

Arthur Laurents

June 15, 2004

Dear Leslie,

I had an unforgettable theatre experience this afternoon watching you play the essence of the Lena Horne I knew so intimately for so many years. For most of the piece, I had to be satisfied only by your acting which was so truthful and memorizing despite the limited opportunities. Finally you sang – and I was devastated..

The quiet elegy to Billy Strayhorn was heartbreakingly beautiful. It brought the play suddenly to life but still didn't prepare me for your "Stormy Weather". I knew your thrilling voice; I knew you found the Lena in you; I knew there was a depth of emotion you were finally tapping into, but nothing, none of it, accounted for the magnificence of that extraordinary emotional roller coaster ride you took me and every single person in that audience on. It was astounding, thrilling and it moved me to tears.

I would love to see you play Rose in "Gypsy" – not a black "Gypsy", just "Gypsy."

With admiration and affection,



P.S. I first met Lena in Hollywood, just shortly before Lennie Hayton made her into the tigress she became. I was there the night it began at Slapsie Maxie's. I met Strayhorn with her in Paris – a marvel of a man - and talked endlessly with her about him. I never met Kay Thompson and in all the years, Lena never mentioned her except in the most casual way. Is she in Lena's book? I don't remember.