



October 8, 2015

Wagner tackles race and drugs: '21 Chump Street,' 'Dutchman'

by NICOLE DeROSA

Wagner College Theatre's Stage One is launching its 2015-16 season with a double bill: "Dutchman" and "21 Chump Street."

"We chose 'Dutchman' first, after seeing all of these issues of power and race," said David McDonald, the director of the double-feature production. "But it's only a half-hour long, so we thought '21 Chump Street' would be a nice companion."

"Dutchman" was written in 1964 by Amiri Baraka, who was founder of the Black Arts movement. This play tells the story of Lola, a young white woman and Clay, an African American man, who meet while riding the subway. Lola begins to flirt heavily with Clay, but he rejects her and eventually gets very angry and impatient with Lola's advances. He receives heavy punishment for snapping at her.

"It's really good with double-bills like this that the students are exposed to issues like race and drugs," said Charlie Siedenbug, the Wagner Theater's P.R. director.

"21 Chump Street" is a podcast-turned-musical written by Broadway darling Lin-Manuel Miranda ("In the Heights," "Hamilton") that clocks in at just 15 minutes. Based on a newspaper article, the short features a high school boy falling in love with a transfer student who turns out to be an undercover cop looking for drugs in the school.

"The whole theme of the night is keep talking," said McDonald. "Don't be afraid of talking about these issues, keep addressing them."

McDonald plans on following through with that theme by inviting all the audience members to stay after the production to discuss these issues and have an open conversation with each other.

— *The production runs through Oct. 11: Wednesday through Friday, 8 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday matinees, 2 p.m. Tickets: \$10 each, and Wagner students get in for free with a current school I.D. To purchase, call 718-390-3259.*