archibald MacLeish, Eugene O’Neill, and Tennessee Williams—may have been its capacity to sustain a variety of not-quite-compatible interpretations and the way it reflected the kaleidoscopic reality of its author, whose 34 short years of life tumbled her into many of the momentous social and political changes that defined American life at the middle of the twentieth century.

When Hansberry was born in Chicago in 1930, seven months after the Stock Market crash that ushered in the Great Depression, Black Americans, like their fellow citizens, were vigorously debating the paths the nation might take towards becoming a just society. Some argued for what political scientist Preston E. Smith II has called “racial democracy”—the idea that justice and fairness merely demanded that Black Americans, and members of all other racial groups, not be discriminated against in their pursuit of happiness and prosperity within a liberal capitalist America. Hansberry’s parents largely held this view. Her father, Carl, was a real estate speculator who at the time of her birth owned property valued up to \$250,000 (more than \$4 million in today’s economy), and her mother, Nannie, was serving as a Republican Ward committeewoman. Together, as foes of racial discrimination, they established the Hansberry Foundation “with a \$10,000 endowment to support legal remedies to racial discrimination.” Even more consequentially, Carl Hansberry was named the respondent in a legal case alleging that he had illegally purchased a property covered by a “restrictive covenant,” the term for discriminatory contracts that were the norm in Chicago and elsewhere, through which “white homeowners and real estate developers and agents” agreed not “to sell lease, or rent to racial and religious minorities for a specified period of time unless all signers agreed with the transaction.”¹ The ensuing legal battle went all the way to the US Supreme Court as *Hansberry v. Lee* (1940), where Hansberry prevailed in a ruling that signaled the beginning of the end of that form of discrimination.

“When Hansberry was born in Chicago in 1930, seven months after the Stock Market crash that ushered in the Great Depression, Black Americans, like their fellow citizens, were vigorously debating the paths the nation might take towards becoming a just society.”

But Hansberry’s victory was only a partial one for most poor and working-class Black Americans seeking decent housing. As a real estate speculator, Hansberry had aggressively expanded the availability of “kitchenette” apartments—small units created by subdividing buildings so that seven or eight families were squeezed into a space that had previously accommodated one or two. Carl’s industrious conversions earned him the moniker, “the King of the Kitchenettes” while producing considerable wealth for him and his family.² And while the apartments he rented to poor Black migrants may have been better than nothing, they were unheated, sometimes no larger than 100 square feet, and forced renters to share a bathroom with all of the other units on that floor. Kitchenette living was oppressive, and its deprivations provided the bleak cockroach- and rat-infested settings for Richard Wright’s *Native Son*, Gwendolyn Brooks’s *Maud Martha*, and of course, Hansberry’s *A Raisin in the Sun*.

Although she never repudiated her family’s commitment to real estate, Lorraine was not, politically, her parents’ child. Against their commitment to racial democracy, she came to embrace ideas closer to what Smith calls “social democracy, the belief that attacked class stratification and held ‘that citizens should have access to decent housing regardless of their ability to pay for it.’”³ As a 17-year-old at the University of Wisconsin-Madison—where she attended meetings of the Labor Youth League, a socialist organization—Hansberry saw a production of the socialist Irish playwright Sean O’Casey’s *Juno and the Paycock*, which left her “in a transcendent mood” and set her on the course of becoming a playwright herself.⁴ In 1948, she supported Henry A. Wallace’s Progressive Party campaign for president of the United States. By the 1950s in Harlem, she was openly espousing Marxist ideals and worked for a time at the newspaper, *Freedom*, which had been founded by Paul Robeson after his passport had been suspended following his refusal to affirm that he was not a Communist Party Member. While in Harlem, Hansberry also met and married Robert Nemiroff, a Communist Party fellow traveler, and took a course on Marxism and anticolonialism with W.E.B. Du Bois.

All of these influences and experiences would exert their force when Hansberry came to write *A Raisin in the Sun*, which takes its title from Langston Hughes’s short, evocative poem “Harlem,” from his 1951 *Montage of a Dream Deferred*. The play unfolds in a shabby but not scandalous kitchenette, where the overcrowded Younger family await the arrival of a \$10,000 insurance settlement check after the death of the family patriarch, Big Walter. The windfall offers the possibility of changing the family’s fortune, but the competing visions of the family members put them in conflict with one another. Big Walter’s widow, Lena (Mama) Younger, sees the check as an opportunity to move to a home with a yard and a garden where her grandson, Travis, will be able to grow up away from South Side deprivation; a place where the tensions within her family may dissipate when they no longer have to live virtually on top of one another. That finding such a home will mean moving into what has been a whites-only neighborhood adds a significant complication to Lena’s dream. Her son, Walter Lee Younger, who lives in the apartment with his wife, Ruth, and their son Travis, dreams of leaving behind his job as a chauffeur by entering into a partnership to buy a liquor store as the first step to becoming a wealthy businessman. At odds with his vision is his sister. Beneatha’s aspiration is to go to medical school and to sort out her relationship with two different suitors, the Nigerian student, Joseph Asagai, who is committed to the struggle for African liberation, and another student, the stylish George Murchison, a scion of real estate-owning family not unlike Hansberry’s own.

Although Hansberry may have wanted *Raisin* to express powerfully her socialist political sentiments, her empathetic portrayals of the Youngers and their neighbors and friends, resulted in drama that flummoxed some of her politically-minded critics and reviewers. Indeed, in a recent assessment of the play, University of Chicago Professor Adrienne Brown has argued that Hansberry’s play represents her “attempt to understand the complexities of feelings for and about property and its capacity to serve as both tether and tinder for [Black] visions of liberation.” In Brown’s view, it is George Murchison, “the queer progeny of a black property mogul” who despite his relatively minor role in *Raisin*, comes closest to embodying Hansberry’s pragmatic concession to the unavoidability of property acquisition as a way of advancing any progressive social vision at all.⁵

The history of American theatre might have unfolded quite differently had *Raisin* been the first play in a lengthy career for Hansberry, but fate had other ends in view. Hansberry died of pancreatic cancer in 1965 on the same night her second Broadway play, *The Sign in Sidney Brustein’s Window* closed at the Longacre Theatre after 101 performances.

1. Preston H. Smith II, *Racial Democracy and the Black Metropolis: Housing Policy in Postwar Chicago* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2012) 194.

2. Charles J. Shields, *Lorraine Hansberry: The Life Behind A Raisin in the Sun* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2022), 15.

3. Smith, xiii.

4. Shields, 72.

5. Adrienne Brown, *The Residential is Racial: A Perceptual History of Mass Homeownership* (Stanford; Stanford University Press, 2024), 243.

KENNETH WARREN is the Department Chair and Fairfax M. Cone Distinguished Service Professor in the University of Chicago’s English Department. His scholarship and teaching focus on American and African American literature from the late nineteenth century through the twenty-first century. His single-authored books include *What Was African American Literature?* (Harvard 2010), *So Black and Blue: Ralph Ellison and the Occasion of Criticism* (Chicago, 2003), and *Black and White Strangers: Race and American Literary Realism* (Chicago, 1993). He also edited *Upton Sinclair’s The Jungle for The Norton Library* (2023).

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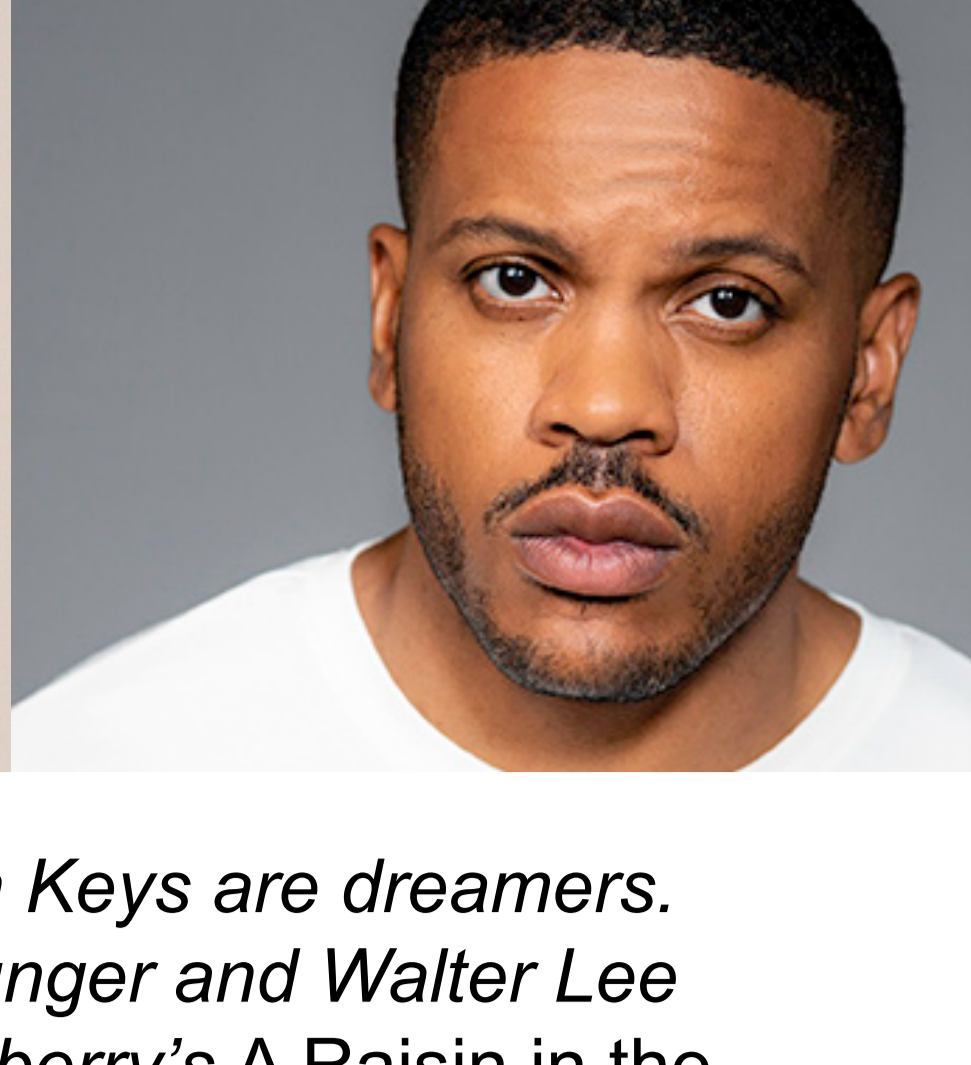
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IN CONVERSATION

ACTORS SHANÉSIA DAVIS AND BRIAN KEYS



Shanésia Davis and Brian Keys are dreamers. Playing Lena (Mama) Younger and Walter Lee Younger in Lorraine Hansberry's A Raisin in the Sun, Davis and Keys recently met with Associate Director of Marketing Camille Oswald to discuss the relationship between the specific and the universal, the definition of home, and the beauty of the South Side.

