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RAISIN IN THE SUN SETS BACK OPENING

Now Due Week of March
at the Barrymore—Herbert
Marshall III, Drops Role

By SAM ZOLOTOW

Regardless of the current booking congestion, room can be made—as if by magic—for anything resembling a potential hit. Apparently, this situation applies to "A Raisin in the Sun," with Sidney Poitier, Claudia McNeil and Ruby Dee in the cast.

Originally, Lorraine Hansberry's drama about Negro life was supposed to pass in review

Theatre Tonight

"TALL STORY," the Howard Lindsay-Russel Crouse comedy, suggested by Ho Nemerov's novel, "The Homecoming Game." At the Belasco Theatre, Avenue of the Americas and Forty-fourth Street. Curtain: 7:50 o'clock. Latecomers will not be seated during first act. Principals include Hans Conried, Marc Connelly and Marian Winters. Director, Herman Shumlin.

here Feb. 10 after tryouts in New Haven and Philadelphia, where the attraction continues through Feb. 7.

Since no Broadway house will be available Feb. 10, the offering will open in Chicago on that date and remain there until March 7. Therefore, the New York premiere has been set back to the week of March 9.

The house reserved for it is the Barrymore, which has been occupied since Nov. 28, 1957, by "Look Homeward, Angel," the recipient of the Pulitzer Prize and the Critics Circle Award. After an honorable career, the Ketti Frings dramatization of the Thomas Wolfe novel, starring Miriam Hopkins and Ed Begley, will leave March 7 for the road, which is confronted with an acute shortage of traveling shows.

Rumors that "Tall Story," tonight's arrival at the Belasco, may switch houses later with "A Raisin in the Sun" could not be confirmed. A spokesman for "Tall Story" said tickets were on sale until May 2 and there was a possibility that air-conditioning may be installed in the Belasco.

CLIPPING FROM THE

N. Y.

Times

Lab City

28 JAN 1959

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100-107297-162

SEARCHED.....	INDEXED.....
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JAN 29 1959	
FBI - NEW YORK	

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TUESDAY, JAN. 27, 1959

New Haven

Unknown Negro Writer Scores Hit With Play Here

Her First Sale as Writer Destined for Broad- way Success

"I wanted to try to put something on the stage that would take the very substance of ordinary life today and insist that even in the depths of disappointment there is something of the very nature of life."

With this in mind, a slight, 22-year-old Negro girl set her sights high. With a life's ambition to be a writer, she simply began writing, choosing as her medium the drama, probably the most complex and demanding form of literary expression.

Six years later, at 28, Lorraine Hansberry has a potential Broadway hit on her hands. Her "Raisin in the Sun" opened at the Shubert Theater here last week to enthusiastic reviews. Sale of the Broadway option to the play marked the first money Miss Hansberry had ever made through her writing.

"Very Excited"

"We're very excited about this production," says Miss Hansberry. "It means a great deal to a lot of people, aside from any artistic impact it may have. Negro writers rarely get the opportunity to do serious work that is designed and written out of an effort to represent life rather than a series of stereotypes, so they have a sense of dedication about this play."

"It also means work for them on a level of dignity that they don't often get a chance to do—this is the first play to bring a Negro director to Broadway."

The play, which is about a South Chicago Negro family, has only one white character in the cast. With realism and



With the script of her enthusiastically-received "Raisin in the Sun" in her lap, young playwright Lorraine Hansberry discusses her work. Play opened here at the Shubert last week.

with a great deal of humor, it tells about the problems and the dreams of a poor Negro family.

The play, Miss Hansberry says, is not autobiographical. Although she is from Chicago, she comes from a comfortable Negro middle-class home rather than from the poorer class. Her father was the head of a realty firm.

However, she says, "In the Negro community, the delineation of classes is not as sharp as it is in other areas in the United States. For example, if my mother wanted to employ a domestic, the person she employed might just as easily be one of her friends... The figures in my play are composite people, so that there are ele-

Lorraine Hansberry's 'Raisin in the Sun' Highly Praised

ments of many people I've known...

"It doesn't matter if you're writing about Negro or white characters—if you're genuine writing about human beings as you're generally trying to present their identity and all their dimensions and if you know them, I think you can feel just as free to draw white characters as Negro," she says.

Miss Hansberry, who attended the University of Wisconsin for two years, became interested in the theater as a youngster, when she saw a road performance of "The Dark of the Moon."

"I thought it was amazing—what could be done in terms of creating an illusion up there."

She says she did some acting in amateur groups, and took some drama courses. Later she studied at the Playwrights' Workshop at the New School of Social Research in New York, and began writing plays. She wouldn't show her first work to anybody.

"There's not a line of my work that I haven't spoken," according to Miss Hansberry, who says she often gets up from the typewriter to stride across the room, working out the way a character should move.

Husband Aids As Critic

Because one of the neighbors objected to the typewriter's going after 11 p.m. Miss Hansberry developed the habit of working during the day, and says it seems to work well for her. In recent years, her husband, Robert Nemiroff, has

MRS ECKENHOWER

SEARCHED INDEXED
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FEB 2 1959
FBI - NEW YORK
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Article from "New Haven Evening Register"
edition of 1/21/59 - Pg. 2

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
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helpful critic. Nemil-
writer (who wrote
Fisher hit "Cindy,
Cindy" and the more recent
"Ambrose"), is also "a fine
ary critic," his wife says.
currently at work on a
al work on Theodore

Hansberry wrote "Rais-
Sun" between her
th birthdays. When
it, she felt good
about it to read it to
Phillip Rose, an associate
husband's.

had him to dinner and
ected them to the play.
yed until 2 a.m."

who has always want-
produce a serious play,
bo: e Broadway option—

Miss Hansberry's first sale—
and "Raisin in the Sun" was
on its way to Broadway. The
play, which stars Sidney Poitier
and Claudia McNeil, is playing
two weeks in Philadelphia now.

Dramatists Miss Hansberry
particularly admires include
Lillian Hellman, Sean O'Casey,
Arthur Miller and Ibsen.

"I wouldn't mind a re-birth
of Ibsenism—or a little Shakes-
peare at all," she says. "I
think we haven't helped our-
selves much by opening our
arms to superpsychological
motifs that usually are, not very
well defined dramas . . . I'm
in favor of anything on the
stage that is highly theatrical
—if the theatricality is genu-
inely motivated."

