



Smithsonian Institution

National Museum of African American History and Culture

Playbill for Ma Rainey's Black Bottom

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THE NEW SEASON

Some of the exciting shows soon to arrive on Broadway

[[image: black & white photograph of a woman in 1920s dress sings in front of the band behind a 1920s radio microphone]]
Theresa Merritt in Ma Rainey's Black Bottom, a new American play by August Wilson, opening October 11 at the Cort Theatre.

If there's no business like show business, there's no drama like the drama of a new Broadway season. This is the time of year when the air is thick with predictions about coming attractions along the Great White Way. But in the midst of all the speculation, only one thing can be said with certainty: Nothing on a Broadway stage can rival the entertainment value of the season itself as it unfurls against a mounting backdrop of surprises, disasters, comedic twists and occasional heart-soaring triumphs. Suddenly, a brilliant new star is born or a great new playwright emerges.

A musical can cost \$5 million. A play with only one set and four characters can cost nearly \$1 million. As a result, caution has become the first rule of producing. Nowadays, most producers want to see a show on its feet somewhere before drawing up contracts and making financial commitments for a New York run. London is crowded with American producers who keep second homes on the Concorde in order to compete for the rights to the latest West End hit. Likewise, regional theatres around the country have learned to expect an invasion of New York theatre people whenever one of their new productions receives favorable reviews.

Caution has also created a new traffic pattern for the theatre season. In recent years the season has begun with a slow start, with fewer and fewer openings before the Christmas break, and it has ended with a fast finish, with a flurry of openings in the spring right before the May deadline for Tony nominations.

This season promises to be no different. Coming attractions so far include one big new musical, one revival, a few small musicals and a mix of American and British plays – although the British are coming in less force than in recent years.

Alexandre Dumas's swashbuckling tale of *The Three Musketeers* is scheduled to be the first splashy new musical of the season, opening Nov. 4 at the Broadway Theatre. The score, with music by Rudolph Friml and lyrics by P.G. Wodehouse and Clifford Grey, include songs from the 1928 version of *The Three Musketeers* that Florenz Ziegfeld produced, as well as other Friml songs. The musical has a new book by Mark Bramble, the librettist for *42nd Street*. The director is Tom O'Horgan, who staged *Hair* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

Other new musicals are *Quilters* and *Leader of the Pack*. *Quilters*, by Molly Newman and Barbara Damashek, is about pioneer women of the American West who told their own stories in their quilts. Opening night was Sept. 25 at the Jack

by Carol Lawson



12

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[[advertisement]]

A guest is someone you invite to your home. A friend is someone you share it with.

[image - color photograph of two stemmed glasses with ice and liquor; a purple Crown Royal flannel bag]]

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