Youth Theatre Unlimited Updates 'Romeo and Juliet'

Romeo is black and Juliet is white in Clay Stevenson's production of the Shakespeare tragedy. The story of star-crossed lovers and the breakdown of two families has another component which is both real and sadly contemporary — a conscious statement about racism and the lack of communication between races.

The director of Youth Theatre Unlimited, a theater group performing now at the Wadsworth Atheneum's Avery Theatre, Mr. Stevenson joined the organization in 1978. Before that, the Youth Theatre was an eductional program in the Hartford public school system.

Mr. Stevenson added a new dimension to the organization by instituting classes in acting techniques, voice, and dance for teenagers and adults. Today, the theater group is a professional training center and provides professional training and preparation for people serious about pursuing careers in the theater.

In conjunction with the Office of Cultural Affairs and the Capital Region Education Council, Mr. Stevenson recently embarked on a summer theater training program culminating in outdoor productions in Hartford's parks. Some Youth Theatre graduates have graduated to the Hartford Stage Company, professional dance troups, and college theater-arts programs throughout the country.

In the current production, Romeo is played by Tyron Leggett, a Bulkeley High School junior, and Liza Petruzzi of Southington plays Juliet. The interracial cast includes 30 other actors from Youth Theatre Unlimited.

"Romeo and Juliet" will be performed on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays through March 24. Matinee performances are at 3 P.M. on Sundays through March 18.

'Follies' to Be Performed

The Hole in the Wall Theatre will present "Follies" at 8:30 p.m., Fridays and Saturdays, March 9 to 31, at 36 North St., New Britain.

Reservations will be held until 8:15 p.m., and admission is by donation.

David Murphy (left) matches swordplay with Tyron Leggitt in the Youth Theatre Unlimited's production of 'Romeo and Juliet.'