Theater

SHUBERT PLAY A WARM STUDY OF NEGRO LIFE

'A RAISIN IN THE SUN'
By Lorraine Hansberry.
Presented by Philip Rose
and David J. Cogan. With
Sidney Poitier, Claudia Mc-
Neil, Ruby Dee, Louis Gos-
sett, Diana Sands, John
Fiedler, Ivan Dixon, and
others. Directed by Lloyd
Richards; designed and
lighted by Ralph Alswang;
costumes by Virginia Vol-
land. At the Shubert.

A new Negro play of exceptional warmth and discernment and a Negro company of great charm—and proficiency—last night made "A Raisin In The Sun" one of the dramatic high spots of the season at the Shubert.

In this study of South Chicago slum dwellers who survive today through a dedication to toil and family decency and who face tomorrow with a dream of the good things to be won, playwright Lorraine Hansberry has given us a sensitively written family drama which involves its people deeply in the currents of today's Negro living but never sacrifices their individuality to political or social symbolism.

Her play is given a rousing performance by Sidney Poitier as a frustrated young husband who finds himself shackled to poverty... by

the family heritage to find a true objective.

The performances are uniformly strong. Claudia McNeil's easy grasp of a character of simple dimensions—and massive moral resources—is as amusing as it is moving. Her position on a chair in a moment of crisis, her lowered eyelids, her moments of song—or brief despair—are magnificent. Sidney Poitier unfolds a portrait of infinite complexity and yearning behind his big talk. And there are solidly engaging contributions from Diana Sands as the rising intellectual, from Ruby Dee as the steadfast wife, from young Glynn Turman as the youngster of the family—and, in a trio of fine supporting vignettes, from Ivan Dixon as a Nigerian college mate of the girl, from Louis Gossett as a prosperous young suitor, and by John Fiedler as a "reasonable" white man who talks to the family about a house they propose to buy.

"Raisin In The Sun" has been directed by Lloyd Richards with a sure theatrical touch and with a clear respect for the dignity as well as the humor of author Hansberry's writing. Ralph Alswang has provided an atmospherically worn-out tenement setting.

In the life and the strength of its people, the play provides New Haven — and Broadway too — with a production of beauty and memorable warmth.

—R. J. L.

Quinnipiac College Offers Special Evening Courses

Courses on the history and geography of Alaska and on current issues in the Far East are among several special courses for interested adults in the community to be offered in the Evening Division of Quinnipiac College during the spring semester.

Other courses include: Effective writing.

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1/22/59 Edition of the
"New Haven Evening Register"

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'Raisin in Sun' with Poitier attracts raves at the Walnut

Sidney Poitier is star of "A Raisin In The Sun," the new play by Lorraine Hansberry now playing a two-week date at the Walnut Street Theatre.

Although he first faced Broadway footlights in a comic role—Polydorus in a revival of the ribald farce, "Lysistrata," it was in films of great emotional impact such as "Blackboard Jungle," "Edge Of The City" and "The Defiant Ones" that he was established as a leading dramatic actor.

THUS IT is appropriate that he returns to the stage in a drama.

In "Raisin" he portrays a perplexed young man whose dreams and ambitions soar beyond reality to the extent that he precipitates a crisis which eventually involves his whole family.

Ruby Dee, the versatile actress, who scored as tempestuous "Anna Lucasta" on the New York stage will play the actor's wife in the Philip Rose-David Cogan production.

Miss Dee has already been Poitier's mate in the films, "Go Man Go," "Edge Of The City," and "The Virgin Island."

Her other screen credits include, "The Jackie Robinson Story," "St. Louis Blues," and the recently finished, "Take A Giant Step."

Claudia McNeil, who impressed New York critics as lusty Mame in "Simply Heavenly" and charmed TV viewers as warm-hearted Berenice in "Member Of The Wedding" is cast as Poitier's mother. Louis Gossett, a young actor,

best remembered for his sensitive portrayal of the juvenile hero in "Take A Giant Step" and Diana Sabds, a dancer-actress who appeared to advantage in "The World of Sholem Aleichem" and a quartet of major movies are also featured.

The directorial reins of the production are in the hands of Lloyd Richards, Ralph Alls-wang, who numbers among his many Broadway credits, "Sunrise at Campobello" designed the setting and Virginia Volland executed the costumes.

PHILADELPHIA, PA.

INQUIRER _____
BULLETIN _____
DAILY NEWS _____

Philadelphia American

DATE 1/24/59
EDITION _____
PAGE 17
COLUMN 7
EDITOR _____
TITLE OF CASE _____

SEARCHED _____ INDEXED _____
SERIALIZED _____ FILED _____
FEB 12 1959
FBI - NEW YORK

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HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 10/5/82 BY SP6 BJA/omf

100-107297-167

New Haven Critics View 'A Raisin' in the Sun' as Something to Rave About

NEW HAVEN, Conn. — Lorraine Hansberry's initial play, produced for Broadway by Phillip Rose and David J. Cogan with more behind-the-scenes democracy than can be seen across the footlights, took its initial step towards the illuminated lane here Wednesday night in a most successful manner.

STARRING Sidney Poitier with Claudia McNeil, Ruby Dee, Louis Gossett, John Fiedler, Diana Sands and Ivan Dixon, the drama was warmly embraced by audience and critics alike at the Shubert Theatre.

Directed by Lloyd Richards, "A Raisin in the Sun" is as much a departure from the usual "Negro" screen fare as is Richards, who is the first Negro to direct a major legitimate stage effort for the big street. The job he performed with his talented actors and actresses bubbled out all through the three-act drama.

LIKE THE AUDIENCE, the critic for the Journal-Courier spared no adjectives in expressing his enjoyment of the opus. He wrote: "The combination of an engrossing story, a beautifully written play and superb direction by Lloyd Richards marks the new production for certain Broadway success. While it is a story of a fifth-generation family of Negroes living in Chicago, its theme is a universal one—man's dream of bettering himself."

PHILADELPHIA, PA.

INQUIRER _____
BULLETIN _____
DAILY NEWS _____

Lorraine Hansberry
Philadelphia
DATE 1/31/59
EDITION _____
PAGE 23
COLUMN 2
EDITOR _____
TITLE OF CASE _____

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
DATE 10/5/82 BY SP-6 BJA/ODL

SEARCHED _____	INDEXED _____
SERIALIZED _____	FILED _____
FEB 12 1959	
FBI — NEW YORK	

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Hit Makers— Ruby Dee and Sidney Poitier are shown here in a happier scene from "A Raisin in the Sun," the new play by Lorraine Hansberry, which had a most successful opening in New Haven Wednesday, and moved into Philadelphia for a two-week run at the Walnut Street Theatre. The Connecticut critics went all out for the production and labeled it a sure Broadway hit.

