TO BE YOUNG, GIFTED AND BLACK

CLARICE SMITH PERFORMING ARTS CENTER
OCTOBER 16 – 26, 2008
If there is any one way to describe the life of Lorraine Hansberry, it is not simple. In her lifetime she belonged to many communities: as a black person, as a woman, as a playwright, as an upper-middle-class citizen, as a civil rights activist, as a wife and, though she did not disclose it until late in her short life, as a lesbian. Her life spans so many different identities that it is nearly impossible to assemble them all into one single, comprehensive picture.

And yet, *To Be Young, Gifted and Black* attempts to do exactly that. Robert Nemiroff, Hansberry’s husband and literary executor, has here collected her own words into a narrative that tells the story of her life. It is at times fuzzy, or vague in its detail — even Nemiroff does not pretend that he can describe her completely — but it offers as full a picture as it can of who she was and what she wanted to pursue in her art. The question, then, is why? Why try to explain the unexplainable? What relevance does the (incomplete) story of a playwright who died in the 1960s have to us?

The answer lies in the purpose of Hansberry’s art itself. Following the wide success of her first play, *A Raisin in the Sun*, critics and scholars were quick to identify her as a playwright who was concerned with black issues and the struggle for civil rights. This assumption was very accurate: Hansberry was an outspoken advocate of the civil rights movement both in her writings and in her speeches; she originally met Nemiroff at a rally. What it was not was comprehensive. The premiere of her second and last work produced in her lifetime, *The Sign in Sidney Brustein’s Window*, drew negative reviews from critics and audiences alike. Granted, it was a tough play to grasp intellectually, but the main reason critics gave for their dislike was that its subject was not Hansberry’s to write about. The play depicted the lives of white Jewish intellectuals in Greenwich Village; she was supposed to be a black writer alone.

What these reviews miss about the purpose of her plays is that they are not really about the people in them at all. The action onstage depends entirely on the characters, of course, and the dramas center on them in very specific detail. But Hansberry herself said that her purpose was never to describe these individual people in isolation. Rather, she viewed her work as accessing bigger truths about all people, by focusing on particular ones: “in order to create the universal, you must pay very great attention to the specific. Universality ... emerges from truthful identity of what is.”[1] Her work was ultimately not about black people, or white people, but about people.

*To Be Young, Gifted and Black* is written in that same spirit. It may seem to describe the life of one particular person; complex, brilliant and utterly unique. But it reveals something greater about the struggles, hardships and victories that we all face, in each of our own many roles.

— John Barkmeyer, Research Dramaturg
— Adriene Brathwaite, Production/Research Dramaturg

TO BE YOUNG, GIFTED AND BLACK

by Lorraine Hansberry
adapted by Robert Nemiroff

Director Scot Reese
Scenic Designer Deborah Wheatley
Lighting Designer Brian Engel
Costume Designer Ivania Stack
Sound Designer Matthew M. Nielson
Production/Research Dramaturg Adriene Brathwaite
Research Dramaturg John Barkmeyer

Photo by David Moses Attie

OCTOBER 16 - 26 2008
INA & JACK KAY THEATRE
CAST

CAST (in alphabetical order)
Adriene Brathwaite
Nevie Brooks
Jamar Brown
Lauren Ciandella
Joanna Maria Fortuna+
Tonique Heaven+
Chase Helton
Deborah Lubega*
Jasmine Meadows+
Thony Mena
Amanda Miller*
Jason Phillips
Carmen Samuel*

* Performances: October 16, 19, 23, 24
+ Performances: October 17, 21, 22, 26

UNDERSTUDIES (in alphabetical order)
Andrew Blau
Ellentinya Dodd
Ann Fraistat
David Olson
Mai Spann-Wilson
Alicia Waller
John Wood

ACT ONE: 1930 – 1959
ACT TWO: 1960 – 1965

There will be one 15-minute intermission.
PRODUCTION STAFF

Assistant Directors
Karalee Dawn, Thembi Duncan,
Farah Lawal, and Bina Malhotra

Assistant Scenic Designer
Jackie Littman

Assistant Lighting Designer
Ariel Benjamin

Assistant Costume Designer
Kristy Hall and Frank Labovitz

Assistant Sound Designer
Joanna Maria Fortuna

Assistant Dramaturg
Eternanda Fudge

Production Coordinator
Cary Gillett

Stage Manager Supervisor
David Kriebs

Stage Manager
Sarah Wilby

Assistant Stage Managers
Rachel Parks and Courtney Wood

COSTUMES AND WARDROBE

Costume Shop Manager
Stephanie Shaw

Costume Shop Supervisor
Susan Chiang

Drapers
Lisa Burgess, Susan Chiang, Emily Hoem,
Liz Brown, Jessica Cruise, Shana Ferguson,
Maevie Kelly, Jackie Littman, Peter Park,
Chelsey Schuller, Courtney Wood,
students of THET 284, THET 479,
and THET 114

