



Smithsonian Institution

National Museum of African American History and Culture

Playbill for Ma Rainey's Black Bottom

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A THEATREGOER'S NOTEBOOK by Rebecca Morehouse

HEY THERE

Surveying her comfortable California world, Janis Paige wondered, "How do I leave this? How do I leave my dogs, my house in the mountains?" But remembering with fondness the good Broadway times, she fastened a seat belt and came again to Manhattan. She was last here in

[[image - black and white photograph of Janis Paige; caption: Janis Paige, who is appearing in Lawrence Roman's new comedy Alone Together]]

1968, intrepidly succeeding Angela Lansbury in *Mame*. "I have deep roots in California," she explains. "I was married almost 13 years to Ray Gilbert, who died eight years ago. He was a songwriter and had music-publishing companies and I've been running them." To learn the business was hard, but she swings like Jane through the music jungle. "I've been to London, Paris and Japan to meet publishers who take care of our music around the world.

"But sooner or later," she adds, "life moves you into the mainstream again." Her irresistible propellant was *Alone Together*, a new comedy by Lawrence Roman, who wrote *Under the Yum-Yum Tree*. "I was scared," she admits, "but it's the first play I've read in years that felt right." Starring with her at the Music Box: Kevin McCarthy, another welcome returnee.

John Raitt played opposite her in the hit musical, *The Pajama Game*. "He was gorgeous, I just loved him," she says. "He lives in California and we talk on the phone; he's happily married to his childhood sweetheart. Nobody believed in the show, but opening night was astonishing." Wrote an admiring Brooks Atkinson of Janis, "Her voice is as exhilarating as her shape."

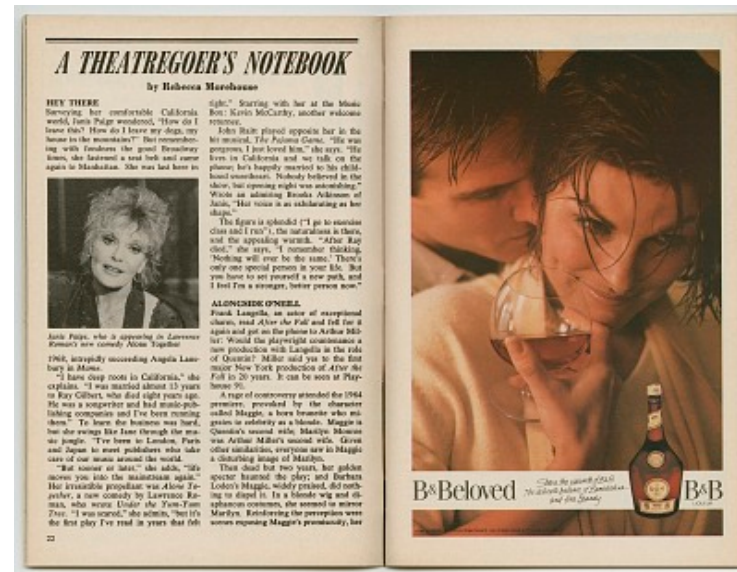
The figure is splendid ("I go to exercise class and I run"), the naturalness is there, and the appealing warmth. "After Ray died," she says, "I remember thinking, 'Nothing will ever be the same.' There's only one special person in your life. But you have to set yourself a new path, and I feel I'm a stronger, better person now."

ALONGSIDE O'NEILL

Frank Langella, an actor of exceptional charm, read *After the Fall* and fell for it again and got on the phone to Arthur Miller: Would the playwright countenance a new production with Langella in the role of Quentin? Miller said yes to the first major New York production of *After the Fall* in 20 years. It can be seen at Playhouse 91.

A rage of controversy attended the 1964 premiere, provoked by the character called Maggie, a born brunette who migrates to celebrity as a blonde. Maggie is Quentin's second wife; Marilyn Monroe was Arthur Miller's second wife. Given other similarities, everyone saw in Maggie a disturbing image of Marilyn.

Then dead but two years, her golden specter haunted the play; and Barbara Loden's Maggie, widely praised, did nothing to dispel it. In a



blonde wig and diaphanous costumes, she seemed to mirror Marilyn.
Reinforcing the perception were scenes exposing Maggie's promiscuity,
her

22

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[[image - color photograph of man hugging a woman holding a glass. A
bottle of B&B is superimposed on the image]]

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