AFRICA ON STAGE

let us tell you a story . . .

June–August 2007

LES BLANCS

by Lorraine Hansberry

Thursday through Sunday, July 19–August 5 at 8:00 PM
Pigott Theater, Memorial Hall, Stanford University
LES BLANCS
by Lorraine Hansberry

DIRECTOR
Harry J. Elam, Jr.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR/STAGE MANAGER
Gabrielle Randle

CHOREOGRAPHER
Aleta Hayes

SCENIC DESIGNER
Fred Kinney

COSTUME DESIGNER
Patricia Polen

LIGHTING DESIGNER
Chad Bonaker

SOUND DESIGNER
Michael St. Clair

DIALECT COACH
Kimberly Mohne Hill

CAST

TSHEMBE MATOSEH Anthony J. Haney *
THE WOMAN Aleta Hayes
CHARLIE MORRIS Rush Rehm
ABIOSEH MATOSEH Kieleil DeLeon *
ERIC Daniel Chavez
MADAME NEILSEN Anne Hallinan
DR. MARTA GOTTERLING Courtney Walsh Phleger
DR. WILLY DEKOVEN Kyle Gillette
PETER Cameron Drake
MAJOR GEORGE RICE Thomas Freeland
SOLDIER Amin El Gamal
SOLDIER M. Scott Frank
VILLAGER/PRISONER/NGAGO Wade Ray
VILLAGER Robert Watkins
VILLAGER Valerie Bellande
VILLAGER Olivia Harewood
VILLAGER Jay-Marie Hill
VILLAGER Kiara Jones
AFRICAN CHILDREN D’Andre and Dania Stamper
DRUMMER Tumani Onabiyi

* appearing courtesy of the Actors Equity Association of America
LES BLANCS will run two and a half hours, including one fifteen-minute intermission. Refreshments will be on sale during intermission.

There will be herbal cigarettes smoked on stage and strobe used. Please turn off all cell phones and pagers. Photography and videotaping are prohibited.

This production was made possible by the Stanford Continuing Studies Program, the Department of Drama, the President’s Fund, and the Center for African Studies. Presented by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc.
Welcome to Stanford Summer Theater’s ninth season, our most ambitious to date! This summer we are proud to present Africa on Stage: Let us tell you a story . . . , a festival of theater and film that brings the vitality of African culture to the greater Stanford community. When many Americans think of Africa, desperate images come to mind. But once we go beyond these familiar scenarios, Africa emerges as a boundless source of memory, knowledge, story, art, and inspiration. Now more than ever, Africa demands attention, and we need to encounter its challenges and prospects with a deeper sense of Africa’s cultural richness, its complex history, and its extraordinary promise. Africa on Stage: Let us tell you a story . . . offers stories from the African continent that will engage, inspire, challenge, and transform us.

As well as mounting Dan Hoyle’s Tings Dey Happen, Lorraine Hansberry’s Les Blancs, Femi Osofisan’s Farewell to a Cannibal Rage, and Tsegaye Gabre-Medhin’s Oda Oak Oracle at Stanford, we are taking Oda Oak Oracle to Oakland for community performances involving the Ethiopian and Eritrean diaspora, and performing sections of the play at the San Francisco Theater Festival at the Yerba Buena Center. Our research/apprenticeship program with Stanford drama students (supported by the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education) has grown to include fifteen Stanford student artists, and we have extended our internship program to promising students from Eastside College Preparatory School in East Palo Alto. Our festival extends into the fall, with the powerful one-woman show Miracle in Rwanda, sponsored by SICA (Stanford Institute for Creativity and the Arts). Supporting these endeavors is SST’s wonderful new “Cast of Patrons,” including Charles Junkerman, Dean of Continuing Studies, whose energy and ongoing commitment has helped make Africa on Stage a reality.

Those of us drawn to the stage know that the craft of theater—for all its frustrations and difficulties—holds out real promise to a world that has lost its sense of community and its appreciation for the work of art, what it is and what it can do. For all the pressures of the market, the “business” of the culture industry, the privatization of consumption, and the destruction of public space, the theater continues to offer a place of freedom where we can gather, observe, feel, think, reflect, and judge, returning to our non-theatrical lives refreshed, challenged, and even changed.

We hope you enjoy the show and the festival, and continue to support us in the years to come. Welcome to Africa on Stage!