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OPENS WED. EVE. MARCH 11
MAIL ORDERS NOW

PHILIP ROSE and DAVID J. EDGAN present

SIDNEY POITIER



a raisin in the sun

A new play by LORRAINE HANSBERRY

CLAUDIA McNEIL RUBY DEE
LOUIS GOSSETT DIANA SANDS
JOHN FIEDLER IVAN DIXON

Directed by LLOYD RICHARDS
Designed and Lighted by RALPH ALSHANG
Costumes by VIRGINIA VOLLAND

PRICES: Evng. Orch. \$4.90, Mezz. \$3.75, 4.00, Balc. \$4.05,
3.00, 2.90 First Matinee Thurs. (March 12) thereafter Wed. &
Sat. Orch. \$4.60, Mezz. \$4.60, 4.05, Balc. \$3.60, 3.00, 2.50
Opening Night Completely Sold Out (Tax Included)

Please enclose stamped, self-addressed envelope with check
or money order and suggest three alternate dates

BARRYMORE THEATRE 247 West 47th Street, N. Y. C.

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100-107297-171

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I LOVE A PARADE

By JACK SAUNDERS

This Column is a Regular Feature of Your TWICE-A-WEEK TRIBUNE and will appear again in TUESDAY'S EDITION.

BILLY ROWE, a colleague and friend of so many years, there are times when I hesitate to cite them, has done a commendable "advance job" for Sidney Poitier's "A Raisin In The Sun," which opens at the Walnut Theatre Monday night.

BILLY'S CONTACTS have been wide and significant and there is great reason to believe "Raisin In The Sun's" Philly premiere should be a click of stellar dimensions. All of which is intended to imply that Negro first-nighters will be out in droves, a multitude occupying seats of the highest price.



JACK SAUNDERS

CONCHITA NAKATANI and Juanita Simms aided Rowe in making local contacts, and all of them received invaluable assistance from Dr. Eugene Wayman Jones.

CLUB GEMS, that galaxy of Philly lovelies, permitted me to introduce Billy Rowe to them at their monthly meeting at Clarice Cox's West Philly apartment the other night. And after listening to Billy hail the merits of "A Raisin In The Sun," the club ladies purchased a block of something like 36 tickets for themselves and their husbands.

PHILADELPHIA, PA.

INQUIRER _____
 BULLETIN _____
 DAILY NEWS _____
Philadelphia Tribune
 DATE 1/24/59
 EDITION _____
 PAGE 17
 COLUMN _____
 EDITOR _____
 TITLE OF CASE _____

100-107297-173

SEARCHED _____ INDEXED _____
 SERIALIZED _____ FILED _____
 401 FEB 1 6 1959
 FBI - NEW YORK

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
 HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
 DATE 10/5/82 BY SP-UBS/R/om

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OTHER LOCAL CLUBS as Las Connalsance, Click, Town And Country, Continentals, and the Collegiate Choir, Lois Williams, president; Howard Council, Helen Mons, president, pledged to purchase tickets either for opening night or some night during the play's two-week stay at the Walnut. As a matter of fact, the response was so great Billy Rowe has been singing the praises of Philadelphians the past two weeks.

GIL AND ESTHER TURNER were among the first to buy tickets for the premiere—and were followed in short order by Calvin and Clarice Cox, Don and Lois Ramsey, Alexander and Ruth Aikens, Julia and Buddy Moore, Kenny and Charlotte Miller, Carroll and Thurmae Anderson, George and Patty Bolden, Bill and Jean Curtis, Joe and Gloria Harrison, Candida Simpson, Janet, Elinor Johns and others from the same group.

THE POITIER PLAY shapes up as one of the most outstanding in history, from this correspondent's point of view, mainly because of the fact that it was written by a Negro, **LORRAINE HANSBERRY**, is being directed by a Negro, **LLOYD RICHARDS**, will star a Negro, **SIDNEY POITIER**, and is co-produced by two white men, Phil Rose and David Cogan.



FROM PHILLY, "A Raisin In The Sun" will move on to Broadway—and that will be something! For Broadway has been hard as rawhide on Negro writers and directors as long as I can remember. Very few plays written by Negroes have reached Broadway and none have been able to survive. So here is the chance for Negro writers and directors to get on Broadway and stay.

PHILLY, HOWEVER, is at present the key to whether a play written by a Negro and directed by a Negro will be able to reach

RUBY DEE the "Great Whiteway." For the Philadelphia reception of "A Raisin In The Sun" for two weeks, beginning next Monday, Jan. 26, will determine the life of the play and whether it reaches Broadway. The reason is plain and simple: If "Raisin In The Sun" is forced to fold here because of lack of patronage, that's the finale. Broadway will never see it.

SIDNEY POITIER, the star, needs no introduction. His rise in the theatrical world has been meteoric, and the same goes for his co-star, Miss Ruby Dee.

POITIER'S FORTUNES seemed at the lowest ebb when he did the TV show, "A Man Is Ten Feet Tall." It proved a fantastic success and he was immediately signed for the picture version, "Edge of the City." He was then given a role in "Something Of Value," which



took him to Africa. He returned from Africa and was soon enroute back to make "Mark of the Hawk." After "Hawk" came "Band of Angels" and then "Virgin Island." Following "Virgin Island," he was co-starred with Tony Curtis in Stanley Kramer's "The Defiant Ones." Both the picture and Sidney are leading contenders for the 1958 Academy Award nominations. On completion of "The Defiant Ones," he was immediately signed for "Porgy and Bess" in which he plays one of the title roles. Now he's in "Raisin In The Sun," which

SIDNEY POITIER hope will reach Broadway with the help of an understanding Philadelphia.

Chicago Housewife Authors Hit 'A Raisin In The Sun'

By ESTHER EDWARDS

The patience of a Chicago housewife who refused to give up her struggle to become a playwright, despite her failures to complete four previous plays she had begun writing, was richly rewarded by the phenomenal success of her fifth and final effort. The play is the widely-acclaimed "Raisin In The Sun" and the victorious young woman is Miss Lorraine Hansberry, now hailed as one of the nation's most talented playwrights.