What followed was a conversation both thoughtful and personal, and deeply rooted in the themes of the play, demonstrating A Raisin in the Sun's perpetual relevance. Below is an excerpt of their discussion.

What is your background with *A Raisin in the Sun*?

Brian: I read the play in seventh grade. I was Mr. Lindner. That's what happens when the school is 100% Black kids—somebody's got to do it! [*laughs*]

Shanésia: We read it in high school. Just as a side note: I read the play again last night [before this conversation]. I told my daughter—who's in high school—what I was reading, and she said, "We're reading that!" I also had the wonderful experience of playing Ruth years ago at Kansas City Rep; the most challenging aspect of the role, outside of creating the character, was the language—the musicality of the language. And now, to be fortunate enough to play Lena Younger? How does that happen?

Lorraine Hansberry has said, "In order to create something universal, you must pay very great attention to the specific." How does that apply to *A Raisin in the Sun*?

Brian: In this play, if you focus on the specific human beings who are living in this world, you'll find there's a lot of relatability. There's a false barrier that was put up based on skin color to make it seem like there's a big chasm between us as humans, but everybody in this world—[we're] all dreamers. We all come into this world as dreamers. The world can take that out of us, but there are many of us who are fortunate to hold on and keep a grasp on that dream.

Shanésia: What is the American Dream? By whose standards do we live this dream, work towards this dream? I would rather have a dream and not reach it, than to not have any at all. What's your passion? What's your love? Go for that. Even if you don't achieve it, it's not a failure.

Brian: It is very rooted in humanity. The specifics of humanity reflect the universality of humanity, and that's the legacy.

Shanésia: The specifics of that universality that Lorraine Hansberry speaks about lie in the marginalization of Black people. It's as fundamental as, *Where can we live healthily, happily, and protected?* To have the opportunity to want more, even if it's just simply having a place to live where your child can go in the streets safely, play safely, and you can come to and from work. We're still dealing with those issues today.

Brian: I can't imagine being the first Black woman to have a show produced on Broadway—how people, the critics, would dissect it, and decode it, and try to make it something that it's not. Like, *Oh, this is a Black play*. No. It's human. We just so happen to be Black, but we're human, you know? People will have their own interpretation of what the work is, but Lorraine wanted to reflect humanity—what she saw, the humans around her, the neighborhood, the world—everything.

Shanésia: In the introduction of *A Raisin in the Sun* written by Rober Nemiroff [Lorraine Hansberry's ex-husband and Literary Executor of her estate], he alludes to scenes being taken out for Broadway: the scene with the neighbor at the end, and a scene between Travis and Walter—a Black man, who was raised by a Black man, who is now raising a Black boy—that was modified. Going back to Ms. Hansberry, that says a lot about some of the challenges she faced; even though it was this trailblazing production to have on Broadway, there were still many concessions that were made in order for that to happen. In order to not make the audience uncomfortable.

"I would rather have a dream and not reach it, than to not have any at all."

What does this play teach us about home?

Shanésia: Being raised by a single mom, we moved a lot. After my divorce, I moved a lot as well, and one of the things that I tried to establish for my daughter was a sense of stability. At one point, I was so broken down, I was talking to my best friend, and she said, "You don't understand. Wherever you are, that's home to your daughter." [With that experience] I understand what my mother went through, and now that she is eighty-five, I need to do something for her, so that at least she can understand that I understand what she went through. Just the fact that I have [my mother with me], and she has a home—that just means something to me, to provide for her. Home is what makes you feel safe: knowing that I have people in my house who I love, who I can provide for, who I can see when I want to. Knowing that I'm able to provide that for my mom is important to me—really important for me—because *her* mom did it for us. My grandmother, in Detroit. 20464 Monica. I will never forget that address.

I think important, too, is—where is the Younger family going to, right? Is it about assimilation, as Beneatha says? Of all the predominantly white neighborhoods, what is it about this neighborhood? It's just something I think about as a human being, wondering why I would want to move over there. Would that feel like home?

Brian: The Great Migration, they had to make that choice. You've got to choose the lesser of two evils.

Shanésia: Do you call that home, where you know that you are in your community, you're surrounded by people who look like you, but yet you're not safe? Or do you go to a community where you know it's not going to be safe, and you could take the necessary precautions, but you could be safe to a certain degree?

Brian: A home is very subjective. For me, it's *Where do I feel safe? Where do I feel loved?* When I travel, go to different cities, I compare everything to Chicago—anywhere else just doesn't feel like home. Something I wanted to mention, that you reminded me of: in this play, I feel like the men get too much focus. Maybe it's my upbringing, but every time I read the pages, I'm like, *This is about the women of the world*. Being raised by a single mom and my grandmother, they don't get enough credit. And I'm sure that echoes for a lot of mothers. What you're doing matters.

Shanésia: You bring up a really good point: Mama is center, but Walter is the focus. Mama is the head of the house; however, she's the head of the house because her husband passed away. Being a South Side single mom, there's a label that happens, that you're a strong Black woman. No, I'm not. I am a woman. I am a resilient Black woman. Resilience lasts longer than strength; resilience comes from the need to do what needs to be done, to raise your children, to protect your children. When I think about Lena and the words that she says—and this is the resilience she has—it's all about love. She finds that joy in the love that she has for her children, her grandchildren. She finds love and joy in the hope, in the dream. Each character has to find their own joy that drives them.

Brian: It's a journey. In this world of the Younger family, everyone's carrying this burden of grief. It's hard to be joyous during grief. For myself, on the heels of losing my mom, every day is a choice: I'm going to try and be joyful today. I have responsibilities, I have to be a dad, and I'm going to go on that journey to find my joy. And if you wake up one day and you just don't have that choice in you, I think that's okay too. You're still trying.

Can you speak about the importance of doing *A Raisin in the Sun* on the South Side?

Shanésia: It's been over twenty years, so I guess I can say I'm an official South Sider. On the South Side, there are a lot of gems and young people who want to make their communities better. I would always see this little boy—maybe about ten or twelve years old—I would see him, he would ask for money, I'd give him some money, and I'd ask him what he read today. He was like, "I've got the books right here, ma'am. I was expecting you." I wonder where that kid is today, but I hope that his love, his determination, his love for wanting to do more, to be more, whatever he got from those books...that says a lot. I never saw that anywhere but right here on the South Side.

Brian: I was introduced to a phrase through [the television series] *The Chi: How can I be what I cannot see?* Some may be coming to see the play, or may read the play, and they're in a space where they're not surrounded by either support of their dream, examples of their dream, or even the understanding that they are free to dream. The dream can thrive and survive in this environment. The notion may be, *You can't do anything—can't be anything—coming from the South Side*. You can. So many beautiful things come from the South Side of Chicago. To me, everything dope comes from the South Side of Chicago. I hold the South Side near and dear to my heart; I would not be who I am without the South Side.

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THE ENDURING LEGACY OF *A Raisin in the Sun*