Rush Rehm
Artistic Director, Stanford Summer Theater
DIRECTOR’S NOTE

Les Blancs has always been very special to me, so when my colleague Rush Rehm offered me the possibility of directing the play, I jumped at the opportunity. Lorraine Hansberry, already famous for her critically-acclaimed first play, A Raisin in the Sun, wrote this, her last play, in 1965, as she was dying of cancer at the age of thirty-four. What struck me on my first reading of the play and what continues to move me now in staging it for the Stanford Summer Theater is how Hansberry profoundly conjoins the political and the personal. She asks us to consider the blood politics of revolution. How are we inherently connected to the past, to our familial and cultural histories? What are we willing to risk for our beliefs? What is the price of change? In a time when war, injustice, civil strife and ethnic violence disrupt our global environment with both fervor and urgency, Hansberry’s questions have a powerful contemporary resonance.

Hansberry’s voice in Les Blancs is particularly prescient. With this work set in the fictive African country of Zatembe, Hansberry probes the connotations and denotations of terrorism. When is one a terrorist or a freedom fighter? How does the occupation of land, or paternalistic imperialism look from the vantage point of the colonized as well as the colonizer? “Take away the violence and who will hear the man of peace,” her lead character Tshembe states. Eric even articulates some of the contemporary arguments circulating

“If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground, they want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters.

“This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, and it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will. Find out just what any people will quietly submit to and you have found out the exact measure of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them, and these will continue till they are resisted with either words or blows, or with both...Man may not get all they pay for in this world, but they must certainly pay for all they get. If we ever get free from the oppressions and wrongs heaped upon us, we must pay for their removal. We must do that by labor, by suffering, by sacrifice, and if needs be, by our lives and the lives of others.”

—Frederick Douglass

“But what exactly is a black? First of all, what’s his color?”

—Jean Genet
about mixed race, racial identity, and belonging. In fact, *Les Blancs* offers one of the clearest and most powerful discourses on the constructed “reality” and situational meanings of race. Predicting contemporary academic discussions, Hansberry theorizes that the meanings of race are conditional, that the illusion of race becomes reality through its application. Consequently, she argues that race is both real and socially constructed. The consequences of race have materiality as racial categories, shape the lives of people differently within existing inequities of power, wealth, and privilege. In *Les Blancs*, Hansberry argues for a progressive politics of identity, grounded in history and experience.

The title *Les Blancs* comments on the French playwright Jean Genet’s critically celebrated play *The Blacks* (1953). *The Blacks* enjoyed a successful run on Broadway in 1960 with James Earl Jones in the cast (he would later play Tshembe when *Les Blancs* opened in 1970). Hansberry took offense at what she understood as Genet’s racial exoticism and the fact that in *The Blacks*, Genet does not explore the historical grounding for or particular contexts of oppression. Hansberry found Genet’s absurdism problematic. And so, even as she fictionalizes the country of Zatembe, she sets her play specifically in the political realities of Africa in the early 1960s. For Hansberry then—and for us now—Africa is a critical nexus for global concerns. In the artistic arena of the theater, *Les Blancs* engages these issues with humor, passion and pathos, and speaks piercingly to our present real-world dramas.

—Harry J. Elam, Jr.

**SOME ASPECTS OF LES BLANCS**

*Les Blancs* was the last (and unfinished) play of Lorraine Hansberry, written in the year of her death, 1965, when she was thirty-four years old. *Les Blancs* was finished by Hansberry’s former husband, Robert Nemiroff, and debuted on Broadway on November 15, 1970. The *New York Post* hailed Hansberry’s “compassionate fair-mindedness” for being “truthful as well as deeply haunting.” According to *The New York Times*, the play “enlivened the theatre scene with a great deal of discussion.” However, *New York* deplored it as “a play finished—or finished off—by white liberals that does its utmost to justify the slaughter of whites by blacks.”

*Les Blancs* deals with the revolt against colonialism in an African state (based on Kenya). Tshembe Matoseh returns to Africa from his new home in Europe to attend the funeral of his father, a village leader. Confronting the different perspectives of his countrymen, his brother (now a Catholic priest), the Europeans who staff the missionary clinic, and an American journalist, Tshembe finds himself drawn into the anti-colonial struggle igniting around him.
Hansberry had been mesmerized by Africa since childhood. At five, she wept over newsreels of the Italian conquest of Ethiopia. In her twenties she studied African history under Dr. W.E.B. DuBois, the father of Pan-Africanism. Her uncle William Leo Hansberry was one the world’s foremost scholars of African antiquity. She wrote her first notes for *Les Blancs* in 1960, a year after *A Raisin in the Sun* opened. Its title was in response to Jean Genet’s *The Blacks*, which she considered “a conversation between white men about themselves.” That play confirmed her belief that racial exoticism (as portrayed in *The Blacks*) turned the issue of racism into an abstraction, by making the oppression of blacks unique to blacks. The oppression of human by human required a conversation among human beings, and she set about to create fully realized characters of both races who could have such a dialogue.