Miss Hansberry says that her many years of living in a squalid Negro ghetto inspired her to write the play depicting the plight of a typical Negro family who much like herself is trapped by housing discrimination, forced to live in tenement jungles.

The play stars motion picture actor Sidney Poitier and is backed by a supporting cast of some of the top Negro thespians including actress Ruby Dee.

Predicted to be a certain Broadway hit, the plot graphically tells of the frustrations, setbacks and racial hatred encountered by the Negro family when it attempts to escape the squalid surroundings of the "jungle" and move into a home in a white residential community.

Miss Lorraine Hansberry, 28-year-old authoress of the play, drew heavily upon her own background as a child and a young woman raised in the slum section of Chicago to produce this supreme effort which is being hailed

as a documentary study of slum conditions in big cities.

Interviewed by this reporter in her suite at the John Bartram Hotel where she is staying for the duration of the play's showing at the nearby Walnut St. Theater, Miss Hansberry admitted that she believed the success of the play is largely due to the authenticity of the background and the plot.

"Although I had attempted several other plays," Mrs. Hansberry said, "none of them came through because I was writing about situations which I was not as familiar with as I am with housing discrimination in Chicago."

"I am a realist," she added, "and this play tells of problems which are universal—problems which daily confront millions of Negroes across the nation."

"At first," she said, "I was surprised to see that so many whites clamoured for tickets both here in Philadelphia and in New Haven where it was first shown in a

try-but performance." She realized later, she said, that discrimination is no longer a problem to Negroes alone, "it is as much a handicap to liberal whites."

Although the play definitely has a "message," Miss Hansberry emphasized that the plot has many humorous sidelights which provide comic relief and prevent it from becoming impossibly heavy.

Miss Hansberry, who was educated in Chicago elementary and secondary schools, studied for two years at the University of Wisconsin where she majored in English.

With only her mother to support her (her father died when she was a child) Miss Hansberry was forced to work nights and attend classes during the day when she was in college.

She left college in 1954 to marry

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Robert Nemiroff, a young New York City businessman.

Her new role in life as housewife did not lessen her college-born desire to write the "great American drama."

Between her cooking and her washing chores, she began work on several plays, all of which were doomed to failure.

"I never did complete any of them," she recalls, "because none of them rang true when I read them. So I would stop writing one and begin another."

Finally after three years and four abortive attempts, Miss Hansberry hit upon the plot for "Raisin In the Sun."

"I knew it was going to be a success almost from the completion of the first act," she says.

The critics, always severe to beginning playwrights, have been extremely kind to Miss Hansberry. They have had nothing but praise for the play which they predict will be a Broadway hit.

The young writer is optimistic that because of the favorable reviews, no drastic changes will be made in the cast or the plot.

Broadway bound, Miss Hansberry's hit will leave Philadelphia this week for her hometown, Chicago. Then, on the tenth of March, the play will face its supreme challenge when it is scheduled to open on Broadway.



MISS LORRAINE HANSBERRY, the young author of the hit "A Raisin In The Sun," which ends its two-week showing at the Walnut Theater in Philadelphia, was born in Chicago, Illinois. The play will leave this city Sunday for Chicago. It opens in New York City March 10th. Tops in drama, it has been rated "show of the year".

Sidney Poitier is superb in 'Raisin In the Sun'

By RUTH JENKINS, who subscribes to the new Sidney Poitier and a sup-intellectual schools of thought reporting cast of top drawer drama and self-expression. matics stars are giving superb performances of "Raisin In the Sun" now playing the Walnut Theatre.

'Twas the acting rather than the school-age Younger son. the time-worn depressing story of racial frustration which won the acclaim of the full-house First Nighter audience on Monday.

THOSE who go to see Mr. Poitier at his talented best will not be disappointed. His performance is fully as moving as his award-winning screen portrayal in "The Defiant Ones."

But some impact is lost by the commonplaceness of his role as Walter Lee Younger, only man in a family of other, wife, sister and son—family stricken not only by economic limitations, but by clashing ideas of what makes for a better life.

NEVERTHELESS, Mr. Poitier chalks up another triumph in his succession of dramatic successes.

But the surprise performance go to Claudia McNeil who commands ovational applause in her portrayal of Lena Younger, all-suffering, all-loving, all-forgiving mother of the family.

Her homespun humor, god-fearing preachments, and earthly practicality make her a warm and lovable character.

Ruby Dee turns in a performance as the loyal wife, left out, without taking anything to make overwhelming thing away from the impact of her husband's hurts and frustrations.

And Diana Sands provides the most sparkling heights of realistic. And it carries a moving play as the 20-year-old sis- ing message.

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Lorraine Hansberry Goes Into B'way Orbit With Socko 'Raisin in the Sun'

By ISADORA ROWE

NEW YORK—The opening of "A Raisin in the Sun" at the Blackstone Theatre in Chicago this week is like the work of the "Prodigal Daughter" returning home. The tie-in is a mite synonymous since the play was written by Lorraine Hansberry and the youthful playwright is a native of the "Windy City."

Having had a shake-down cruise in New Haven and Philadelphia where critics have been most extravagant with their adjectives, Lorraine's first effort for the Broadways of the country is considered a decided hit.

The lavishness by which she has been praised makes her somewhat of a once-in-a-lifetime oddity in the tough world of play-writing.

Though "Raisin" is the first piece she has written for the attention of the critics and the theatre-going public, her pen has already been compared with that of the famous Irish writer, Sean O'Casey and John Osborne. One critic went so far as to say that Lorraine's drama about a Chicago family is the best play in a decade about a Negro.



LORRAINE HANSBERRY

sition when she was old enough to express an interest in the creative arts.

At the outset she was interested in painting and studied at the Art Institute in her home city and later at the Universities of Wisconsin and Mexico.

However, it was in Wisconsin where her interest started its turn to the theatre. However, it wasn't until she married Robert Nemeroff, now head of Brydern Music Publishers, that she began writing seriously.

TALKING to this young new female talent to come among us, I found no tele-tale giveaway as to this unusual ability. Behind her pretty face there seem to be great purpose and a somewhat perplexed wonderment.

But it didn't shine through as did the poignant and bitter lines of her play in which Sidney Poitier is starred.

Born in Chicago in 1930 of an economically, comfortably middle class family, she found no oppo-

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UNLIKE some viewers believe, "Raisin" is in no way associated with her own life since the Hansberries are well off and well known in Chicago.

