

Lloyd Richards

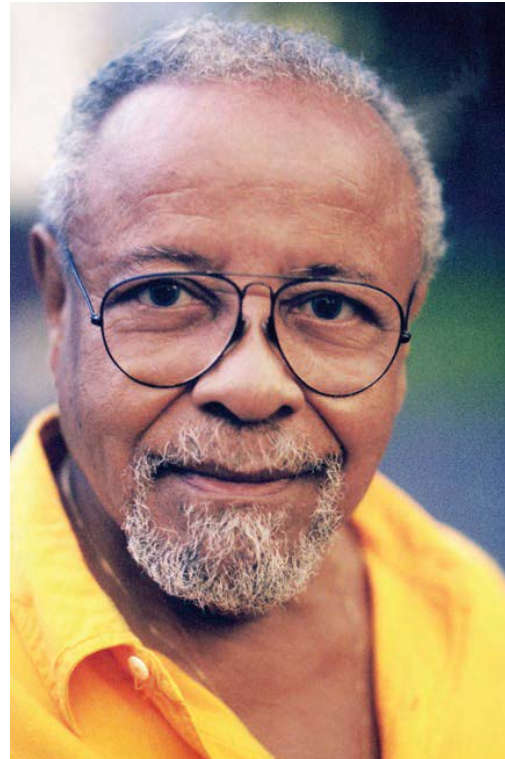
July 1992 Calendar

Lloyd Richards will forever hold the reputation at one of the most influential people in American theater.

In 1959, he became the first African American to direct a play on Broadway – Lorraine Hansberry’s award-winning drama, “A Raisin in the Sun.” Twenty years later, he was appointed artistic director for the Yale Repertory Theater and dean of the Yale University Drama School, two of the country’s most prestigious theatrical institutions.

At Yale and at the Eugene O’Neill Theater Center’s National Playwrights’ Conference, which he led as artistic director from 1968 to 1999, Richards developed hundreds of new plays. It was during this time that he helped discover August Wilson, who was to become a celebrated playwright. Richards directed most of Wilson’s original productions, beginning with the 1984 production of “Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom.”

“I was attracted to the authenticity, the recognizable voice in August Wilson’s work,” said Richards. “His characters spoke to me in a way I recalled from my own youth. He echoed the wonderful poetry of the streets.”



Richards went on to produce most of the plays in Wilson’s ongoing series about the experiences of African Americans in the 20th century, including “Fences,” the most honored play in the history of the American theater. In his later career, he began producing television segments, including “Roots: The Next Generation,” while he continued his work in the theater. Richards died on June 29, 2006, his 87th birthday.