BY KHALID LONG, PHD, PRODUCTION DRAMATURG



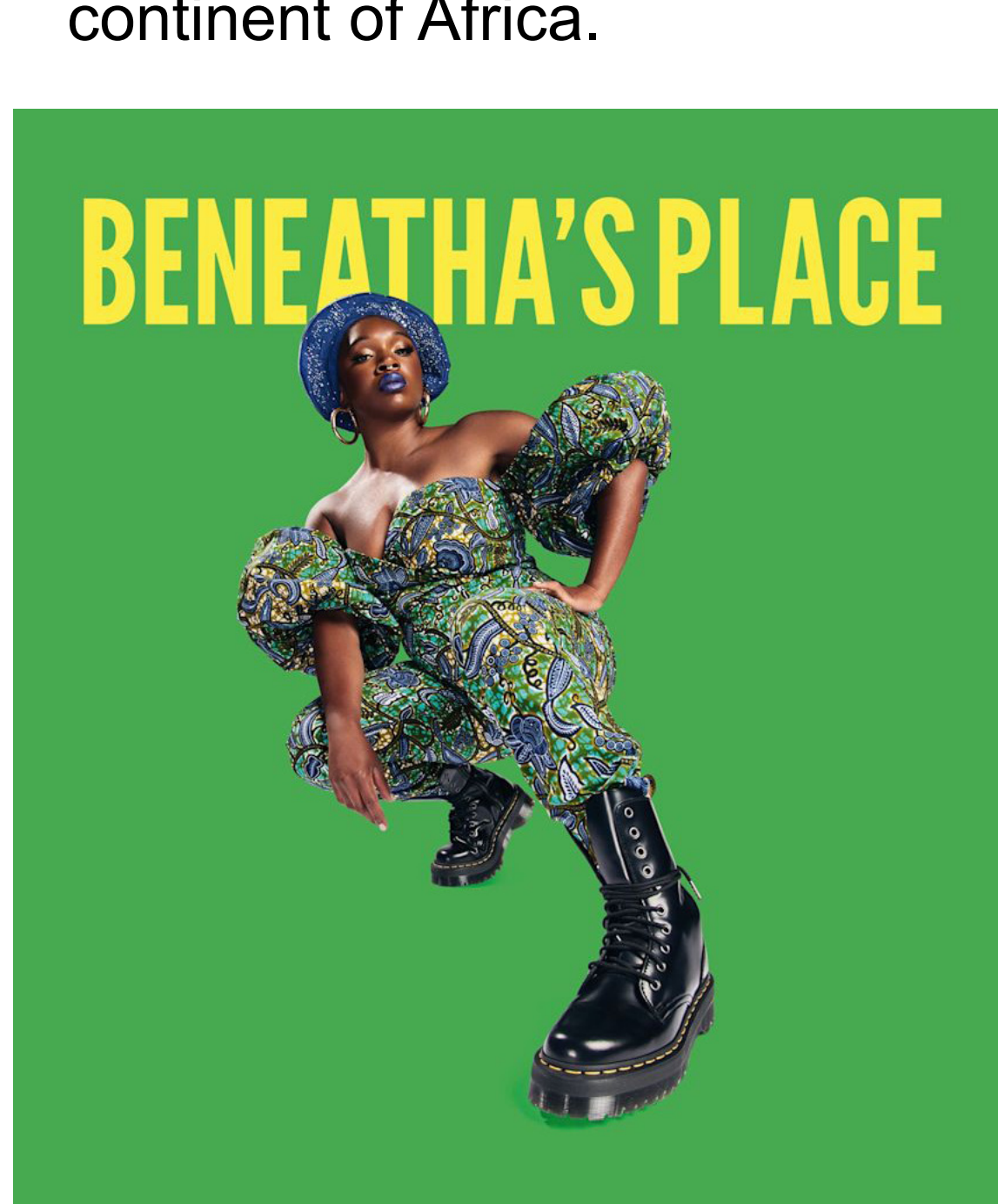
Claudia McNeil, Sidney Poitier, and Diana Sands in *A Raisin in the Sun*, 1959. Photo by Friedman-Abeles ©The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

On January 19, 1959, a few months before *A Raisin in the Sun* opened on Broadway, Lorraine Hansberry was in the Taft Hotel when she wrote a letter to her mother, Nannie Perry Hansberry, detailing her ambitions for the new play: “Dear Mother, Well – here we are. I am sitting alone in a nice hotel room in New Haven, Conn. Downstairs, next door, in the Shubert Theatre, technicians are putting the finishing touches on a living room that is supposed to be a Chicago living room. Mama, it is a play that tells the truth about people, Negroes and life and I think it will help a lot of people to understand how we are just as complicated as they are—and just as mixed up—but above all, that we have among our miserable and downtrodden ranks—people who are the very essence of human dignity. That is what, after all the laughter and tears, the play is supposed to say. I hope it will make you proud. See you soon. Love to all.”

When Hansberry wrote to her mother and witnessed the play’s success, including a 1961 film adaptation, one can only imagine if she anticipated its enduring legacy. *A Raisin in the Sun* remains among American theatre’s most produced and studied plays. It was revived on Broadway in 2004 and again in 2014. In 2022, the play was produced Off-Broadway. The film version was also remade twice: first in 1989 and then in 2008, with distinguished actress Phylicia Rashad as Lena Younger. Undoubtedly, Hansberry has impacted American theatre, culture, and politics, thus prompting renewed interest in her works. As such, several scholars and critics continue to document her efforts, most recently in studies by Soyica Diggs Colbert, Imani Perry, Charles J. Shields, and Isaiah M. Wooden.

Writer Imani Perry remarks that Lorraine Hansberry believed sincerely that “great art *required* one to say something about society.” Commencing with *A Raisin in the Sun*, Hansberry used her dramas to discuss issues affecting the most marginalized, nationally and abroad. However, Hansberry is one of the greatest American playwrights precisely because her works are not overly didactic. Instead, she invites viewers to be informed of a social message while simultaneously being highly entertained. This very quality of Hansberry’s has inspired a cadre of contemporary playwrights to take up the mantle and write with a commitment to social action and highlight “the very essence of human dignity.”

Kwame Kwei-Armah’s *Beneatha’s Place* is one such play (in which I served as assistant dramaturg). Premiering in 2014 for Baltimore Center Stage’s *The Raisin Cycle*, Kwei-Armah’s play picks up where Hansberry left off in *Raisin*. In doing so, *Beneatha’s Place* extends the conversation about colonialism’s impact at home and abroad, the necessity of Black internationalism, and the effects of structural imperialism on familial communities and other institutions, including academe. One could even argue that *Beneatha’s Place*—set in Lagos, Nigeria—has a greater connection to Hansberry’s *Les Blancs* (1970), precisely because both plays deal with the resistance to institutional racism on the continent of Africa.



Cover of *Beneatha’s Place* by Kwame Kwei-Armah, published by Methuen Drama (2023)

Other plays that revel in Hansberry’s legacy—specifically those that explore themes of home and neighborhood integration, heritage, and the American Dream—include *Younger* by Kelundra Smith, *The Etiquette of Vigilance* by Robert O’Hara, *Living Green* by Gloria Bond Clunie, *Neighbors* by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, and Bruce Norris’s *Clybourne Park* (which was produced in repertory with *Beneatha’s Place* at Baltimore Center Stage). The last four titles were published as a collection, *Reimagining A Raisin in the Sun* (edited by Harvey Young and Rebecca Rugg), thus confirming the enduring legacy of Hansberry’s groundbreaking drama.

These plays acknowledge the importance of legacy. This is especially poignant in *Younger*, which examines the life of Lena Younger years before we meet her in *Raisin*, and *The Etiquette of Vigilance*, which explores the adult life of Travis Younger fifty years after *A Raisin in the Sun* premiered.

Collectively, these playwrights have elaborated on topics initiated by Hansberry, making her play even more relevant today. These topics include the Great Migration, racial covenants and housing segregation, generational differences, perspectives on gender and the role of women within a changing society, and gentrification and economic deprivation, particularly for African Americans who still find themselves pondering the notion of home and the American Dream.



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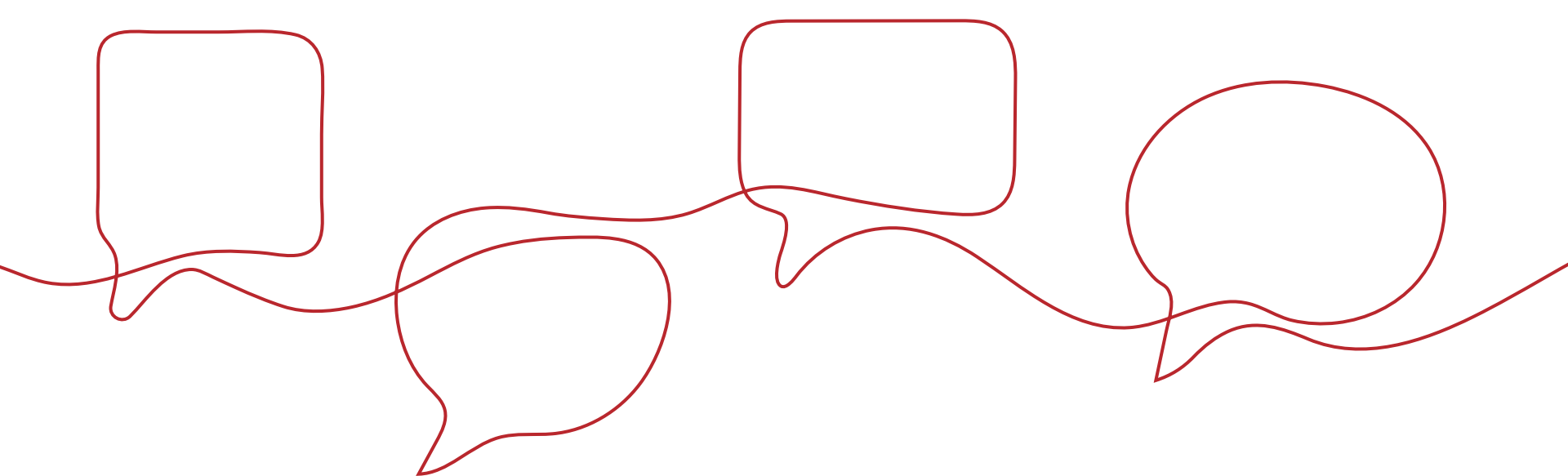
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CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

BY GABRIELLE RANDLE-BENT, DIRECTOR AND SENIOR ARTISTIC PRODUCER



If you're reading this note at Court Theatre as you watch *A Raisin in the Sun*, you are just over a mile away from Lorraine Hansberry's family home at 6140 S. Rhodes Avenue. Her home—now officially designated as a historic landmark—was the nexus point of the 1940 Supreme Court case *Hansberry v. Lee*, in which the Hansberry family tried to purchase a home in Woodlawn (then a predominantly white neighborhood) and were unable to do so because of a racially restrictive covenant. These clauses—often contained in housing deeds—codified the exclusion of Black residents from certain neighborhoods, endorsing and enforcing segregation. The Hansberry family was ultimately successful in their fight to keep their home, but this case provides crucial context for the play and the broader landscape of housing inequity in Chicago, specifically on the South Side.