Inspiration for her first and current dramatic hit goes back to when she was 14 and through "Dark of the Moon" became carried away by the magic of the theatre.

The impulse for this play actually struck her after viewing a play with a Negro cast. She liked the theme, but was most distressed because of the presentation of the characters. It was then that she vowed to write a play involving Negroes in full di-

mensions with problems just like any other people.

"A RAISIN IN THE SUN" was written in its first form about a year ago. A personal friend of Phil Rose, co-producer, and his actress wife, Doris Bellack, Lorraine read the play to them.

Said she, "Imagine my surprise when Phil asked to option same for a Broadway production.

What has happened since then is theatrical history, infused with a kind of democracy which is strange in the annals of Broadway. You see, "A Raisin in the Sun" is a triple threat production—a Negro writer, a Negro director and a Negro star.

Audiences Spread Word on 'Raisin'

By WALTER LISTER JR.

CHICAGO.

Lorraine Hansberry, an attractive Chicago girl who left art studies at the University of Wisconsin to write plays in Greenwich Village, where she also found a husband, is one of the first Negro women to have a play produced on Broadway. And she is only twenty-eight. Her play is scheduled to open at the Barrymore Theater on March 11, offered by two fledgling producers and starring Sidney Poitier, the movie actor, in his first major Broadway role.

Audiences in New Haven, Philadelphia and now Chicago, many of whom thought they were going to see a discomfiting exposition of Negro housing problems, have been surprised with laughter and have then gone out to spread the word. The reviews—even in Chicago, where drama critics have a reputation of scaring actors away—have been exceptionally good.

"Dream Deferred"

Miss Hansberry titles her play, the first one she ever completed, "A Raisin in the Sun," from a poem by Langston Hughes about what happens to a "dream deferred." The poet asks:

Does it dry 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?

Being a Negro girl from an upper-income family, Miss Hansberry insists that her characters, most of them members of a low-income family

on Chicago's South Side, are "invented people, not autobiographical, not even reportorial." She explains:

"I belong to the school of thought that you achieve the universal by paying acute attention to the specific. These are not New York Negroes, they're not Southern, they're South Side Chicago.

Self-Taught

The humor is Negro-oriented—ranging from wry lines such as a mother's remark that "something always told me I wasn't a rich white woman," to a rollicking Nigerian folk dance. But the feeling grows, first that the characters could be members of any minority group, then that they could belong to any family of human beings. Her subsequent plays, Miss Hansberry says, may have less to do with Negroes.

Miss Hansberry is essentially a self-taught playwright. She took a course in stage design at Wisconsin because she was an "art major." When she moved to New York in 1950 she began

Continued on page 4, column 1

CLIPPING FROM THE

Chicago Tribune
Late City
3/1/59

* VOL. 107, NO. 107,297-177

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writing plays, she says, because "I like the theater." As guideposts, she says, "I'm very much addicted to Shakespeare and Sean O'Casey, and I very much respect Arthur Miller and Lillian Hellman."

She was married to Robert B. Nemiroff, a music publisher, in 1953. She continued to write. She worked on four plays before finishing "Raisin." Last year, after a small dinner party, she asked if she might read one scene. Her husband and Philip Rose, thirty-six, a friend and a music business associate, consented.

"We wound up, of course, listening to the whole play," Mr. Rose recalls. "It was a Saturday night. I didn't get home until 4:30 a. m. Then I called Lorraine at nine the next morning, woke her up and asked her for an option on producing it. She thought I had lost my mind."

Mr. Rose's only previous theatrical experience had been "by proxy," a reference to his actress wife, Doris Belack. And he couldn't offer her a part in this production because the only non-Negro role is a middle-aged man.

Most of "Raisin's" \$100,000 budget was raised among 150 small investors. David J. Coogan, a New York accountant, joined Mr. Rose as co-producer after bringing in the last measure of needed capital.

One surprising production aspect is that very few changes have been made in the script. "We pulled one scene in New Haven, but I haven't done any re-writing," Miss Hansberry reports.

"Raisin" was produced on a

pattern of friendship. Sidney Poitier, thirty-one, was approached to play the lead, not only because of his Hollywood television reputation, but also because Mr. Rose had known him for several years. Mr. Poitier, in turn, recommended as director Lloyd Richards, a former teacher of his at the Actors' Workshop in New York. This is Mr. Richards' first directing job for Broadway.

"Sidney is taking a financial loss on this," Mr. Rose notes. "His motion picture salary is much higher."

But Mr. Poitier, while he has no plan to desert Hollywood, is delighted with the part. "It's good for an actor to play an unsympathetic role," he observes. "It helps you bring out all your tools." His previous Broadway appearance was a small role in "Lysistrata" in 1946. "It was a big flop," he recalls. Mr. Poitier hopes he will be able to return to "Raisin" after taking time out in August to fulfill a motion picture commitment.

Mr. Rose, his hopes also up, enthuses: "This is a wonderful word-of-mouth show. The audience reaction is most gratifying. We get very little advance sale, then after it opens the word spreads."

The entire cast, including Claudia McNeil, Ruby Dee, Diana Sands, Ivan Dixon and Glynn Turman, received high praise from Chicago critics.

Sydney Harris, in "The Chicago Daily News," observed that "as in any well made play, there is no star." He found the cast "uniformly excellent" and summed up "Raisin" as "the happiest surprise entry since 'The Glass Menagerie' rang all the bells a dozen years ago."

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Theater

'Raisin in Sun' Is Moving Tale

By FRANK ASTON.

The number of tears shed by a big-shot businessman. His presumably worldly first nighters must have set a new record at the Ethel Barrymore last evening. They dropped in tribute to Lorraine Hansberry's "A Raisin in the Sun," written by a Negro about Chicago Negroes and acted, with one exception, by an all-Negro company.

The major weeping came in two waves. The first greeted an overpowering artist, Claudia McNeil, at the close of the second act when she bewailed the loss of a new life for her brood. The other accompanied the closing moments in which Sidney Poitier, as her son, obeyed Miss McNeil's command to meet disaster with the pride of a man who, sprung from a long line of slaves and sharecroppers, was bred to spurn any money he hadn't earned.

With loving humor and understanding, Mrs. Hansberry tells a simple tale involving a family inhabiting a South Side tenement so sunless only the toughest of weedlike potted plants may live in its shadows. Head of the house is a newly widowed matriarch with \$10,000 from an insurance company. Her daughter, Neathy, 20 (Diana Sands), is a flighty intellectual hoping to become a doctor. Her son, Walter Lee, 25 (Mr. Poitier), is a chauffeur given to bitter dreams of being

a patient, little wife, Ruth (Ruby Dee), is about to have their second child, whom the father doesn't want.

