

A Raisin in the Sun: 1959 Broadway Production

By Zachary Sanner



“A Raisin in the Sun” is a play written by Lorraine Hansberry that was first performed on March 11, 1959, in New York City’s Ethel Barrymore Theater. The play opened to both critical and popular success that would lead to 530 total performances ending June 25, 1960, a 19-month streak. The play remained such a timeless classic and was made into movies and was revived on Broadway twice. Press found that the play was more than what was called a “Negro play” and that it had qualities that were transferable to everyone in every part of the world. The play was of more influence than just seeing Black lives play out on the stage, “A Raisin in the Sun” was the first Broadway play written by a Black woman and the first Broadway play with a Black director. The topic was an introduction to what being Black looked like under racial segregation for Broadway audiences, who were mostly white. For many people, it must have been a rude awakening seeing how poorly others were treated for a factor that they had no control over and one that had no bearing on character. Some critics feel as if the play is just as much a historical moment as it is a theatrical production. Hansberry’s work is considered visionary because at the time the play was written there was no much discussion on the topics like feminism and generation conflict. The play was performed as the civil rights movement was underway and gaining recognition for the topics that Hansberry had covered.

Sources:

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