Working in conjunction with restrictive housing covenants was redlining, a color-coded system implemented by the Federal Housing Administration that assigned value to neighborhoods based on demographics, and subsequently used that value to systematically deny services (such as credit, loans, mortgages, etc.). This denial then directly impacted families' upward mobility. Neighborhoods that did not score well—those deemed “dangerous” or otherwise “hazardous” or “undesirable”—were literally noted on a map in red. Uncoincidentally, in Chicago, those neighborhoods were predominantly Black communities on the South Side.

The Chicago in which *A Raisin in the Sun* is set is one in which redlining is still legal and widespread, as are restrictive housing covenants; this is the context in which we meet the Younger family. Both practices were officially outlawed by the Fair Housing Act of 1968, but—while no longer legally sanctioned—their influence continues to impact Black Americans and communities of color to this day through health (and healthcare) disparities, generational wealth, access to food and transit, and educational prospects. Their roots are deep and insidious; as such, they're still a lived reality in modern Chicago, whether we are actively aware of them or not. The legacy of inequitable housing practices shapes how we literally and figuratively move through the world, how we assign moral and financial value, and where we consider home.

As you engage with *A Raisin in the Sun*, we invite you to remember the Hansberry family. Honor their fight for fair housing by learning how it affects our lives today:

- [You Didn't See Nothin](#) podcast from the Invisible Institute
- [National Public Housing Museum](#)
- [Agora: A Dream Deferred – Black Mobility and Housing](#)

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WHEN I GET HOME

BY KAMILAH RASHIED, DIRECTOR OF ENGAGEMENT



Amanda Williams, *Ultrasheen*, 2014 – 2016, printed 2017, color photograph, 20 × 30 in. (50.8 × 76.2 cm), courtesy of The David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago

“I grew up a little girl with dreams.” That’s how the song “Dreams” begins, from the 2019 Solange album entitled *When I Get Home*. The album debuted before the pandemic began, but Black Lives Matter was already airborne and spreading in the Black community, well before our grief had a moniker. Trayvon Martin and Laquan McDonald and Michael Brown and more, they had already been slain. Soon the world would awaken to the reality that Martin Luther King may have been right about the burning house he feared we all lived in, which he disclosed with deep despair to his close friend Harry Belafonte, mere months before his assassination, as he reconsidered if integration were enough to reconcile our past.

I think about this as I listen to the chorus of Solange’s song: “Dreams, they come a long way, not today. Dreams, they come undone.” Langston Hughes wrote the poem “[Harlem](#)” in 1951; and Lorraine Hansberry wrote *A Raisin in the Sun*, perhaps in response to his inquiry, in 1957. Solange released this song in 2019, nearly 70 years after Hughes first posed the question, *What happens to a dream deferred?* As I listen to the chorus, I wonder if this is her answer. The path to equality does not appear to be linear. Human rights are fragile. Vulnerable to the elements, they can be dismantled. Dreams deferred come undone, as Solange put it.

As I turned my attention to what ideas would ground our programs for this production, the tenuous nature of progress weighed heavy on my mind. I thought about the Younger family and tried to imagine what they might have felt as they tested the American experiment and endeavored to move from the South Side of Chicago into a brave new world. I tried to comprehend the fortitude it takes to continue to insist on a more just world and the fundamental role that an indestructible kind of hope must play to keep resisting the status quo.

When I consider the improbable history of my people, I can only come to the conclusion that they believed a better world was coming, but only if they dreamed it first. Like the Youngers, they too remained steadfast, holding tight to the promise that I might one day exist. With this in mind, I hope our public programs for *A Raisin in the Sun* act as an invitation to reconsider the American Dream. Through critical exploration of the themes within this play, I hope you are inspired to have new visions of what America can become.

For details and event reservations, please visit [Court’s website](#).

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Art by Jason Lutes

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“I am overjoyed to direct the world premiere of *Berlin* at Court Theatre, my creative home,” shares Director and Senior Artistic Consultant Charles Newell. “*Berlin* is full of rich history, vibrant characters, urgent circumstances, and touching, ever-resonant themes. World premieres offer the chance to see ourselves and others reflected in unexpected and exciting ways, broadening our possibilities for connection, and *Berlin* answers that call. I am proud to collaborate with Mickle Maher, the creator of this propulsive adaptation of Jason Lutes’s graphic novel, and I cannot wait to bring this story to the stage.”

Meet us in Berlin. This production runs from April 11 – May 4, and tickets can be purchased by calling the Box Office at (773) 753-4472 or online at [CourtTheatre.org](https://www.courttheatre.org).

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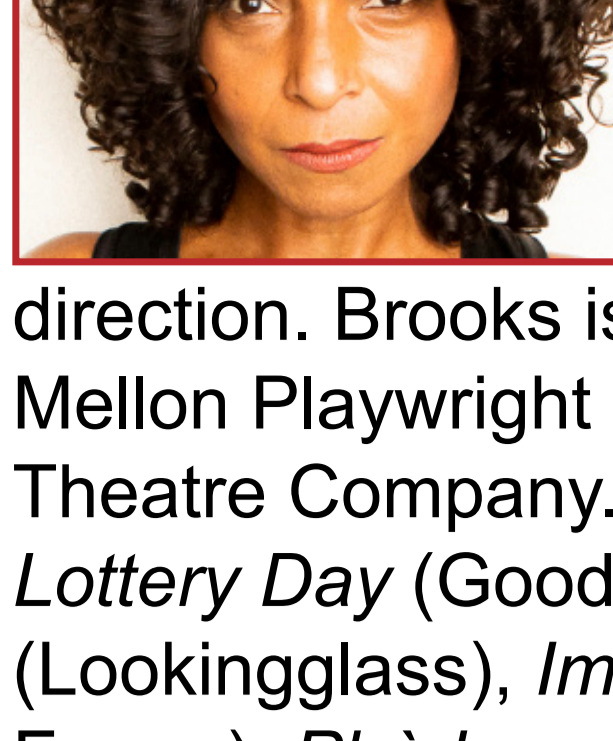
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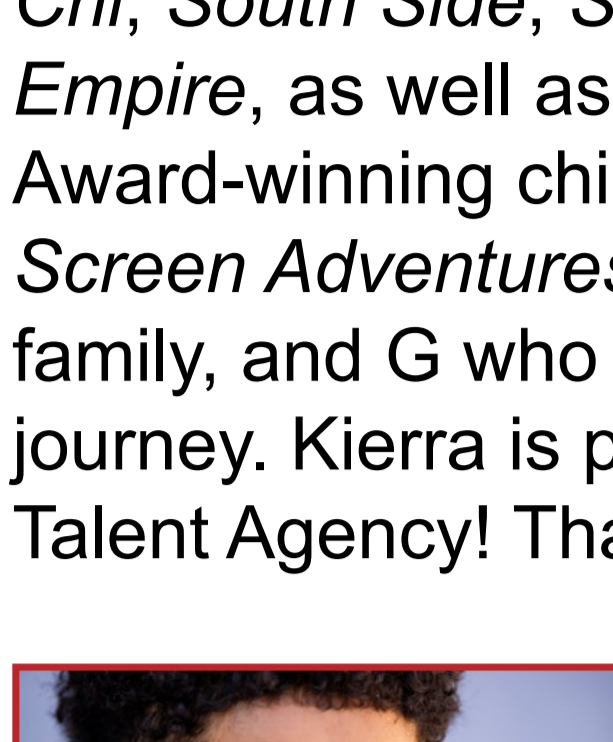
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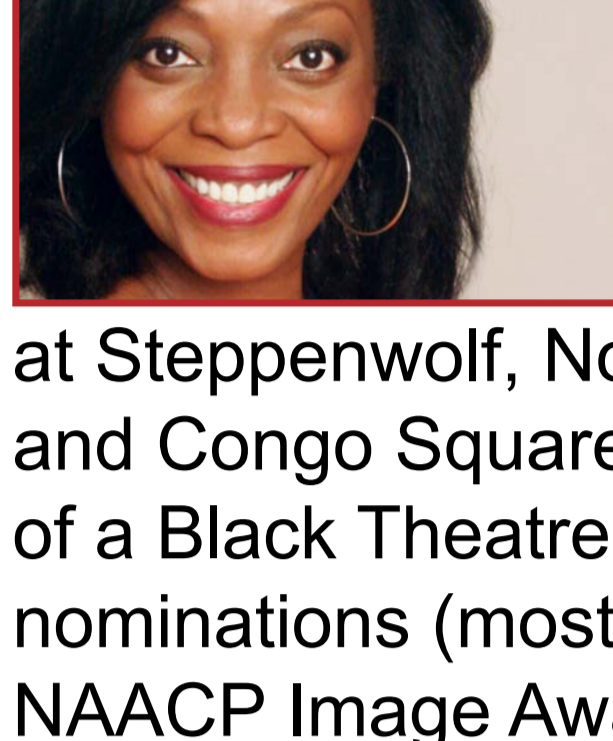
CAST PROFILES