The mother makes a down payment on a "house with a patch of dirt" in a white neighborhood and gives the rest to her son with instructions to bank half for his sister's schooling and use the rest as he thinks best. With childlike innocence, he loses it to a fast operator, smashing his mother's dearest dream. When he seeks to recoup by selling the new place at a profit to the overeager "improvement committee" of the white community his mother and sister turn on him with majestic scorn. Above all else, they demand self-respect.

Miss-McNeil's sweetness and grandeur are unforgettable. Mr. Poitier masters the contrasting facets of his role: Conning, sarcastic, fiery, craven, crushed and eventually exalted. Under Lloyd Richards' direction the whole company functions beautifully. Ralph Alswang has created a set that looks like a playground for cockroaches.

The show has no ax to grind. It is honest drama, catching up real people. It may rip you to shreds. It will make you proud of human beings.

CLIPPING FROM THE

N. Y. World Telegram

EDITION Night

DATE 3-12-59

PAGE 10

BY Frank Aston

TITLE 'Raisin in Sun' Is Moving Tale

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED
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CLAUDIA McNEIL and Sidney Poitier . . . In "A Raisin in the Sun."

'A Raisin in The Sun' a Glowingly Lovely and Touching Little Play

By JOHN CHAPMAN

Lorraine Hansberry's "A Raisin in the Sun," which was presented at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre, is a beautiful, lovable play. It is affectionately human, funny and touching, and it is acted by a company of actors who really are a company and not just a set of players. This is not a big play



Claudia McNeil
Big, warm performance

and probably not even an important one, but even so it is a work of theatrical magic in which the usual barrier between audience and stage disappears; the people up there are living among us, and we down here are mixing with those up there on easy terms. This happy blend of script, cast

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N. Y. News
 EDITION Final
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and audience is not achieved very often, and when it does come about it shows us what the theatre should be at its best. It can make something important out of something slight and simple.

"A Raisin in the Sun" is slight and simple enough, being the story of a hard-working Chicago family which forgets its petty differences and becomes a unit—a brave one, too—when it is brushed by disappointment and near-disaster. Its great appeal lies in its affection and understanding, rather than in the mechanics of telling a story.

Not Room Enough

It is a play by a Negro, about Negroes and acted by Negroes. The family, living in a poor flat in Chicago, consists of a widowed mother, a son who has dreams of power and wealth, the son's pregnant wife, their small boy and the son's sister.

There is not room in the flat to hold all of them and their ambitions too, so there are clashes and squabbles—not bitter ones, just human. More room for family and ambitions is in prospect, for the widow is about to get the \$10,000 insurance her husband left. Perhaps this will be enough for all—a business career for the son, a doctor's education for his sister, a house with a garden for the mother.

Flawless Acting

If it came out like that there wouldn't be much of a play. But much of the money is thoughtlessly lost and what has been spent on the home may have been ill-spent, for white people in the neighborhood are uneasy about colored people moving in. Miss

"A RAISIN IN THE SUN"

Play by Lorraine Hansberry,
produced by Philip Rose and
David J. Cogan at the Ethel
Barrymore Theatre, March
11, 1959.

THE PRINCIPALS

Ruth Younger	Ruby Dee
Travis Younger	Glynn Turman
Walter Lee Younger	Sidney Poitier
Beneatha Younger	Diana Sands
Lena Younger	Claudia McNeil
Joseph Asagai	Ivan Dixon
George Murchison	Louie Gossett
Bobo	Louise Elder III
Karl Lindner	John Fiedler

Hansberry's resolution of these problems is a heartening one.

The acting company, under the direction of Lloyd Richards, is flawless. Claudia McNeil gives a warm, big performance as the mother and Sidney Poitier is splendid as a son who has false dreams of wealth. Ruby Dee is touching as Poitier's wife and Diana Sands is spirited and amusing as his sister. There is an admirable appearance by Ivan Dixon as Miss Dee's suitor—an educated Nigerian who is not certain that American civilization is the best.

The family, in losing much of its fortune and most of its hopes, gains something greater—its pride. As Poitier proudly points out in the closing scene, his little boy represents the sixth generation of Americans who have been able to take care of themselves. It's a lovely play.

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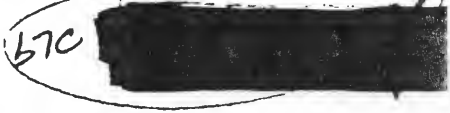
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Playwright Wins Ovation
Lorraine Hansberry, author of "A Raisin in the Sun," received an ovation from the first-nighters at the Barrmore Theatre last evening after the curtain fell on her first Broadway play. Miss Hansberry, seated in the third row, stood up to acknowledge the persistent applause and cries of "author." Sidney Poitier, star of the play, then jumped down from the stage and lifted Miss Hansberry over the footlights, where she joined the cast in taking a series of bows.

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N. Y. Times
Late City
3-12-59
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The Theatre: 'A Raisin in the Sun'

Negro Drama Given at Ethel Barrymore

By BROOKS ATKINSON

IN "A Raisin in the Sun," which opened at the Ethel Barrymore last evening, Lorraine Hansberry touches on some serious problems. No doubt, her feelings about them are as strong as any one's.

But she has not tipped her play to prove one thing or another. The play is honest. She has told the inner as well as the outer truth about a Negro family in the south-side of Chicago at the present time. Since the performance is also honest and since Sidney Poitier is a candid actor, "A Raisin in the Sun" has vigor as well as veracity and is likely to destroy the complacency of any one who sees it.

The family consists of a firm-minded widow, her daughter, her restless son and his wife and son. The mother has brought up her family in a tenement that is small, battered but personable. All the mother wants is that her children adhere to the code of honor and self-respect that she inherited from her parents.

The son is dreaming of success in a business deal. And the daughter, who is race-conscious, wants to become a physician and heal the wounds of her people. After a long delay the widow receives \$10,000 as the premium on her husband's life insurance. The money projects the family into a series of situations that test their individual characters.

What the situations are does not matter at the moment. For "A Raisin in the Sun" is a play about human beings who want, on the one hand, to preserve their family pride and, on the other hand, to break out of the poverty that seems to be their fate. Not having any axe to grind, Miss Hansberry has a wide range of topics to write about—some of them hilarious, some of them painful in the extreme.

