

MA RAINEY TOP WINNER

NAACP ANNOUNCES THEATRE AWARDS

By DON SHIRLEY

Ma Rainey's "Black Bottom" led the pack as the Beverly Hills/Hollywood chapter of the NAACP announced the recipients of its 1987 Theatre Awards on Tuesday.

The Los Angeles Theatre Center production of August Wilson's drama about racial tension behind the scenes at a 1927 Chicago recording session won 12 of the 112 awards, which will be presented in a ceremony at UCLA on Nov. 2. This is the first year the Theatre Awards have been separated from the rest of the National Assn. for the Advancement of Colored People's Image Awards.

Why so many awards?

"It acknowledges that the artists in local theater should not be pitted against each other as in other mediums," according to a statement issued by the NAACP's Connie Watson. "Whereas television and motion picture performances

are frozen on film, the theater experience differs from performance to performance and story to story."

As a result, 14 productions shared "best play" honors.

"Ma Rainey's Black Bottom" was one of five Equity productions honored as best play. The others were "Checkmates," "A Raisin in the Sun," "Asinamali!" and "Tamer of Horses."

Five Equity-Waiver productions also won best play awards: "The Meeting," "Rounds," "Ritual," "No Place to Be Somebody" and "Eyes of the American."

And four special productions—"Don't Get God Started," "Diary of Black Men," "A Night for Dancing" and "West Memphis Mojo"—were also cited as best plays.

"Ma Rainey," "Tamer of Horses" and "Eyes of the American" were all produced at Los Angeles Theatre Center, which won a special theater house award.

Lifetime achievement honors

went to New York's Negro Ensemble Company, actor Brock Peters, director Lloyd Richards and writer-director Douglas Turner Ward. The Inner City Cultural Center's C. Bernard Jackson was cited as a "trailblazer."

"A Raisin in the Sun" placed second in total awards, with 10. "Eyes of the American" garnered nine awards, while "The Meeting," "No Place to Be Somebody" and "Checkmates" each won eight.

Besides the best play honor, "Ma Rainey" also picked up awards for Wilson; director Claude Purdy; actors Richard Lawson, Vernon Washington and Abdul Salaam El Arazzal, actresses Ann Weldon and Kimberly LaMarque, set designer Jesse Hollis, costume designer Fritha Knudsen, musical director Dwight Andrews and (sharing one award) sound/light designers Jon Gottlieb and Derek Duarte.