

Mime Troupe 'Tells It How It Is'

In blackface

Ann Wehrer

1966

Unwind and un-complicate. Let go, on Oct. 7 the Mime Troupe did. They touched on all the touchy issues. They gave us a quick look at ourselves, black and white.

The exaggerated makeup, the powder blue satin tails, the bentwood chairs were all an integral part of mime in the classic tradition, satirizing the minstrel show and putting us all down.

They succeeded through pure entertainment to thrill, embarrass and scare the audience. Their dance-like theatrics held the audience; their trips through the theatre shouting "integrate now" made only a few feel uneasy.

Their skits would begin lightly and lead often to tragedy and freeze, leaving a great tableau of an unresolved problem.

At one point the stage was filled with a movie, "Oh Dem Watermelons" (with the chorus of minstrels singing same) a hilarious destruction of the watermelon-darkie image. The watermelon was finished in every conceivable way—delightful and horrifying, paralleling the white vs. negro world. In the end the watermelon chases its tormentors.

One look was at two teenage hipsters on a New York street corner, not doing much. A white cop comes and tells 'em to shove off. They don't. Things get rough and instant death.

As I left the Detroit Institute Auditorium I saw four teenage hipsters on a Detroit street corner, not doing much. Two white cops tell 'em to shove off. They don't. Things get rough—I didn't stay the other instant.

fifth Estate

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