You might, in fact, regard "A Raisin in the Sun" as a Negro "The Cherry Orchard."

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Sidney Poitier and Claudia McNeil as they appear in play by Lorraine Hansberry, "A Raisin in the Sun."

The Cast

RAISIN IN THE SUN, a drama by Lorraine Hansberry. Staged by Lloyd Richards; presented by Philip Rose and David J. Cogan; scenery and lighting by Ralph Alswang; costumes by Virginia Voland; production stage manager: Leonard Auerbach. At the Ethel Barrymore Theatre.

Ruth Younger.....	Ruby Dee
Travis Younger.....	Glynn Turman
Walter Lee Younger.....	Sidney Poitier
Beneatha Younger.....	Diana Sands
Erica Younger.....	Claudia McNeil
Joseph Asagai.....	Ivan Dixon
George Murchison.....	Louis Gossett
Bobo.....	Lonne Elderkin
Karl Lindner.....	John Fiedler
Master Men.....	Ed Hall, Douglas Turner

Although the social scale of the characters is different, the knowledge of how character is controlled by environment is much the same, and the alternation of humor and pathos is similar.

If there are occasional crudities in the craftsmanship, they are redeemed by the honesty of the writing. And also by the rousing honesty of the stage work. For Lloyd Richards has selected an admirable cast and directed a bold and stirring performance.

Mr. Poitier is a remarkable actor with enormous power that is always under control. First as the restless son, he vividly communicates the tumult of a highstrung young man. He is as eloquent when he has nothing to say as when he has a pungent line to speak. He can convey devious pro-

cesses of thought as graphically as he can clown and dance.

As the matriarch, Claudia McNeil gives a heroic performance. Although the character is simple, Miss McNeil gives it nobility of spirit. Diana Sands' amusing portrait of the overintellectualized daughter; Ivan Dixon's quiet, sagacious student from Nigeria; Ruby Dee's young wife burdened with problems; Louis Gossett's supercilious suitor; John Fiedler's timid white man, who speaks sanctimonious platitudes—bring variety and excitement to a first-rate performance.

All the crises and comic sequences take place inside Ralph Alswang's set, which depicts both the poverty and the taste of the family. Like the play, it is honest. That is Miss Hansberry's personal contribution to an explosive situation in which simple honesty is the most difficult thing in the world. And also the most illuminating.

A RAISIN IN SUN BASKS IN PRAISE

7 Critics Welcome Play by
Miss Hansberry — 'Room
in Paris' Reserved

By SAM ZOLOTOW

For the second day in a row, the seven New York drama critics welcomed a new Broadway presentation with unanimous reviews. The much-sought-after distinction went to "A Raisin in the Sun" yesterday. On Wednesday the accolade was bestowed upon "Sweet Bird of Youth."

"Raisin" had a more rugged road to travel than "Sweet Bird." The latter was fortified with an established dramatist (Tennessee Williams), a top director (Elia Kazan) and three well-known stars (Paul New-

Theatre Tonight

"THE ROPE DANCERS," a revival of Morton Wishengrad's drama. At the DeWitt Clinton Adult Center, 100 West Moshulu Parkway, the Bronx. Curtain: 8:30 o'clock. Principals include Carole Couche, Allen Mullikin, Mary Moran and Paul Marin. Director, John Ulmer.

man, Geraldine Page and Sidney Blackmer).

The situation was different with "Raisin." The author (Lorraine Hansberry), director (Lloyd Richards) and the sponsors (Philip Rose and David J. Cogan) were Broadway newcomers.

Only four of the players in the Negro drama had achieved recognition—Sidney Poitier, who is starred; Claudia McNeil, Ruby Dee and Louis Gossett. On its way into the Barry-

more, the attraction received trial performances in New Haven, Philadelphia and Chicago. Although out-of-town reviewers praised the offering, there was no immediate box-office stampede. It did not take long, however, before capacity trade prevailed.

Mr. Rose attributed the spurt in each case to this observation: "During the first fifteen minutes the audience gets color-blind and they no longer see Negroes on the stage."

The Shuberts booked "Raisin" into the Barrymore, a desirable house, with confidence. To arrange the booking, they persuaded the producers to send the play to Chicago, guaranteed it against loss there and shared in the transportation cost.

According to Walter Fried, general manager for Messrs. Rose and Cogan, the advance sale here amounts to \$160,000. The sum was accumulated from six parties for the entire seating capacity of 1,076, a number of partial parties, mail orders and window sale.

A total of 147 investors have a stake in the destiny of "Raisin." The major backer is Charles Swibel of Chicago. Attendance at yesterday's matinee of "Raisin" was below expectations and almost at the sell-out mark for "Sweet Bird."

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Across the Footlights

By Frances Herridge

Author of 'Raisin' Takes It in Stride

Lorraine Hansberry, 28, whose "Raisin in the Sun" made theater history Wednesday night, was taking the day-after calmly in her Greenwich Village flat yesterday. Although this is her first play and she is the first Negro woman to get one on Broadway, although critics hailed it unanimously, although Sidney Poltner had pulled her on stage to acknowledge opening-night cheers and Sardi's had given her a standing ovation, she insisted she had a good night's sleep.

"the usual problem of pressing deadlines."

She is now completing several scripts started before "Raisin," and very different from it.

"I was quite relaxed and really enjoyed myself," she said, contrary to all precedence. "We are waiting until Saturday to have our party, so the cast won't have to work the next day."

Her only regret, she said, was that the reviews had spent more time describing the play than evaluating or interpreting it—

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STAGE PLAYS STAGE PLAYS STAGE PLAYS

UNANIMOUSLY

SIDNEY POITIER



a raisin in the sun

**"AN IMPRESSIVE PLAY,
BEAUTIFULLY ACTED"**

"A cumulative swell of emotion reaches back over the evening to surround, and bind up, an honest, intelligible and moving experience. An impressive play, beautifully acted. Mr. Poitier is superb."
—Kerr, Herald Tribune

"BOLD AND STIRRING"

"Miss Hansberry has a wide range of topics to write about—some of them hilarious, some of them painful in the extreme. Lloyd Richards has directed a bold and stirring performance. Likely to destroy the complacency of anyone who sees it. Mr. Poitier is a remarkable actor with enormous power. Claudia McNeil gives a heroic performance."
—Atkinson, Times

SIDNEY POITIER

**"A WORK OF
THEATRICAL MAGNITUDE"**

"A beautiful, lovable play, passionately human, funny and moving. Shows us what the theatre is at its best. The acting company under the direction of Lloyd Richards, a work of theatrical magic."
—C

"ANOTHER SMASH HIT"

"A moving play wonderful in its dramatic power. Miss Hansberry is the most powerful dramatist to reach the Rialto in many years. Miss McNeil can roar with laughter one moment and reach for your handkerchief the next. Not only good fun but gripping as well. Another smash hit."
—C

SIDNEY POITIER



a raisin in the sun

"MOVING AND STIRRING"

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Pictures, Plays and Players

People Get Messed Up, Says Author of 'Raisin'

By HENDERSON CLEAVES

Two plays opened to unanimous critical ecstasy in New York this week.

