

Bryan's Stage Center brings to life racially-conscious work "Raisin in the Sun"

By Christina Teichman
THE BATTALION

When Carolyn Myrick descended the steps of the Stage Center in Bryan, she hoped to get feedback from audience members, as she did at every one of her performances of "Raisin in the Sun." But this time, she was in for a surprise.

"An audience member came up to me and started crying, telling me about how she fought against (prejudice). It (touched) me to see her moved," Myrick said.

Myrick plays Lena "Mama" Younger in the Stage Center's production of Lorraine Hansberry's novel "A Raisin in the Sun."

The classic, which was published in 1959, depicts the struggles of the Younger family, a black family living in a segregated Chicago during times of racial turmoil. In the play, the Youngers must fight hard to find happiness, live their own lives and respect themselves.

The play was handpicked and directed by Leah Fletcher with the hope of reaching out to others and touching people on a personal basis.

"I chose this play because watching (the Youngers) fall apart and having lost their pride, (we) realize how important family is," Fletcher said.

Fletcher said this particular play has not been performed locally in the past 30 years.

"Normally plays circulate, but Mrs. Worley, (a volunteer a Stage Center volunteer) remembers the last time it was here was right after segregation (ended) in Bryan in the 1970s," Fletcher said.

Fletcher said every night the audience reacts to the play in different ways, laughing at the same lines or sometimes new ones, but positive reactions are consistently received at the end of the play.

Fletcher is very adamant in her belief that people should follow their hopes or dreams and reach for the stars no matter what others might think.

"In this society, roles are assigned to us. I think we can't live life that way; if we live like others say, life won't be fulfilling," Fletcher said.

One problem Fletcher said she anticipated was finding a cast to justly portray the emotions and themes of Hansberry's work of art. Fortunately, she said, she found a powerful cast with no problem.

Many of the actors in the play have everyday jobs around the Bryan-College Station area when they are not on stage.



Carolyn Myrick (left) plays Lena Younger with Harold Presley playing Harold younger in the Bryan Stage Center's production of Lorraine Hansberry's novel, "Raisin in the Sun."

Aside from Myrick, the cast includes Harold Presley and Raquel Masco, who play the son and daughter of the Younger household, Harold and Beneatha Younger.

"I grew up on this play, first seeing the movie, and loved it," Myrick said. "I always wanted to do this play even before I knew I wanted to go into acting."

Myrick said she grew up in Washington, D.C., and even though her family tried to protect her from the truth, she still saw how her family was sometimes treated unfairly.

Hansberry's words affect many and continue to reel in more fans. Jessica Fazio, a senior double major in theater arts and psychology had to read "A Raisin in the Sun" for an English class.

"(Reading the book), at that time, I was really aggravated because you just don't discriminate like that," Fazio said. "But what aggravates me the most is that it was prevalent then and is still around now."

As far as the theme of the play goes,

Fazio said her personal experiences with discrimination were limited. Coming from a sheltered and strong Italian Catholic background, Fazio said she has always been taught about diversity.

"Some of my dad's friends made statements or remarks about our heritage, but my parents made sure I knew the comments were jokes," Fazio said. "I have never been oppressed, so reading a play where they are (oppressed) didn't hit home as a personal experience, but it did hit home because others shouldn't experience that oppression. That is what I was taught my entire life."

Jessica said she also enjoyed some of the technical aspects of the play, such as the old style of language and some of the slang that was used.

"A Raisin in the Sun" will return to the stage Feb. 26 through Feb. 28. All shows start at 7:30 p.m. Thursdays are a buy-one-get-one-free deal while tickets are regularly \$8 for adults and \$7 for seniors and students.

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