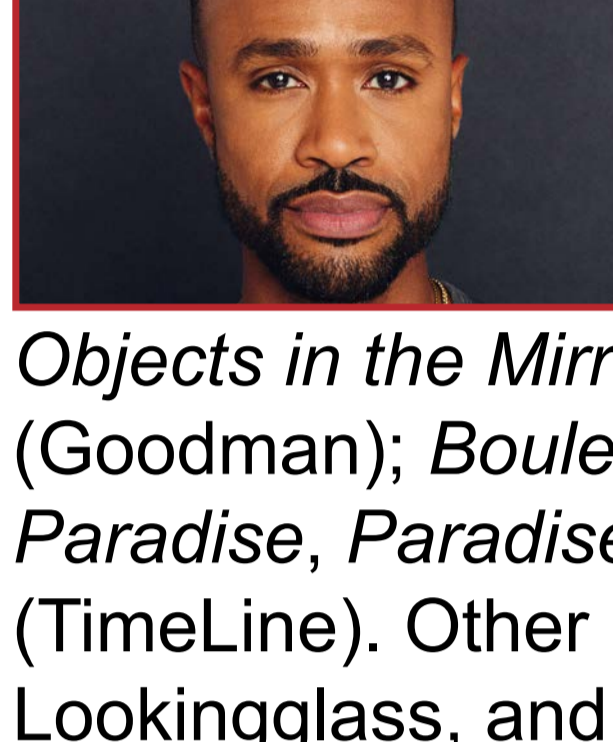
J. NICOLE BROOKS (*Mrs. Johnson*) is an award-winning interdisciplinary artist whose practice includes acting, writing, directing, and movement direction. Brooks is an ensemble member and Mellon Playwright in Residence at Lookingglass Theatre Company. Selected stage credits include *Lottery Day* (Goodman), *Beyond Caring* (Lookingglass), *Immediate Family* (Mark Taper Forum), *Phèdre* and *La Bête* (Court). Stage writing credits include *Her Honor Jane Byrne* (Lookingglass), *1919* (Steppenwolf), and *HeLa* (Sideshow Theatre Company). Television and film credits include guest and recurring roles on *Chicago Fire*, *Emperor of Ocean Park*, *South Side*, *Fargo*, and *Candyman (Say My Name)*.



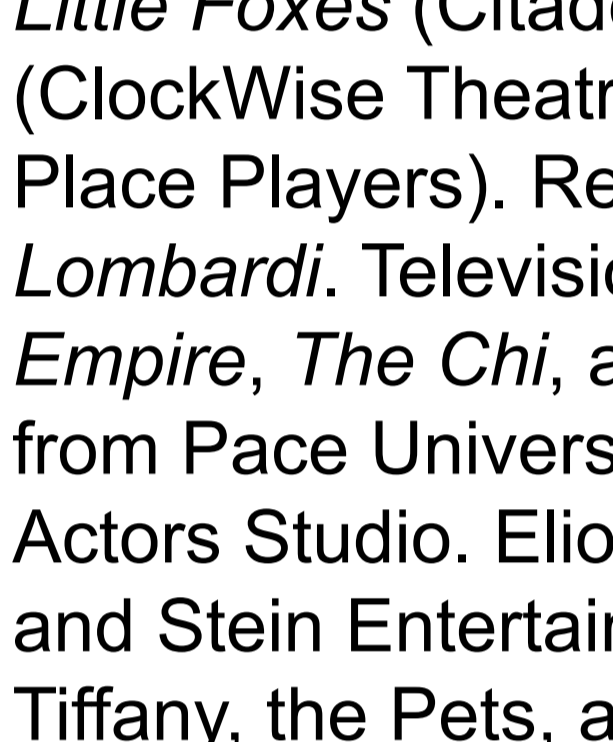
KIERRA BUNCH (*Ruth Younger*) is excited to join the cast of *A Raisin in the Sun* at Court. She was recently seen in August Wilson's *Seven Guitars* at Cincinnati Playhouse/Milwaukee Rep, Chicago Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, Court's *Two Trains Running*, Definition Theatre's *White*, and Court's *King Hedley II*. Film/TV credits include *The Chi*, *South Side*, *Shameless*, *Chicago Med*, and *Empire*, as well as a series regular role on the Emmy Award-winning children's television show *Green Screen Adventures*. Kierra is grateful for her friends, family, and G who have supported her along her journey. Kierra is proudly represented by Paonessa Talent Agency! Thank you Freddie Mae Bunch.



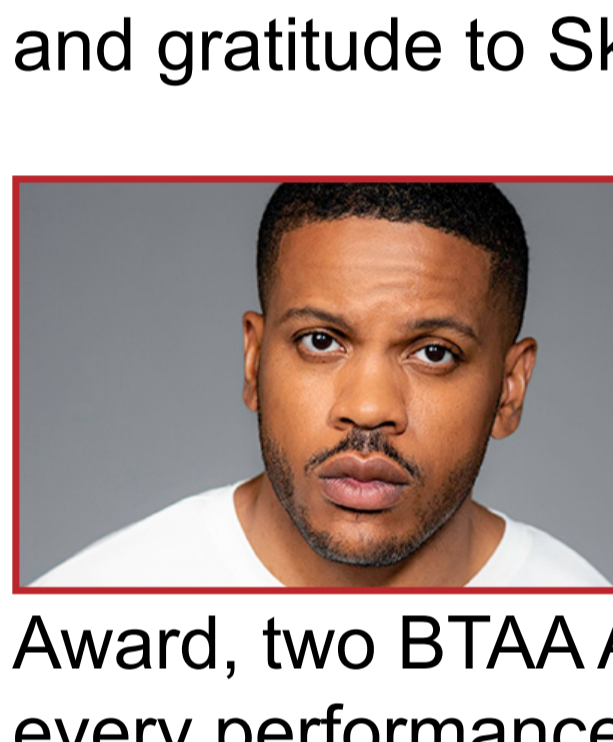
JEREMIAS DARVILLE (*Travis Younger*) is excited to be making his Court Theatre debut! He began his professional journey at a young age, having most recently co-starred in *Chicago Fire*. Additionally, Jeremias has been featured in numerous commercials and print campaigns. Outside of his busy career, he has a second-degree black belt in MMA, loves playing travel baseball, and plays the piano. Jeremias expresses deep gratitude to his family, friends, and agents at Stewart Talent for their unwavering support!



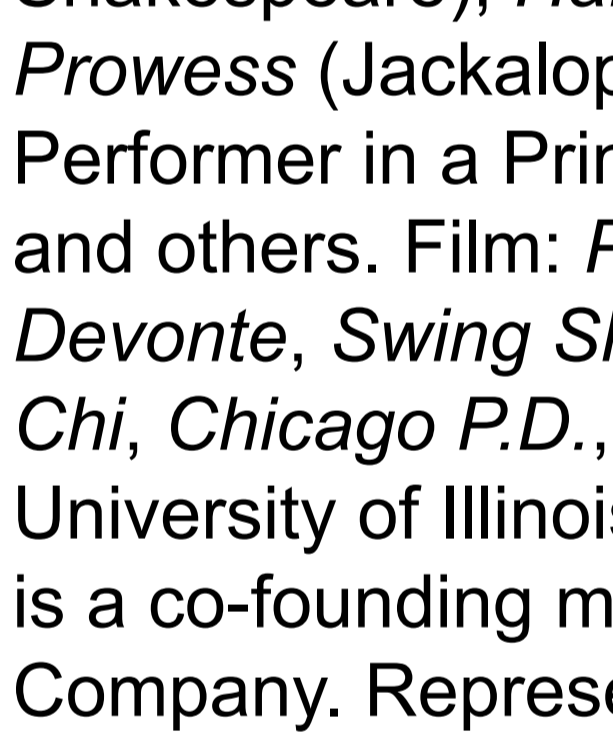
SHANÉSIA DAVIS (*Lena Younger (Mama)*) is excited to return to Court Theatre. Her last appearance was in *Native Son*. Additional credits include works at Steppenwolf, Northlight, Porchlight, Goodman, and Congo Square, among others. She is a recipient of a Black Theatre Alliance Award, several Jeff nominations (most recently for *Fences*), and is an NAACP Image Award nominee. Select television credits include *Chicago Stories: Ida B. Wells*, *Lovecraft Country*, *The Chi*, *Proven Innocent*, *Empire*, *Chicago Fire*, and a series regular role on *Early Edition*. Shanésia is a published author/editor of *Nine Questions Every Actor of Color...*, and is a proud member of Equity and SAG-AFTRA unions. XO NamNam and Tayda Boe!



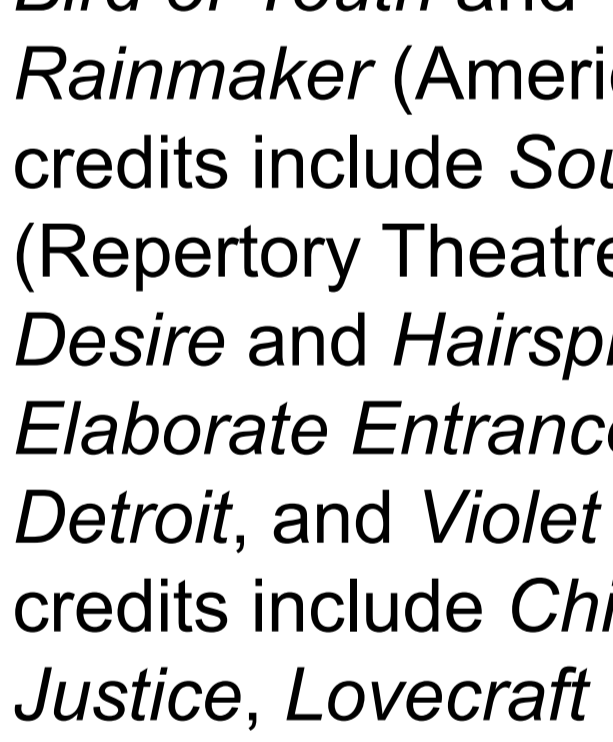
CHARLES ANDREW GARDNER (*George Murchison*) is ecstatic to be making his Court Theatre debut! Recent Chicago theatre credits include *Primary Trust*, *Objects in the Mirror*, *Stop.Reset.*, and *Buzzer* (Goodman); *Boulevard of Bold Dreams*, *Kill Move Paradise*, *Paradise Blue*, and *My Kind of Town* (TimeLine). Other Chicago credits: Steppenwolf, Lookingglass, and 16th Street. TV credits: *Mayor of Kingstown*, *Somebody Somewhere*, *The Chi*, *Chicago Med*, and *Chicago P.D.* Film credits: *Heist 88*, *Olympia*, and *Long Ride Home*. Charles is the SAG-AFTRA Chicago Local President, a Company Member with TimeLine Theatre Company, a DePaul University professor, and owner/CEO of The Actor's Cup LLC and Stay Creative Clothing. @CharlesAndrewGardner.