Throughout *Les Blancs*, the relationships between the characters shift, just as we think we are beginning to understand them. The changing balance between intimacy and hostility, respect and dismissal, and compassion and ignorance allows Hansberry to deal with intractable political issues in truly human terms. Her masterful play challenges all of us to come to grips with the problems of racism and colonialism in Africa, in America, and beyond.

—Courtney Walsh Phleger

**CAST OF PATRONS**

| Joni Beemsterboer | Barbara Levitt               |
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| J. Burke Knapp | | * member of the SST Advisory Council |

*Special Thanks:*
*Brigitte Dulfer, Michele Elam, Dr. Vicki Martinez, Azin Massoudi, Margaret Wilkerson*
BIOGRAPHIES

CLEA ALSIP [Production Assistant; Props] is a senior majoring in Drama and International Relations. At Stanford, she has performed in several productions, including *The Last Five Years*, *The Wild Party*, *Cabaret*, and *Company*.

MAGDALENA ANCHONDO [Board Operator] is a sophomore majoring in Drama and International Relations. At Stanford, she has performed in *Secret Love in Peach Blossom Land* (Nurse).

VALERIE BELLANDE [Villager] is a junior at Stanford, where she is a member of the Kuumba African Dance and Drum Ensemble.

CHAD BONAKER [Lighting Designer] designs for West Bay Opera, TheatreWorks, Broadway by the Bay, and Children’s Musical Theater San Jose. He returns to the Bay Area after receiving his MFA in Theatrical Production from the University of Cincinnati, College Conservatory of Music.

DANIEL CHAVEZ [Eric] is completing a BA in Drama this summer. At Stanford, he has performed in many shows and directed *Zoot Suit* by Luis Valdez. He wrote, produced, and starred in his one-man show *Backwardz*, a portrait of what it is to be Latino in the U.S. He received the Louis Sudler Prize in the Creative Arts and the Sherifa Omade Edoga Prize for creative work that explores race, gender, and politics.

KIELEIL DELEON [Abioseh Matoseh] has performed in the Bay Area productions of *Ragtime*, *The King and I*, *Children of Eden*, and *Aïda*, to name a few. In the past he has been a backup singer for Aces and Eights, a rockabilly band. He has a degree in Music and Business.

CAMERON DRAKE [Peter] is a sophomore. At the Chicago History Museum’s Rubloff Auditorium, he portrayed Malcolm X in Jeff Stetson’s *The Meeting*.

HARRY J. ELAM, JR. [Director] has directed professionally for more than eighteen years. He directed Talvin Wilks’ *Tod, the Boy Tod* for the Oakland Ensemble Company, and Cheryl West’s *Jar the Floor* and Pearl Cleage’s *Blues for an Alabama Sky* for TheatreWorks, the latter nominated for nine Bay Area Circle Critics Awards and winner of four DramaLogue Awards. He has directed several August Wilson plays, including *Joe Turner’s Come and Gone*, *Two Trains Running*, and *Fences*, the latter winning eight Bay Area “Choice” Awards. At Stanford, he directed Suzan Lori Parks’ *In the Blood* in 2005 and Theodore Brown’s *Natural Man* in 2003. He is the Olive H. Palmer Professor in the Humanities and the outgoing Chair of the Stanford Department of Drama.
AMIN EL GAMAL [Soldier] is a senior majoring in Drama and English. At Stanford, he has performed in The Cherry Orchard (Yepikhodov), Measure for Measure (Pompey), Funny House of a Negro (Mother/Raymond), Typical American (Idris/President Bush/Imam/Rob) and the film The Strange Case of Salman Abd al Haqq (Salman). He has studied acting at American Conservatory Theater and the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art.

M. SCOTT FRANK [Soldier] is a sophomore at Stanford, where he has performed in Goliath (David).

THOMAS FREELAND [Major George Rice] has performed in several productions at Stanford including The Comedy of Errors (Pinch), Our Country’s Good (Ross), Much Ado about Nothing (Benedick), and Henry V (Fluellen). He is a lecturer in the Oral Communication Program at Stanford’s Center for Teaching and Learning. His play Better Angels will be featured in the First Fridays new play series this fall at Stanford. He received his BFA and MA in Theater from the University of Colorado, and his PhD in Drama from Stanford.

