



Wednesday, October 30, 2002

Political drama 'Les Blancs' opens Nov. 8

A unique collaborative production of Lorraine Hansberry's political drama, "Les Blancs," opens Friday, Nov. 8, at Oakland University.

The production includes cast and crew from both Oakland's **Department of Music, Theatre and Dance** and the University of Michigan – Flint. The play's runs from Nov. 8-17 at Varner Studio Theatre.

A collaborative Oakland University and University of Michigan- Flint production is unusual, but not unprecedented. In 1997, the two groups joined together for a successful "Hamlet." Since then, students have continued to interact at the annual American College Theatre Festival and have attended each other's productions. Also, OU Professor Michael Gillespie, who directs the play, is married to Carolyn Gillespie, professor of theatre at U-M Flint.

"We have been wanting to do another collaboration, but it takes time to find the right material," said Michael Gillespie. "When I reacquainted myself with 'Les Blancs' last year, I found that it met all our criteria, including a diverse cast and challenging material. Also, because it explores the subject of terrorism and the influence of Westerners on cultures foreign to them, I thought it would be very interesting to see the perspectives today's actors and audiences have on the play."

"Les Blancs," is a powerful and complex drama about African liberation from white colonialism. It was the last work of Lorraine Hansberry, who won the Best Play of the Year Award from the New York Drama Critics Circle for her first play, "Raisin in the Sun." Hansberry, an American Civil Rights activist, succumbed to cancer in 1965 at the age of 34 before completing "Les Blancs." Robert Nemiroff, her ex-husband, finished and produced the play after Hansberry's death. She is considered an important figure in 20th century African-American literature. While popular, Hansberry's work also was controversial among both African-American and white critics.

The Oakland University actors are Patrick Butcher, My-Ishia Cason-Brown, Catherine Lutz, Mark McCleese, Christopher Mian, Krysty Swann, George Williams Mason and Heather Yanke. Actors from the UM - Flint include Ron Bailey, Jason Briggs, Jeffery Moore, Tom Rhoads and Tom Russell. Also appearing in the production are 12 drummers from OU's popular African Drum Ensemble and dancers from both OU and U-M Flint.

Performance dates and times are as follows: Nov. 8, 9, 14, 15 and 16 at 8 p.m.; Nov. 10 and 17 at 2 p.m.; and Nov. 12 at 10 a.m. The Nov. 17 performance will be interpreted for the deaf and hard of hearing.

Tickets are \$10 for the general public and \$5 for students, except for the 10 a.m. matinee, which is \$5 for all seats. Tickets are available at Varner Box Office by calling (248) 370-3013, all Ticketmaster outlets at (248) 645-6666 or on the **Ticketmaster** Web site, or at the door one hour before each performance.

SUMMARY

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Created by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Wednesday, October 30, 2002
Modified by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Wednesday, October 30, 2002
Article Start Date: Thursday, October 23, 2003