Stitchers
Krystal Brown

Wigs and Hair
Lee Gerstenhaber, Elizabeth Mann, Renee
Nyack, Alison Parker, Hannah Swirnow

ELECTRICS

Assistant Manager of Electrics
Laura MacAdam

Electrics Coordinator
Jeff Reckeweg

Master Electrician
Tom Haman

Electricians
Jenny Cisneros, Eternanda Fudge, Jordan
Levine, Yeedeya Mellman, Nicole Smith,
Mandy Yu, students of THET 114

Light Board Operator
Melanie Shur

Projection Operator
Tracy Haupt

Spot Light Operator
Sara Osipow

PROPERTIES

Properties Master
Tim Jones

Overhire Properties Crew
Andrea Moore

Properties Construction Crew
Beverly Ginley, Jose Nunez,
students of THET 114
PRODUCTION STAFF

PAINTS
Scenic Charge Artist
Ann Chismar
Mayumi Baker, Lauren Ciandella, Luis Gimenez, Jes Johnstone, Noah Langer, Amina Mohamed, David Olsen, Matt Reckeweg, Kate Wolfe, students of THET 114
Paint Crew

SCENE SHOP
Technical Director
Rick Weinard
Assistant Technical Director
Andrew Wallace
Scene Shop Supervisor
Steve Cosby
Overhire Set Construction Crew
Chris Insley and Christian Sullivan
Set Construction Crew
Lex Davis, Jacob Cigna, Aaron Holmes, students of THET 114

SOUND
Audio Shop Manager
Kristine Eckerman
Audio Coordinator
James O’Connell
Sound Board Operator
Rhea Smirlock
Assistant Sound Technician
Kyle Kallgren
Sound Crew
students of THET 114

RUN CREW
Stage Operations Manager
Bill Brandwein
Run Crew
John Kim
**BRIAN ENGEL** (lighting designer), third-year MFA candidate in lighting design. His recent work includes lighting design for *Filthy Rich* and *The Physicists*. Assistant lighting design credits include: *The Ash Girl*, *Machinal*, *The Distance From Here*; Arena Stage: *The Mystery of Irma Vep*; The Studio Theatre: *My Children! My Africa!*, Olney Theatre Center for the Arts: *Stuff Happens*, *Brooklyn Boy*, *Godspell*, *Democracy*; Round House Theatre: *Orson’s Shadow*. Upcoming work includes *The Winter’s Tale*.

**MATTHEW M. NIELSON** (sound designer) is happy to be returning to Maryland after designing 2007’s *The Distance From Here*. Other area sound design and composition credits include: Round House Theatre (2007 Helen Hayes Award, Outstanding Sound Design, Resident Play, *A Prayer for Owen Meany*), Signature Theatre, Olney Theatre Center, Franklin Park Arts Center, the Contemporary American Theatre Festival, Kennedy Center, Imagination Stage, Discovery Theatre, the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian Institution. Off-Broadway sound design credits include the Joseph Papp Public Theatre/New York Shakespeare Festival.

**SCOT REESE** (director) Professional theatre credits include productions from Los Angeles to New York. Television credits include daytime dramas, situation comedies, variety specials, commercials and an Emmy Award for individual achievement in performance. Reese’s most recent credits include the world premiere of *Blues Journey* at the Kennedy Center, *Pretty Fire* and *From the Mississippi Delta* for the African Continuum Theatre Company, *Once On This Island* and *Crumbs from the Table of Joy* at the Round House Theatre, *The Heidi Chronicles* and *Barefoot in the Park* (with Laura Linney and Eric Stoltz) at LA Theatre Works and *Bells Are Ringing* and *Purlie* at the Kennedy Center.

**IVANIA STACK** (costume designer), third-year MFA candidate in design. Previous credits include costume designs for: Journeymen Theatre Company, Berkshire Theatre Festival and Rorschach Theatre Company. University of Maryland: *Marisol*, *The Ash Girl* and *Urinetown*. Assistant costume design credits: *M. Butterfly* (Philadelphia Theatre Company), *Current Nobody* (Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company) and *Either/Or* (Theatre J). Upcoming design projects include: *Boom* (Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company), *The True History of Coca Cola in Mexico* (Gala Hispanic Theatre) and *F**king A* (Studio Theatre, Second Stage).