AMANDA GELENDER [Producer] is a junior majoring in Drama and Political Science and writing her honors thesis in Ethics in Society. She is a senior program associate and advocacy specialist at New Global Citizens in San Francisco, and at Stanford, Co-Founder and Executive Director of the Stanford Theater Activist Mobilization Project (STAMP) and Co-Founder and President of Jews for Justice in Palestine. She has performed in six Stanford productions and more than thirty-five Bay Area productions.

KYLE GILLETTE [Dr. Willy DeKoven] has performed in several university, professional, and independent theater productions, including Richard II (Richard), The Caucasian Chalk Circle (Simon), Maria (Viskovsky), and Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights (Faustus); and has directed plays of Euripides, Shakespeare, Beckett, and Handke. His academic writing has appeared in Modern Drama and Performance Research. He received his PhD in Drama at Stanford this June.

ANNE HALLINAN [Madame Neilsen] returned to the stage in 1999, reprising an earlier commedia role in the San Francisco Mime Troupe’s fortieth anniversary celebration. Since then she has performed with TheatreFIRST, theatre Q, El Teatro Campesino, Golden Thread, the MultiEthnic Theatre, and the Tabard Theatre Company. Her favorite roles include Ma (Torch Song Trilogy), Rose and Rena (The Arab Israeli Cookbook), Sophie (White Liars), Boo (The Last Night of Ballyhoo), and her most enjoyable production was The Mummified Deer at El Teatro Campesino. She is a member of Theater Bay Area and secretary of the Board of Z Space Studio.

ANTHONY J. HANEY [Tshembe Matoseh] has appeared locally at Berkeley Rep, San Jose Rep, Magic Theatre, The San Francisco Mime Troupe, and TheatreWorks, where he has starred in or directed more than forty productions
and served as Associate Artistic Director for seven years. Most recently he staged *Intimate Apparel* for the company at MVCPA and *Crowns* at the Marines Memorial Theatre, and starred in *Fences* (Troy Maxson) and *Blues for an Alabama Sky* (Doc). At the Ford Theatre he starred in *Daisy in the Dreamtime* (King Billy) and directed for the Fountain Theatre *The Darker Face of the Earth* and Oyamo's *I Am A Man*, in which he portrayed T.O. Jones. In addition, he directed a musical theater tribute to Ben Vereen and Della Reese. Currently he is completing several writing projects and preparing to direct his first feature film.

**OLIVIA HAREWOOD** [Villager] is a junior majoring in Drama and Psychology. At Stanford, she has performed in *The Wild Party* (Madeline True), *The Vagina Monologues* (The Little Coochie Snorcher That Could), *From Cal With Love* (Dementia), *Cabaret* (Fraulein Kost), *Sand on a Distant Star* (Stranger), and *Devils in a Blue Dress* (Popular) which earned her a nomination for the John F. Kennedy Center’s Irene Ryan Acting Award. Her professional dance credits include 2004’s *The Praxis Project* and 2005’s *Viver Brazil*.


**JAY-MARIE HILL** [Villager] is a sophomore majoring in Human Biology. She has done lighting work in *Seussical*, *Godspell*, and *Grease*. This is her first appearance on stage. At Stanford, she is a member of the Kuumba African Dance and Drumming Ensemble, as well as the track and field team.

**KIMBERLY MOHNE HILL** [Dialect Coach] has coached more than forty productions in the Bay Area. She is on the faculty at Santa Clara University and has also served on the faculty at A.C.T. She teaches acting at Notre Dame de Namur University and Broadway by the Bay’s Summer Musical Theatre Conservatory. She has authored *Scenes in Dialect for Young Actors* and *Monologues in Dialect for Young Actors* (Smith and Kraus) and is currently working on the second volume of each book.

**KIARA JONES** [Villager] is a high school senior at Eastside College Preparatory School. She has been active in her high school drama community, participating in all performances and teaching a mime workshop. She attended Berkeley Repertory’s Drama Intensive program last summer, and hopes to pursue a career in acting.
FRED KINNEY [Scenic Designer] has worked on shows across the nation, including the current production of *Taming of the Shrew* for The Cutting Ball Theatre at Magic Theatre. Other credits include *Peter Pan and Wendy* (Prince Music Theater), *A Picasso* (Pittsburgh City Theater), *Serious Money* (Yale Repertory Theater), *Intimate Apparel* (San Diego Repertory Theater), *The Grouch* (The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey), and *Cats Talk Back* and *Suburban Stories* (NYC Fringe Festival). He is a recipient of the NEA/TCG Career Development Program for Designers and holds an MFA from the Yale School of Drama and a BA from the University of Texas.