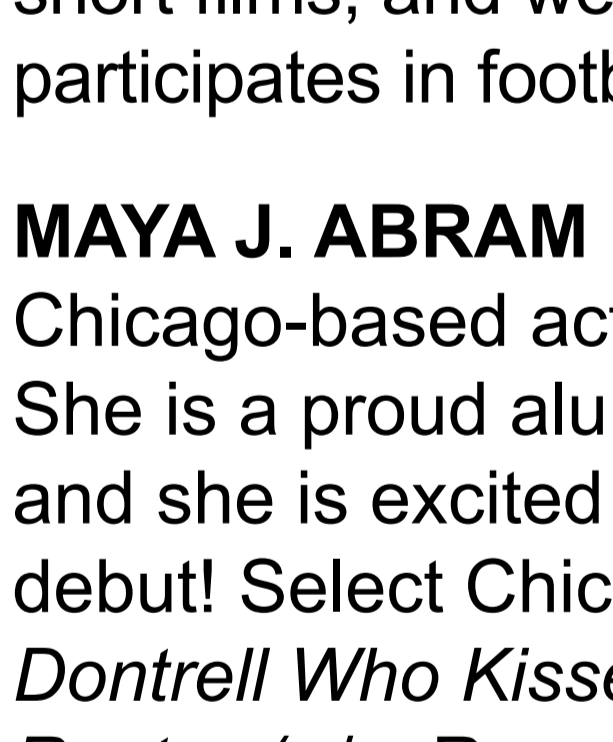
ELLIOTT JOHNSON (*Joseph Asagai*) is excited to make his Court Theatre debut in Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*. Chicago area credits include *The Little Foxes* (Citadel Theatre) and *A Solider's Heart* (ClockWise Theatre). Off-Broadway: *Othello* (New Place Players). Regional: the Midwest premiere of *Lombardi*. Television credits include *Chicago Fire*, *Empire*, *The Chi*, and *Swipe*. Elliott holds his MFA from Pace University and is a lifetime member of the Actors Studio. Elliott is represented by Stewart Talent and Stein Entertainment. Thanks Mom, Leah, Tiffany, the Pets, and Court Theatre!



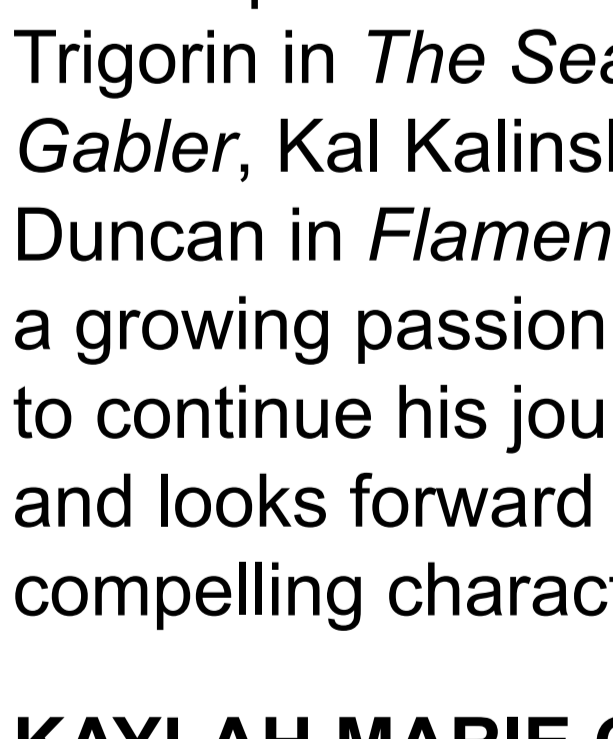
MARTASIA JONES (*Beneatha Younger*) was born and raised in Chicago, and is an alumna of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Select regional theatre credits include *Winter* (Rivendell), *Megastasis* (Eclipse), *Hoodoo Love* (Raven), *America V. 2.1: The Demise and Eventual Distinction of the American Negro* and *Fairview* (Definition). Martasia has done print/commercial work for Walgreens Health & Wellness and Glidden Paint, and voiceovers for Lunchables and McDonald's. She worked on the Spike Lee joint *Chi-Raq* and has guest-starred on *Chicago Med* and The CW's *4400*. Martasia is grateful for the love and support of her family, friends, and pitbull, Kane. She gives all praise and gratitude to Skydaddy.



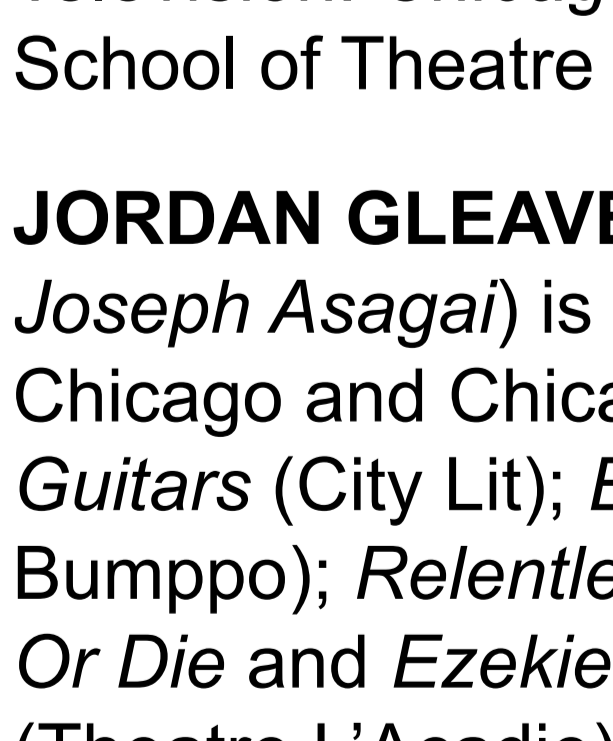
BRIAN KEYS (*Walter Lee Younger*) is an actor who hails from Chicago's South Side Englewood neighborhood. Court: *Seven Guitars*. Awards: Jeff Award, two BTAA Awards. Brian dedicates each and every performance to the memory of his mother, Beatrice Keys, and grandmother, Corine Keys. For a complete listing of theatre, television, and film credits, please visit www.iambriankeys.com.



JULIAN PARKER (*Bobo*) was most recently seen at Court Theatre in *Antigone*, directed by Gabrielle Randle-Bent. Select Chicago credits: *Pass Over*, *The Gospel of Franklin* (Steppenwolf); *An Octoroon*, *Genesis* (Definition); *Romeo and Juliet* (Chicago Shakespeare); *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar* (Writers); *Prowess* (Jackalope); *The Hairy Ape* (Jeff Award-Performer in a Principal Role, Oracle Productions); and others. Film: *Pass Over* (directed by Spike Lee), *Devonte*, *Swing Shift*. Television: *61st Street*, *The Chi*, *Chicago P.D.*, and others. Education: BFA, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Mr. Parker is a co-founding member of Definition Theatre Company. Represented by Stewart Talent Agency and Authentic Talent Management.



VINCENT TENINTY (*Karl Lindner*) is honored to be making his Court Theatre debut! He has been acting in the Chicago area since 1999 and some of his credits include *Mother Courage and Her Children* and *A Lesson Before Dying* (Steppenwolf); *Sweet Bird of Youth* and *Talking Pictures* (Goodman); *The Rainmaker* (American Blues). Regional theatre credits include *Soup*, *Stews*, and *Casseroles: 1976* (Repertory Theatre of St. Louis); *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Hairspray* (Cardinal Stage); *The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity*, *The Royale*, *Detroit*, and *Violet* (TheatreSquared). His television credits include *Chicago Fire*, *Chicago P.D.*, *Chicago Justice*, *Lovecraft Country*, *Shameless*, *The Beast*, and *BOSS*.



DI'AIRE WILSON (*Travis Younger*, alternating) discovered his passion for acting at a young age and has since performed in productions like *The Factotum* (Lyric Opera) and *Pippin* (Music Theater Works). His growing career includes appearances in commercials, short films, and web series. Outside of acting, Di'Aire participates in football, basketball, and bowling.

MAYA J. ABRAM (*u/s Beneatha Younger*) is a Chicago-based actor originally from Nashville, TN. She is a proud alum of Northwestern's MFA program and she is excited to be making her Court Theatre debut! Select Chicago theatre credits include *Dontrell Who Kissed the Sea* (Pegasus Theatre), *Routes* (*u/s*, Remy Bumpo Theatre), and *Boulevard of Bold Dreams* (*u/s*, TimeLine Theatre Company). TV credits include *The Chi*, *Chicago Fire*, and *Night Sky*. Maya is a proud member of SAG-AFTRA, for more info visit mayajahanabram.com.

