

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT



Sasheer Zamata

Saturday Night Live Debut

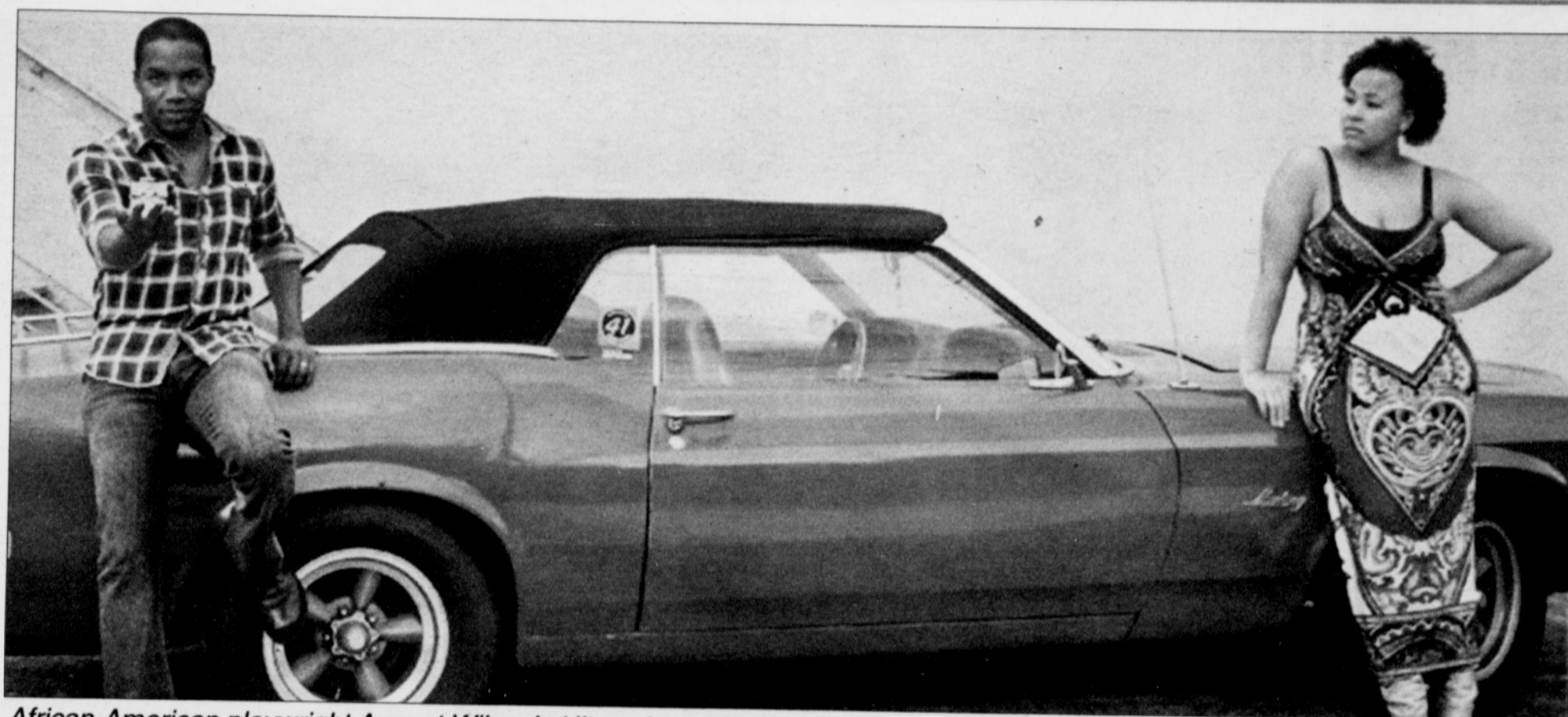
(AP) - Sasheer Zamata made a low-key but notable debut on "Saturday Night Live" as the first black female cast member since 2007.

As usual for a "SNL" newcomer, Zamata kept a low profile on last Saturday's broadcast. She participated in sketches in roles including Rihanna and a teenager at a slumber party.

The 27-year-old comedian and improv performer was signed earlier this month in the wake of criticism of "SNL" for its lack of ethnic diversity. Black male cast members Kenan Thompson and Jay Pharoah were among those voicing complaints last fall.

The NBC series has had only four black women cast members in its 39 seasons. The most recent was Maya Rudolph. The biracial actress left in 2007.

The show has also recently hired two black female writers.



African-American playwright August Wilson's 'Jitney,' a masterful, tension-filled play about a group of independent taxi drivers, is performed by the local theater group Portland Playhouse, Jan. 22 through Feb. 16 at the Winningstad Theater, downtown.

August Wilson's 'Jitney' Opens

Portland Playhouse presents its fifth production from August Wilson's Pittsburgh Cycle: Jitney, a masterful, tension-filled play about a group of independent taxi drivers in a well-worn livery cab station in the mid-1970s.

Regular cabs won't travel to Pittsburgh's Hill District, so small businessman Becker and his drivers provide taxi services for the city's black community. Now, Becker faces the possible closure of his building, and his son has just

returned from prison. Can this community's bond to one another be enough to help them weather a series of storms? Through detailed characters and finely wrought language, Wilson turns everyday experiences into poetry.



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