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# Proposition Stages Galvanizing Play

*The Proposition Theatre Company presents LeRoi Jones' "Dutchman," directed by Walter Dallas, starring Akbar Imhotep and Jacquelyn Mikulencak, at the Neighborhood Arts Center, 252 Georgia Ave. S.W., Saturday, March 18, at 8 p.m. \$5, \$3 students. 523-6450.*

By Helen C. Smith  
Constitution Staff Writer

The Proposition Theatre Company's production of LeRoi Jones' "Dutchman" is a shocking play of ugly truth, enacted powerfully by Akbar Imhotep and Jacquelyn Mikulencak.

It is not pretty or agreeable at all. It is not meant to be. It is strong theater, the kind that sets the mind reeling and the stomach churning.

"Dutchman" is a message play. The theme comes out loud and strong that racism is an obscenity.

But there are no lectures in this galvanizing work, no wordy idealized philosophizing. The racism is fought out to its violent conclusion by two people on a subway; a white, wildly psychopathic woman and a black man, at first rational and cool, in the end emblazoned with passion.

The play is full of symbolism, some obvious, some merely suggestive. The subway setting itself symbolic. Here are two people, imprisoned together in the belly of the earth where the ultimate gut-level tragedy will be played out with sex and violence and ultimate death.

I am not suggesting that there is anything pornographic about "Dutchman," except in so far as it depicts ugly motives and prejudices that live within mankind.

As the play begins, nothing is heard but the grating and jarring noise of a subway grinding to a stop at a station. Clay (Imhotep) is a passenger who sees Lula (Miss Mikulencak) on the platform. He gives her the once-over with his eyes.

That's enough to set Lula in action. She wastes no time. As she slithers in beside him on the seat she deliberately, with an innocent air, drops her hand on his leg. First she teases, offers him an apple (the eternal symbol of temptation) out of her purse. Then she taunts him, feeds him sexual fantasies, challenges his manhood to the utmost and turns ugly and threatening.

Clay at first retains his cool, gradually gets snared into her fantasies and then explodes with hate and a desire to kill, like Othello when he believes himself betrayed by Desdemona.

Miss Mikulencak, a Floridian making her first stage appearance in Atlanta, is splendid as the dreadful Lula. Imhotep, who is the Proposition's assistant administrative director, is also fine as Clay, although in the more fiery moments, the meaning of his words is lost in his intense, rapid delivery, but never the emotion. One feels what he is saying even if the words are garbled.

While all this is going on, four mute subway riders, each with a plastic mask over his eyes, have entered the subway. They stand in frozen positions and never speak. They represent, director Walter Dallas said, the apathetic majority, black and white, that lets racism go on without ever lifting a hand or uttering a protest.

They are collaborators not only in their inaction, but by their final assistance in tossing the body off the subway. Which body I will leave for you to find out. Nor will I divulge the surprise ending, except to say it was the only moment which aroused any laughter from the audience.

"Dutchman" is a powerhouse of a one-act play, but it certainly is not easy to take. It is brutally honest, but well worth the seeing.