

the man who couldn't dance & master harold and the boys

The first in an enjoyable evening of two one act plays being presented at The Coleman & Smith Artistic Company is Jason Katims' "The Man Who Couldn't Dance." In this lightly dramatic romantic piece, Eric (Tom Lawlor) visits his now married, ex-lover, Gail (Seema Rahmani). In her new baby's nursery, tucked in the attic and out of earshot of Gail's husband and Eric's girlfriend downstairs, the old friends relive their past relationship: her "need for structure" and his need to hang on to his carefree adventurousness



Lamont Coleman

Lawlor and Rahmani are very likable and work well together making one wish they might have been able to work it out. Trina Richter directs with an appropriate light touch.

Second is Athol Fugard's powerfully provocative 1982 drama/comedy, "Master Harold and the Boys." Dealing with racism and classism and set in 1940s South Africa, it is both timeless and not necessarily geographically specific.

A young, white middle class boy, Halley/Harold (JR Baily), finds more love, camaraderie and friendship with a black worker, Sam (Lamont Coleman), at his parent's restaurant, than he does with his own family. He also befriends Sam's co-worker and fanatic ballroom-competition-dancer, Willie (Denver Dowridge). However, when push comes to shove, the inbred elitism prevails marking the boy as "master" and his friends merely the family's "servants." Or does it? The only blatant fault is some strange and inappropriate lighting effects. Technical kudos for the rain drizzle.

Under Coleman's flawless direction the wholesome humor brings a smile or chuckle with the same ease that the drama makes you squirm. Baily has some fine moments, but seems to have difficulty with the dialect. Dowridge gives a delightful and multi-leveled performance immediately endearing him to the audience. As actor, Coleman commands the stage in one of the best performances seen this year. He is at once Hally's father and friend, teacher and student, guardian and servant and all with superbly controlled dignity. (NOTE: both plays are double cast, however, Coleman will perform the role of Sam in all performances)

Performing at The Coleman & Smith Artistic Company, 6448 Santa Monica Blvd., (theatre row) in Hollywood, Thurs. & Fri. at 8 pm, Sat. at 3 pm & 8 pm, through Sept. 19th with possible extension. Tickets \$15. call 323/660-TKTS.

-Dave DePino