



Smithsonian Institution

National Museum of African American History and Culture

Playbill for Ma Rainey's Black Bottom

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[[image - black and white photograph of 3 women wearing mink coats and a man in a white shirt.]] CREME DE MINK

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A VIEW FROM THE AUDIENCE continued

to me and said hello. I introduced myself, and he told me what a beautiful letter he thought I had written. Then I asked him how he felt. He put on a puzzled expression and asked "About what?" I wanted to slap myself since I hadn't clarified my question, but I explained, "Your throat sounded so raspy onstage." I thought he was coming down with the flu again. He had missed a performance or two the month before, because of an attack of the flu. He said "No, that was all done for the role onstage." Once again, I was amazed. He was very accommodating when I asked if it would be too much to take a picture with him. Then, I gave him the gift I brought him: a 5" by 7" plaque. It was black brass on a gold plate, against a walnut backing. In script it said "Death Of A Salesman," in print, "Broadhurst Theatre, Dustin Hoffman as Willy Lohman, March 29-June 10, 1984," and lastly in script again a line from the play, "Isn't that a remarkable thing?"

Before leaving, I mentioned that I had reread an interview he did for Kramer vs. Kramer back in 1979. In it, he declared, "When you demand happiness aren't you asking for something unrealistic?" I asked him if he still believed that to be true. Personally I thought in light of his new family life and his tremendous subsequent successes, he would say no. But instead, he said yes.

Why was I surprised he still felt that way? I reminded myself this was

CREME DE MINK.

A VIEW FROM THE AUDIENCE continued

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When I now think of my bonding meeting with Dustin Hoffman it seems almost surreal. But it will keep reminding myself of it because it changed me.

Mr. Mink's play and Dustin Hoffman's performance inspired me to try to connect to him with life, to reach my dreams with the possible and to stay away from the tragic and look for the light instead. I was glad to gift.

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probably the most overpowering characteristic of the man: a constant striving toward perfection, a constant demand upon himself to never be satisfied.

When I now think of my fleeting meeting with Dustin Hoffman it seems almost unreal. But I will keep reminding myself of it because it changed me.

Mr. Miller's play and Dustin Hoffman's performance inspired me to try to come to terms with life, to mesh my dreams with the possible and to veer away from the tragic and look for the light instead. I was given a gift.

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