



BWW Review: RAISIN IN THE SUN at Two River Theater is a Masterpiece

by Marina Kennedy



"What is it that gets into people that are supposed to be close?"
by Walter Lee from A Raisin in the Sun

The wait is over. Two River Theater (TRT) opens its 2017/2018 Season with an outstanding production of the time-honored classic, A Raisin in the Sun. It will be on the Red Bank stage now through October 8. Written by Lorraine Hansberry and directed by Carl Cofield, the show is staged and performed to perfection. Even if you are familiar with the play, it is a must see for your fall entertainment schedule. This drama about the trials of a black family is very relevant to today's hot button issues of race relations and equality. We applaud TRT for making this theatrical gem available to metro area audiences.

A Raisin in the Sun tells the story of the Younger family. Matriarch Lena Younger, her daughter Beneatha, her son Walter Lee along with his wife, Ruth and their young boy, Travis live together in a cramped apartment on the South Side of Chicago. Lena's late husband, Big Walter has passed away and the Youngers are expecting a \$10,000 life insurance check, a veritable fortune for the poverty stricken family. It's money that could make a substantial difference in each of their lives. Walter Lee is desperate to become a success and wants to invest in a liquor

store with partners, Willy and Bobo. Beneatha is a student aspiring to be a doctor while being wooed by two very different suitors, Joseph Asagai and George Murchison. And Lena and Ruth hope to relocate to a nice home in a better neighborhood, a plan that could be thwarted by a neighborhood association led by an older white man, Karl Lindner. The Younger family and their circumstances will tug at your heartstrings, make you laugh, but most importantly, evoke your sense of social justice.

The cast's powerful performances are mesmerizing as they capture the spirit of *Raisin in the Sun*. Lorraine Hansberry's richly crafted dialogue is superbly delivered. The company includes Brenda Pressley as Lena Younger; Brandon J. Dirden as Walter Lee Younger; Crystal A. Dickinson as Ruth Younger; Jasmine Batchelor as Beneatha Younger; Nat DeWolf as Karl Lindner; Willie Dirden as Bobo; Charlie Hudson III as Joseph Asagai; Owen Tabaka as Travis Younger; York Walker as George Murchison. Andrew Binger and David Joel Rivera play the Moving Men.

The Creative Team has done a fantastic job of bringing *A Raisin in the Sun* to the stage with scenic design by Christopher Swader & Justin Swader; costume design by Elivia Bovenzi; lighting design by Kathy A. Perkins; sound design by Karin Graybash; wig design by Valerie Gladstone. Casting is by Jack Doulin + Sharky. The Production Stage Manager is Lloyd Davis Jr.

The Two River Theater production of *A Raisin in the Sun* takes the modern masterpiece to new heights. See it now while you can.

A Raisin in the Sun will be performed in the Joan and Robert Rechnitz Theater of Two River Theater, 21 Bridge Avenue, Red Bank, NJ 07701. Ticket prices range from \$40 to \$70, with discounts available for groups, seniors, and U.S. military personnel, their families, and veterans. A limited number of \$20 tickets are available for every performance; \$20 tickets may be partial view. Tickets for patrons under 30 are \$20 and include the best available seats at every performance. Call them at 732.345.1400 or visit www.tworivertheater.org.

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