**DEBORAH WHEATLEY** (scenic designer), third-year MFA candidate. Recent and upcoming productions include: Adventure Theatre: *Harold and the Purple Crayon* (scenic designer); The Kennedy Center: *blues journey* national tour (associate scenic designer), *Alice In Wonderland*, Jr. (scenic designer), *Chasing George Washington* (projections designer); Imagination Stage: *The Neverending Story* (projections designer); Folger Shakespeare: *Macbeth* (assistant scenic designer); Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company: *Fever Dream* (assistant scenic designer).


ACTORS AND PRODUCTION STAFF

**Ariel J. Benjamin** (assistant lighting designer), first-year lighting MFA candidate. Outside designs include: *Black Comedy, Our Town, Two Rooms, Frozen* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Upcoming lighting design at UM: *The Illusion*.


**Ellentinya Dodd** (u/s Ensemble), sophomore theatre performance major. This is her first performance at the University of Maryland.


**ACTORS AND PRODUCTION STAFF**


**Tonique Heaven** (Ensemble), sophomore communication and theatre double major. Outside productions: *Sweet Charity* (Charity Hope Valentine), *Little Shop of Horrors* (Crystal).


**Franklin Labovitz** (assistant costume designer), second-year MFA candidate in costume design. DC area credits include costume designs for The Olney Theatre Center, Imagination Stage, Studio Theatre Second Stage, Theatre J, Theatre Alliance, Catalyst Theatre Company, Rorschach Theatre, The Potomac Theatre Project and The National Players. Upcoming shows include *Anton in Show Business* (Kogod Theatre), *The Winter’s Tale* (Kay Theatre), *Sholom Aleichem: Laughter Through Tears* (Theatre J) and *Fever/Dream* (Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company).

**Farah Lawal** (assistant director), BA in theatre from the University of Maryland. She was a recipient of a Theatre Patrons Association Scholarship. Kay Theatre: *The Ash Girl* (Spider). Kogod Theatre: *The Physicists* (Matron Boll), *The Colored Museum* (The Kid/Topsy Washington) and *The Amen Corner* (Sister Boxer).


**Bina K. Malhotra** (assistant director), BA in theatre from the University of Maryland with honors. She was a recipient of the Creative and Performing Arts Scholarship and Benjamin Banneker Scholarship. Outside productions: Strathmore Music Center: *Free To Sing* (assistant director); National Tour: *What Every Woman Wants* (assistant director); Lincoln Theatre: *Common Realities* (assistant director).

**Jasmine Meadows** (Ensemble), junior theater performance major. Other UM productions: *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (Cheshire Cat).

**Thony Mena** (Ensemble), junior theatre major. This is Thony’s first Department of Theatre production. Other UM productions: UM Film Club: *Hollow* (Dan), *Etiology* (Elijah).
ACTORS AND PRODUCTION STAFF AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS


Rachel Parks (assistant stage manager), sophomore theatre stage management major. Kay Theatre: The Ash Girl (fly master), Urinetown (run crew). Kogod Theatre: Marisol ( electrics crew).

Jason Phillips (Ensemble), junior theatre performance major. Outside productions: Brunch with Bugs (James), The Wiz (student director), Murder by Indecision (Bentley), Seussical the Musical (Wickersham Brother), Little Shop of Horrors (Wino).


Alicia Waller (u/s Ensemble), senior vocal performance major, Creative and Performing Arts Scholarship, Stringer Foundation Performing Arts Scholarship. Other UM productions: Maryland Opera Studio: Cosi fan tutte (ensemble), Later That Same Evening (production assistant), Armide (ensemble), Don Giovanni (ensemble). Outside Productions: Free to Sing (Inez, Lucrezia, Isabella; understudy).

Sarah Wilby (stage manager), junior theatre production major. Kay Theatre: Urinetown (assistant stage manager). Kogod Theatre: Marisol (assistant stage manager). Outside productions: Studio Theatre: Grey Gardens (run crew); Capital Fringe Festival (venue manager and production assistant); Hangar Theatre (carpentry apprentice).

Courtney Wood (assistant stage manager), senior theatre production major. Kay Theatre: The Ash Girl (assistant stage manager). Kogod Theatre: Marisol (assistant master electrician), The Distance From Here (assistant master electrician). Other UM Productions: Lebensraum (stage manager).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Produced by special arrangements with SAMUEL FRENCH, INC.

The videotaping or other video or audio recording of the production is strictly prohibited.

The productions of the Department of Theatre offer training opportunities for all students. Casting is decided on the basis of ability, not race, ethnicity, or gender, except in those instances where these elements are essential to the play or the character’s development.

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