One of them, "Sweet Bird of Youth," was the work of a 44-year-old native of Columbus, Miss., a veteran of the theater named Tennessee Williams. The other, "A Raisin in the Sun," was written by a hitherto unknown 28-year-old girl from Chicago, Lorraine Hansberry.

Miss Hansberry is the first Negro woman to have a play on Broadway, and this is her first major literary effort. Writing since she was a teenager, she has never been pub-



LOBBRAINE HANSBERRY

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ished, nor did she solicit a producer for her play. Surrounded yesterday by congratulatory telegrams and flanked by an incessantly ringing telephone, she surveyed the play's three-year history.

Began in 1956.

"I started work on the play in 1956," she related. "I've always sort of kept what I write to myself, but you've got to read it to somebody some time."

In this case she read part of the play to a friend, Philip Rose, a music publisher and eventually co-producer of the play. This was in 1957, and Lorraine and her husband, Bob Nemiroff, and Mr. Rose sat up half the night talking about the play. The next day Mr. Rose called her and said he would like to produce it.

It took more than a year to raise the money for the production, but after actor Sidney Poitier, another old friend, was added to the project, it began to pick up momentum.

Then came the triumphant tryouts of the play in Chicago, New Haven and Philadelphia and its enthusiastic reception here Wednesday night.

Get Messed Up.

"These so-called sophisticated New York theater-goers gave

us a beautiful emotional display last night," said Miss Hansberry. "That audience

was saying it liked this kind of drama.

"This is a play about people. I want to say that people can get pretty messed up, and they can also be pretty nice. I think the human race is obviously worth saving, ridiculous as it can be, and that probably we have the stamina to fight for our survival if we can just stop talking about how hopeless we are."

She said she hoped to stay a playwright and hoped to stay in this affirmative groove.

One of four children born on Chicago's South Side, she describes herself as the daughter of "middle-class business people." She was educated at the University of Wisconsin and Chicago's Roosevelt College, coming to New York eight years ago with the intention of painting.

Housewife's Play Is a Hit

By SIDNEY FIELDS

Before last Wednesday, whenever anyone asked Lorraine Hansberry her occupation she was afraid to say, "writer." That sounded too artsy craftsy. She always answered, "housewife."

"And the usual reaction was, 'Why don't you do something useful?'" Lorraine said.

But since last Wednesday Lorraine replies: "Writer!"

It was last Wednesday that her play, "A Raisin in the Sun" opened. It's an enormous hit, as much for the play as for the brilliant performances by Sidney Bollier, Claudia McNeil, and Ruby Dee.

Lorraine is only 28, slight, small, pretty, with a soft voice and a skyful of life and ideas for opera librettos and new plays. We met in the cluttered Greenwich Village flat where she lives with her husband, Robert Nemiroff, a music publisher.

"He's really a literary critic and a good one," Lorraine said. "That's what he went through N.Y.U. for. But since we were married six years ago he wanted me to write and he'd pay the bills."

They haunt movies, plays, ski trails, and now that she's tasting success, Lorraine will satisfy an old and deep frustration: She wants her own ping-pong table. Must be good at it.

"More form than content," she confessed. "At the start I look devastating. At the finish everybody beats me badly."

FOR THE FIRST few years of her marriage she worked at a variety of jobs. Four days in a department store, quitting because she couldn't stand the ringing bells that told the girls what to do and when. In the office of a theatrical producer. Six months putting tags on fur coats. And after a period of years in the restaurant her in-laws owned, as a waitress, hostess, cashier.

"Not too much cashiering," Lorraine said, "because I can't count very well."

But during all this she was writing. Fact is she's been writing since she was 14, though she always was reluctant to show any of it to anyone.

"My father was a real estate man in Chicago, and in my milieu you just didn't admit you wrote a poem, you hid it," Lorraine said. Once she almost died of mortification when her high school teacher came upon something she wrote and proudly read it to the class.

OF THE BEARING on Chicago's South Side she and her sister and two brothers got from their parents, Lorraine said:

"We were properly housed, clothed, fed, and schooled. There were no money problems. When my father died my brothers took over and ran the business.

"I was not a particularly bright student. I had some popularity, and a premature desire, probably irritating, to be accepted in my circle on my terms. My dormitory years, which numbered only two at the University of Wisconsin,

ONLY HUMAN

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LORRAINE HANSBERRY: 'I'm a writer!'

were spent in heated discussions on everything from politics to the nature of art, and I was typically impatient at people who couldn't see the truth—as I saw it. I must have been a horror."

When at 19 she assessed American higher education, found it deficient, packed, and left the campus, her mother's reaction was: "Do what you think you must." (Lorraine dedicated "A Raisin in the Sun" to her mother).

She lounged around Chicago for six months, studying German at Roosevelt College, though she didn't know why, finally got her mother's permission to come to New York.

Here, she tried short stories, TV plays, collected a volume of notes for a novel, but never had anything published. In 1954 she began writing plays, struggling to learn the difficult arts of sincerity, dialogue, structure.

"I didn't have to change dialogue much, but constantly revised the structure," she said. "Boy, if plays didn't have to make sense I'd be a genius."

SHE WROTE FOUR plays before "A Raisin in The Sun." Practice. In college she was more painter than art student, and always knew there's always a lot of sketching before the painting even begins.

In "A Raisin in the Sun" she says with magnificent simplicity that all men have dignity, but often distort it with greedy dreams and strange hungers at the expense of their happiness. If not their sanity. She says it with great humor, deep compassion, and love.

"All the love I can," Lorraine said, "which I do not apologize admitting I feel for the human race."

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