MEHMET BAKIR (*u/s Karl Lindner*) is excited to make his professional debut as an understudy at Court Theatre. He has recently performed in several school productions, including portraying Boris Trigorin in *The Seagull*, Eilert Lovborg in *Hedda Gabler*, Kal Kalinski in *Infinite Black Suitcase*, and Duncan in *Flamenco Macbeth*, among others. With a growing passion for the craft, Mehmet is eager to continue his journey in theatre, TV, and film, and looks forward to more opportunities to bring compelling characters to life on stage and screen.

KAYLAH MARIE CROSBY (*u/s Ruth, Mrs. Johnson*) is so very excited to be a part of her first Court Theatre production! Previous Chicago credits include: *The Love Object* (Story Theatre); *Pro-Am* (First Floor Theater); *Manual Cinema's A Christmas Carol* (*u/s*, Writers Theatre); *Last Night and the Night Before* (*u/s*, Steppenwolf Theatre); *STEW* (*u/s*, Shattered Globe Theatre); *Paris* (*u/s*, Steep Theatre); *As You Like It* (Forest Park Theatre). Television: *Chicago Fire*. Education: BFA, UIC School of Theatre and Music.

JORDAN GLEAVES (*u/s George Murchison, Joseph Asagai*) is making his Court Theatre debut. Chicago and Chicago-area credits include *Seven Guitars* (City Lit); *Blues for an Alabama Sky* (Remy Bumpo); *Relentless* (Goodman, TimeLine); *Ride Or Die* and *Ezekiel's Wheel* (MPAACT); *The Swan* (Theatre L'Acadie); *Sunset Baby* (Fleetwood-Jourdain). Touring credits: *Othello* and *Love's Labour's Lost* (Montana Shakespeare in the Parks). Other regional credits include *Macbeth* and *Julius Caesar* (Nashville Shakespeare Festival). Jordan is represented by Stewart Talent. He holds an MFA in Acting from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a BA in Drama from Morehouse College.

MONTY KANE (*u/s Walter Lee Younger, Bobo*) is new to Court Theatre. Born and raised in Milwaukee, he earned a Bachelor's Degree in Theatre Arts at Cardinal Stritch University. His Chicago theatre credits include: *Revolutions* (Goodman); *Middle Passage* (Lifeline); *Blues for an Alabama Sky* (Remy Bumpo). TV credits include *61st Street*.

RJW MAYS (*u/s Lena Younger (Mama)*) is making her Court Theatre debut. Chicago credits include *Prodigal Daughter*, *Hoodoo Love* (Raven); *In My Granny's Garden* (Goodman); *The Whistleblower* (Theatre Wit); *Think Fast, Jordan Chase!* (Filament); *Marys Seacole* (Griffin); *True West* (Steppenwolf); *Plainclothes* (Jeff Award-Ensemble), *Kingdom* (Broken Nose); *To Catch a Fish* (TimeLine); *Skeleton Crew* (Northlight). She is a BTAA recipient for *Kingdom* (Best Supporting Actress). Television credits include *The Chi*, *South Side*, *Chicago P.D.*, *Power Book IV: Force*, *61st Street*, and *Diarra from Detroit*.



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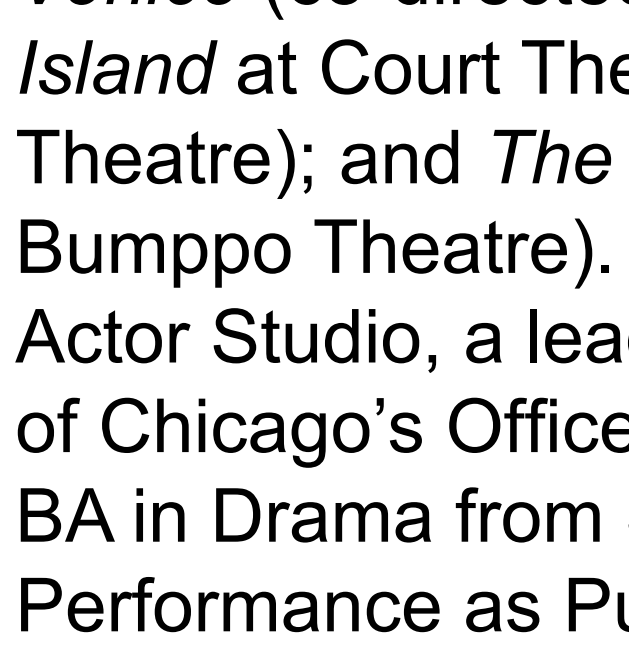
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ARTIST PROFILES

LORRAINE HANSBERRY (*Playwright*, 1930-1965) is an American playwright, poet, activist, and writer from the South Side of Chicago. She was the daughter of a real estate entrepreneur, Carl Hansberry, and schoolteacher, Nannie Hansberry, as well as the niece of Pan-Africanist scholar and college professor Leo Hansberry. Her own family's landmark court case against discriminatory real estate covenants in Chicago would serve as inspiration for her foundational Broadway play, *A Raisin in the Sun*. *Raisin*, her best-known work, would eventually become a highly lauded film starring Sidney Poitier, Ruby Dee, Claudia McNeil, and Diana Sands. Other works include (but are not limited to) *To Be Young, Gifted and Black*; *Les Blancs*; and *The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window*. During her career as a playwright, Hansberry wrote many articles and essays on literary criticism, racism, sexism, homophobia, world peace, and other social and political issues.



GABRIELLE RANDLE-BENT (*Director, Senior Artistic Producer*) is a mother, director, dramaturg, and scholar. Her directorial highlights include *Antigone*; *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice* (co-directed with Charles Newell); and *The Island* at Court Theatre; *1919* (Steppenwolf Theatre); and *The Year of Magical Thinking* (Remy Bumppo Theatre). She is a co-founder of the Civic Actor Studio, a leadership program of the University of Chicago's Office of Civic Engagement. She has a BA in Drama from Stanford University, an MA in Performance as Public Practice from the University of Texas at Austin, and is a PhD candidate at Northwestern University.

ANDREW BOYCE (*Scenic Designer*) is a Chicago-based designer working in theatre, opera, dance, and film/TV. Court: *The Lady from the Sea*. Recent Chicago credits include: *The Thanksgiving Play*, *No Man's Land* (Steppenwolf); *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* (Marriott); *The Audience* (Drury Lane). Broadway credits include New York Theater Workshop, Primary Stages, Lincoln Center, Atlantic Theater Company, and Roundabout, among others. Opera credits include Lyric Opera of Chicago, Opera Theater of St. Louis, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Ballet Idaho, Boston Lyric Opera, Curtis Opera, and Philadelphia Orchestra, among others. Yale School of Drama. Associate Professor of Design at Northwestern. www.andrewboycedesign.com.

RAQUEL ADORNO (*Costume Designer*) returns to Court after designing costumes for *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*; *Antigone*; *The Gospel at Colonus*; *The Island*; and *The Tragedy of Othello, The Moor of Venice*. Other credits include: *The Thanksgiving Play*, *POTUS*, *Describe the Night* (Steppenwolf); *Measure for Measure* and *I, Banquo* (Chicago Shakespeare); *Dial M for Murder*, *Georgiana* and *Kitty: Christmas at Pemberley*, and *Intimate Apparel* (Northlight); *The Band's Visit*, *Wife of a Salesman* (Writers). Regional credits include The MUNY, McCarter Theatre Center, Utah Shakespeare Festival, and American Players Theatre. www.raqueladorno.com.

MAXIMO GRANO DE ORO (*Lighting Designer*) is a lighting designer for theatre, opera, and dance originally from New Jersey. He received his BFA in Lighting Design from Rutgers Mason Gross and his MFA from Northwestern University. Chicago credits include *Dear Elizabeth* (Remy Bumppo); *Selling Kabul* (Northlight); *Everybody, Sweat, As You Like It*, *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*, *In His Hands*, and *Resiliencia* (Northwestern Wirtz Center); *The Magic Flute* and *The Medium* (Northwestern Opera). Regional credits include *The Winter's Tale*, *Macbeth*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, and *The Tempest* (Commonwealth Shakespeare Company). Web: Maximolightingdesign.com. Instagram: max.gdo_id.

WILLOW JAMES (*Sound Designer*) is a Chicago-based artist, educator, arts leader, and DJ whose work is focused on exploring Black identity, new works, and activism. He is the Civic Engagement Director at Definition Theatre (where he is also an ensemble member), a Court Theatre Teaching Artist, and Adjunct Faculty at DePaul University. Court: *Antigone*, *Stokely: The Unfinished Revolution*. Select credits include: *Fat Ham* and *The Nacirema Society* (Goodman); *The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk* (Northlight); *The Hot Wing King* (Writers); *Nat Turner in Jerusalem* (American Players). Representation: Michael Moore Agency. Learn more at worksbywillow.com. @worksbywillow.

