



**Celebration
Theatre**

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Presented by Celebration Theatre, an All-Star Cast Honors the Love, Legacy, and Queer Brilliance of Lorraine Hansberry and James Baldwin

Hollywood, CA, May 19, 2025 — Celebration Theatre, in partnership with City of West Hollywood and Los Angeles LGBT Center's Lily Tomlin/Jane Wagner Cultural Arts Center, proudly presents the West Coast Premiere reading of *sweet lorraine*—a deeply moving and historically urgent new play by acclaimed BIPOC playwright and cultural activist **Rajendra Ramoon Maharaj**—on Friday, May 23 at 8 p.m. at the Renberg Theatre.

Directed by five-time Tony Award nominee director/choreographer **Camille A. Brown**, this one-night-only staged reading brings together a luminous cast: LA Drama Critics Circle Award winner **Ashley Romans** (*Y: The Last Man*, *NOS4A2*) as “Lorraine Hansberry”, Tony nominee **Ato Blankson-Wood** (B’way: *Slave Play*, *When They See Us*) as “James Baldwin”, two-time Obie Award winner and Tony Award nominee **Charlayne Woodard** (B’way: *Ain’t Misbehavin’*, *Pose*), **William Allen Young** (*CSI: Miami*, *Women of Brewster Place*), **Jill Alexander** (*Silicon Valley*, *Mad Men*), and **Steven Weber** (*Wings*, B’way: *The Producers*), with stage directions read by **Leo Sheng** (*The L Word: Generation Q*)

Playwright **Rajendra Ramoon Maharaj**, whose *Little Rock* made its New York Off-Broadway premiere in 2018, shares:

"At a time in our country when powerful political forces are trying to remove from our history the contributions of Black, queer leaders like Lorraine Hansberry and James Baldwin, sweet lorraine becomes a powerful reminder that if we are not careful, the past can become prologue. I'm thrilled to be collaborating with Celebration Theatre, Los Angeles' premiere LGBTQIA+ theatre under the direction of five-time Tony Nominee, Camille A. Brown, to bring this dynamic new American play to the City of Angels. This theatrical event is a soul-stirring reminder that the task that remains is to embrace our interdependence—to see ourselves reflected in every other human being, and to respect and honor differences."

Set in the final weeks of Lorraine Hansberry's life as she faces pancreatic cancer, *sweet lorraine* imagines an extended conversation between Hansberry—the Black lesbian playwright behind *A Raisin in the Sun*—and her closest friend, James Baldwin, the openly gay writer and activist whose voice remains central to queer Black liberation. This new work is more than biographical—it's a spiritual reckoning, a final love letter between chosen family, and a raw, tender portrayal of two queer visionaries who found refuge in each other's brilliance and vulnerability.

A 2025 Semi-Finalist for the Eugene O'Neill National Playwrights Conference, *sweet lorraine* reclaims and elevates queer Black history through a documentary-driven practice that centers intimacy, truth-telling, and liberation.

"I am honored to direct the reading of Rajendra Ramoon Maharaj's deeply heartfelt play, sweet lorraine, which highlights the beautiful relationship of pioneers, Lorraine Hansberry and James Baldwin," says director **Camille A. Brown**. *"I am eager to dive in with Rajendra and the actors to explore and discover!"*

"WONDERFUL!" - New York Times

"SWEETLY STUNNING" - The Amsterdam News

“A SUPERB, TIMELESS DRAMA” - Tony Award Winner, George Faison

This performance is presented as an official selection of the **2025 WeHo Pride Arts Festival**, amplifying LGBTQIA+ artistic voices as part of West Hollywood’s annual celebration of queer culture and creativity.

Admission is free, but RSVP is required. Reserve tickets at lalgbtcenter.org/event/sweet-lorraine.

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For media inquiries, photos, interviews, or press comps, please contact Executive Director Christopher Maikish (he/him) at chris@celebrationtheatre.org.

ABOUT CELEBRATION THEATRE

Celebration Theatre is one of the nation's oldest LGBTQIA+ theatres. Founded in December 1982 in a Silverlake storefront, the nonprofit was expressly organized as a community theatre *"of, by, and for gay and lesbian people and their friends."* Since then, the Los Angeles-based company has mounted theatrical productions representative of, and in support of, the queer community: with a sharp focus on inclusion, visibility, and pride. GLAAD, NAACP, LA theatre awards and many other benchmarks for excellence have recognized the theatre and its artists— performers, writers, directors, designers, musicians, and producers. Scores of LGBTQIA+ luminaries have graced Celebration's stages over the years as it continues to provide an inspiring and empowering forum for professional and emerging artists, giving voice to the evolving experience of queer culture. Tax-deductible donations can be kindly accepted at: [CELEBRATIONTHEATRE.ORG](https://celebrationtheatre.org).