

GALLEY

In conjunction with the Williams Afro-American Society, the black students of Bennington College are selling tickets for "Riot", a play to be given by the Om Players of the Theatre Workshop, Boston, Inc. The play will be performed at the First Congregational Church in Williamstown.

"Riot" carries the form of "Environmental Theatre", utilizing in addition to words, sound, color, light, gesture, voice, and movement with all available theatre space, to destroy the idea of actor-audience separation, to create a new involvement in theatrical drama -- the audience is closer to the action, the action centers around the audience, the audience becomes an integral part of the drama.

Elliot Norton of the Boston Record-American writes:

"The basic idea is interesting but not unique. Thirty-one years ago, Clifford Odets and the Group Theater used it in the same way in "Waiting for Lefty", which turned a theater into a union meeting Hall, put most of the actors in the auditorium and ended not in a riot but a wild uprising in which the audience was swept along shouting, "Strike!" as though they had just joined a taxi drivers' union, an organization in which some of them would not have been caught dead. (January 3, 1968)

In "Riot" the dimensions of a riot are produced while a bi-racial panel discusses "the problem". They present the four basic points of view --the diametrically opposed positions of the white racist, the white liberal, the Negro "Tom" and the black rightist: the play uses their mutual animosity and misunderstandings as a commentary on incommunication while establishing a bond of communication with the audience: spectators lose their anonymity by becoming involved, intellectually and emotionally, thereafter becoming participants in the drama.

The realization reached and the attitudes formed at the end are not imposed ideas nor are they superficial sentiments that arise from a pseudo-identification, but rather the generation of a vaguely stable feeling that evolves from an honest confrontation with reality and the self and a slight communion with both that borders on the empty from having gotten a little closer to the truth.

The Om Players are professionals who have juxtaposed "the disciplines and arts of mime, sound, yoga, movement, improvisation" to create a new art form, having added a new dimension to the theatre and having provided a beginning for the expression of visions that cannot be confined to a proscenium stage.

"What is special about "Riot" is the clarity, level sense, and force of an original conception developed with intelligence and unpretentious theatrical savvy. What's more, it works. (Michael Smith, The Village Voice, January 18, 1968)

The producers of "Riot" have taken the play out of Boston. The form is new, the idea is urgent, and the message immediate and pertinent, especially to college communities.

There will be four performances this Friday and Saturday, at 7:30 and 9:30 PM. The donations are \$2.50. The Theatre Workshop is a non-profit organization. The proceeds from "Riot" will be used to cover the expenses of production. Any profits gained will go towards the establishment of the Dr. Martin Luther King Memorial Library at Williams College. This fund will be used to purchase books which deal with black history, literature, music, and art. In addition, this fund will go towards measures to attract speakers and lecturers acquainted with the problems of the black man in America and with their social, economic, and cultural development. We feel that both of these projects initiated by the performances of "Riot" will benefit the goal of both communities in terms of increasing social awareness for the betterment of our society.

Twelve tickets have been sold on the Bennington campus. Tickets can be purchased from any black student on campus. A table will also be set up at various times in Commons.

We need your help.

May 16, 1968

Barbara Abercrombie
Sharon Stockard