COURTNEY WALSH PHLEGER [Dr. Marta Gotterling] has appeared in twenty-two plays and several films, and also worked professionally as a choreographer. She acted for several years in Los Angeles, where she appeared in such venues as the Los Angeles Theater Center and on the television series “L.A. Law.” She currently works as an attorney representing children in child abuse cases, with occasional forays back into acting. She studied acting at Yale University, where she received her BA in Theater Studies.

PATRICIA POLEN [Costume Designer] has designed more than ninety shows in her thirty-two years as a costume designer. She has designed for professional and academic theater and has received several Bay Area Theater Critic’s Circle Awards for Costume Design. She also works as a make-up artist for the San Francisco Opera and is the wig and make-up designer/ supervisor for the Portland Opera.

ALLISON PORTNOY [Assistant Stage Manager] is a junior majoring in International Relations. At Stanford, she has stage managed shows for Ram’s Head Theatrical Society.

GABRIELLE RANDLE [Assistant Director; Stage Manager] is a junior majoring in Sociology and Drama with an interest in social change through the arts. At Stanford, she has worked on Abi Morgan’s *Splendour* (Stage Manager) and *Guerilla Housewares* (Director) and will co-direct *The Real World: Stanford* this fall.

WADE RAY [Villager/Prisoner/Ngago] is a senior majoring in Human Biology. At Stanford, he is a member of Blackstage and Co-Director of Jam Pac’d, a hip-hop dance group, in addition to acting in *The Wild Party*, *StanFUNK*, and *Grease*.

RUSH REHM [Charlie Morris; Artistic Director of SST] has performed in several SST productions, including *Uncle Vanya* (Astrov), *Waiting for Godot* (Pozzo), *Biedermann and the Firebugs* (Biedermann), and *The Lover* (Richard/Max), and he has directed Amy Freed’s adaptation of *Lysistrata* and Pinter’s *The Collection* (with Ed Iskandar). He is Professor of Drama and Classics at Stanford.
CHARLOTTE SILVER [Production Assistant] is a junior majoring in History with a minor in German Studies. She is Co-Founder of Jews for Justice in Palestine, and active in Stanford’s divestment campaign with the group SCAI (Students Confronting Apartheid by Israel). She is also an intern at Flashpoints on KPFA.

D’ANDRE STAMPER [African Child] is a fifth grader at Beechwood School. His favorite subject is Math and he enjoys playing basketball with friends.

DANIA STAMPER [African Child] is a fourth grader at Beechwood School. Her favorite subject is Language Arts, and she loves swimming.

MICHAEL ST. CLAIR [Sound Designer] is entering his third year as a graduate student in the Department of Drama. He received a BA from Case Western University. At Stanford, he directed Sam Shepard’s Action and Tennessee Williams’ Suddenly Last Summer.

TUMANI ONABIYI [Drummer] has performed with Fua Dia Congo at Jacob’s Pillow and the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.; with the Ceddo Senegalese Dance Company in their concert for Nelson and Winnie Mandela at the Oakland Coliseum; on tour to Nigeria sponsored by the Lagos State Council for the Arts; and at the San Francisco Film Festival Lifetime Achievement ceremony for Senegalese filmmaker Ousman Sembene, among others. He also has appeared on the television series “Northern Exposure,” and “Nash Bridges.” Tumani has worked as an educator with various programs, including Young Audiences of the Bay Area, the San Francisco Symphony’s Adventures in Music, and The Drum Is Our Voice master class for the California Association of Music Educators State Conference.

ROBERT WATKINS [Villager] is a junior majoring in Psychology. At Stanford, he has performed in Grease and Do the Right Thing.

AFRICA ONSTAGE

FAREWELL TO A CANNIBAL RAGE by Femi Osofisan
Thursday through Sunday, August 9–12 at 8:00 PM in Pigott Theater

ODA OAK ORACLE by Tsegaye Gabre-Medhin
Thursday—Saturday, August 16–18 at 8:00 PM; Sunday, August 19 at 2:00 PM and 8:00 PM in Prosser Studio Theater. Check online for other dates in Oakland.

visit http://summertheater.stanford.edu