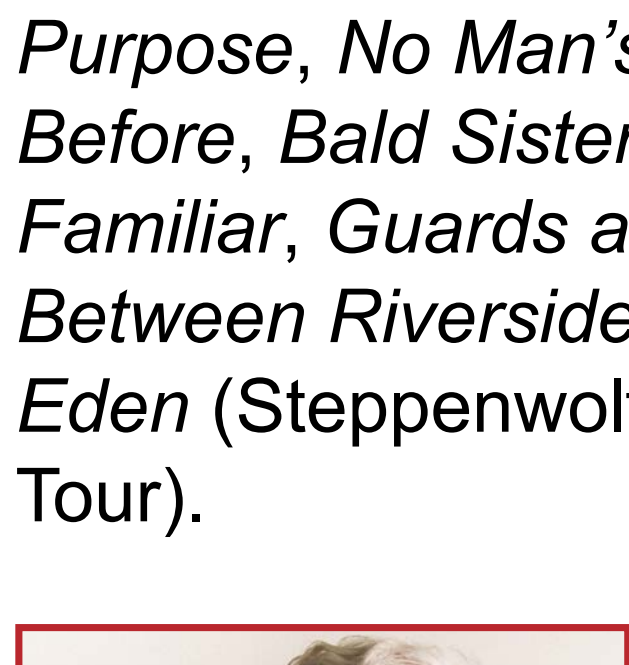
KHALID LONG, PHD (*Production Dramaturg*) is happy to be returning to Court Theatre. Credits include *Two Trains Running* and *Arsenic and Old Lace* (Court); *Relentless* (TimeLine, Goodman); *Boulevard of Bold Dreams* (TimeLine); *Sweat* (Paramount); *Mom, How Did You Meet the Beatles?* (Forward Theatre, Madison, WI); *Sonnets and Soul* (Howard University); *Kill Move Paradise* (Rep Stage); *Gem of the Ocean* (University of Louisville); *Letters to Kamala* and *Dandelion Peace* (Voices Festival Production). He is an Associate Professor of Theatre Arts at Howard University.

SHERYL WILLIAMS (*Culture and Consent Consultant*) moved to Chicago from Phoenix, Arizona in 2016. She has been supporting schools and theaters across the city with intimacy and fight designs since 2017. An affiliate with Theatrical Intimacy Education, her Court credits include *Falsettos*, *East Texas Hot Links*, *Fen*, *Antigone*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, and *Stokely: The Unfinished Revolution*. Chicagoland credits include *Obliteration* (The Gift); *Native Son* (Lifeline); *The Brightest Thing in the World* (About Face); *Silent Sky* (Citadel); and more. Visit iamsherylwilliams.com for more info.

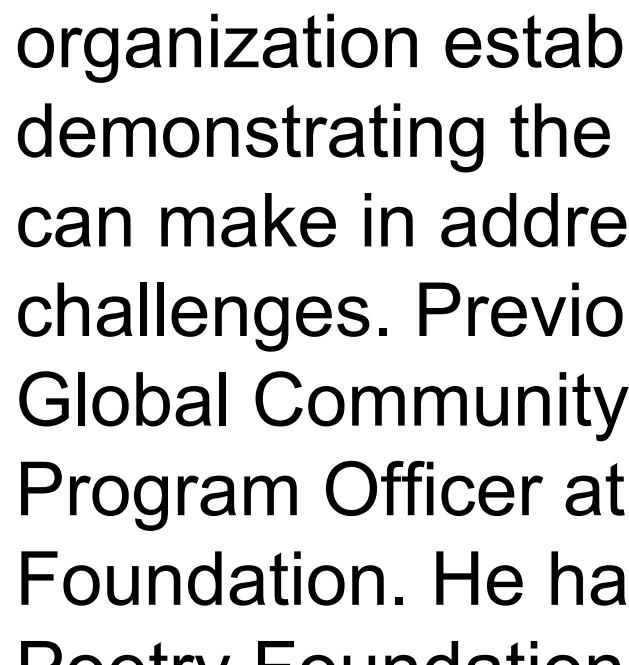
SAMMI GRANT (*Vocal and Dialect Consultant*) is thrilled to return to Court after working on *Falsettos* and *Stokely: The Unfinished Revolution*. Other credits include: *Black Sunday* (TimeLine); *A Christmas Carol* (Goodman); *West Side Story* (Lyric); *The Band's Visit*, *Once* (Writers); *Galileo's Daughter* (Remy Bumppo); and more. Film/TV coaching credits include: *Rescued by Ruby*, *Patriot*, and others. Sammi is an Instructor and Co-Head of Voice and Speech at The Theatre School at DePaul University. She holds an MFA with Distinction in Voice Studies from The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama.

KATE OCKER (*Stage Manager*) is thrilled to be back at Court Theatre. Regional credits include *Falsettos*, *Stokely: The Unfinished Revolution*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, *Antigone*, *The Gospel at Colonus*, *Fen*, *The Island*, *An Iliad*, *The Adventures of Augie March*, and *Iphigenia in Aulis* (Court Theatre); *It Came From Outer Space*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *As You Like It* (Chicago Shakespeare Theater); *Six Corners*, *BUDDY – The Buddy Holly Story*, *The Spitfire Grill* (American Blues Theater); *Noises Off* (Asolo Rep); *A Christmas Carol*, *The Odd Couple*, *An Inspector Calls* (Lyric Theatre of Oklahoma); *Red* (Resident Ensemble Players).

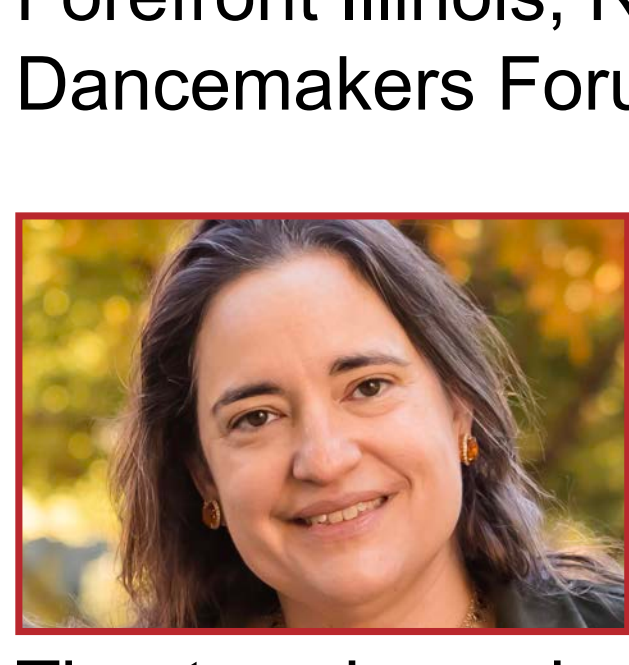
JACLYNN JOSLIN (*Assistant Stage Manager*) is returning to Court Theatre after working on *East Texas Hot Links*; *The Lion in Winter*; *Arsenic and Old Lace*; *Two Trains Running*; *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice*; *Oedipus Rex*; *The Adventures of Augie March*; *for colored girls*; *Photograph 51*; and many others. Her other credits include *Leroy & Lucy*, *Little Bear Ridge Road*, *Purpose*, *No Man's Land*, *Last Night and the Night Before*, *Bald Sisters*, *King James*, *Bug*, *True West*, *Familiar*, *Guards at the Taj*, *BLKS*, *The Crucible*, *Between Riverside and Crazy*, *The Flick*, *East of Eden* (Steppenwolf); and *Oklahoma!* (Regional Tour).



ANGEL YSAGUIRRE (*Executive Director*) has been Court's Executive Director since 2018. Prior to this role, he served as Executive Director of Illinois Humanities. During his tenure there, the organization established a number of new programs demonstrating the contribution that the humanities can make in addressing today's most pressing challenges. Previously, he was the Director of Global Community Investing at Boeing and a Program Officer at the McCormick Tribune Foundation. He has served on the boards of the Poetry Foundation, Theatre Communications Group, Forefront Illinois, Restore Justice, and Chicago Dancemakers Forum.



HEIDI THOMPSON SAUNDERS (*Senior Managing Producer*) has dedicated her entire professional career to Chicago theatre, including 15 years at Court Theatre where she is proud to be part of the leadership team. Prior to coming to Court, Heidi worked as a stage manager and technician for many storefront theaters and spent four years as the Executive Director of PlayMakers Laboratory. Heidi has served on committees or boards for the League of Resident Theaters, Cabrini Green Legal Aid, the Chicago Family Theater Association, the Chicago Comedy Association, the Illinois Theatre Association, and is currently the Chair of the Board of the League of Chicago Theatres. Heidi has an AB and MBA from the University of Chicago, and lives in Hyde Park with her family.



BECCA MCCRACKEN (*Director of Casting and Artist Cultivation*) has spent 19 years casting in Chicago, covering the Midwest market working on TV/film, commercial, and theatre projects. Becca is an Artios Award winner for her casting work at the Lyric Opera of Chicago and is a proud member of the Casting Society of America. She is committed to creating a casting space that empowers the artist and is focused on inclusivity and humanity. Thank you to Michael, James, Hayes, and Luna for their love and support.

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ABOUT COURT THEATRE

Winner of the 2022 Regional Theatre Tony Award, Court Theatre reimagines classic theatre to illuminate our current times. In residence at the University of Chicago and on Chicago's historic South Side, we engage our audiences with intimate and provocative experiences that inspire deeper exploration of the enduring questions that confront humanity and connect us as people.

Court Theatre defines classic theatre as texts from any culture, tradition, or era that resonate throughout time and speak to our present moment.

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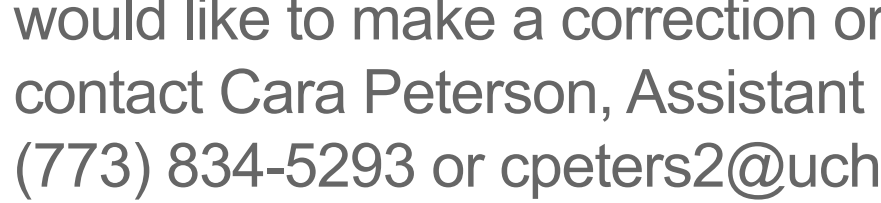
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