

BROOKLINE TAB

Stereotypes on stage

Actor/writer pair take non-PC approach to shining light on racism

By Kyle J. Paine
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A Jewish guy and a black guy are in mid-conversation. "What else does it take to become a Jew?" asks the black man. "Do you know how to answer a question with a question?" answers the Jewish man. The audience laughs, and the performers move to their next punch line. Example: "What do you have to do to become a black man?" the Jewish guy asks. The black man's answer: "Get a job, leave the house and never come back."

Not exactly politically correct, but that's precisely the point of the dialogue above. More specifically, it's the point of another dialogue, aptly named "The Black Jew Dialogues," a two-man (and two-puppet) show that can be seen in Brookline Village this weekend. In "the Dialogues," actors/writers Ron Jones and Larry Jay Tish act out and explore many of the stereotypes — and similarities — of the black and Jewish experiences in America.

"We started our dialogue talking about our personal experiences," said Tish, 46, a Cambridge resident who plays the role of the Jewish man. "What you see on stage is only 30 percent of what we talked about."

Tish and Jones, of Jamaica Plain, use sketch comedy, slide shows, videotaped man-on-the-street interviews, puppetry and other multimedia to shine a bright, but funny, light on racism.

"We've done what three gener-

ations of politicians have been unable to do," said Jones, 43, with more than a hint of sarcasm. "I hope people take the time to take [our message] in and are less likely to marginalize people in the future."

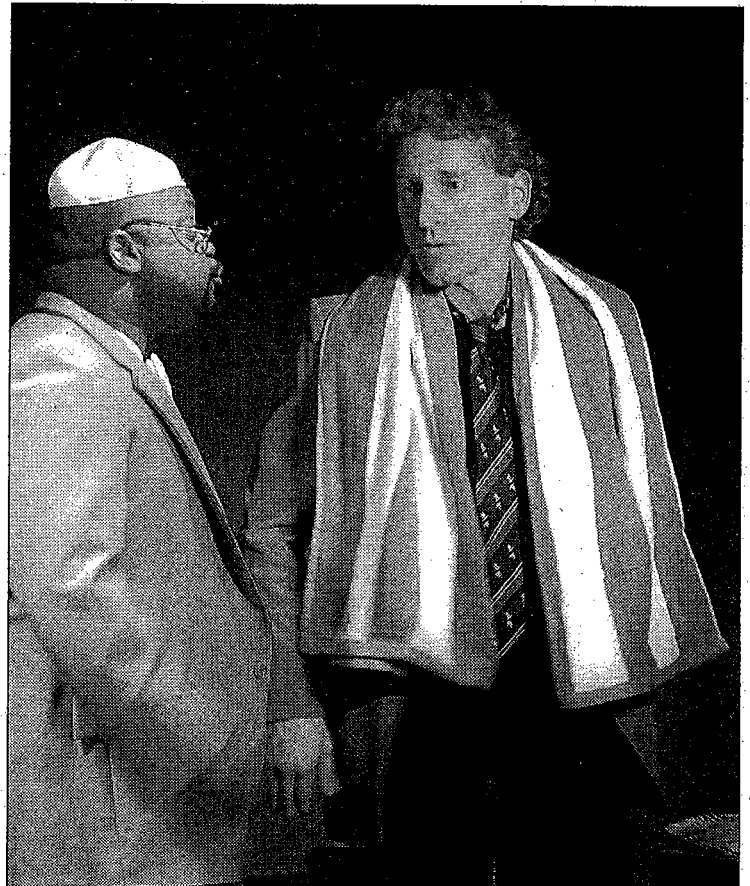
To that end, Jones and Tish work very hard. They change costumes every few minutes, interact with the characters on the big screen, scream, laugh, sing, kvetch and rap. They play video clips of their puppets — one black, one white — quizzing pedestrians on everything from Jewish recipes to racist jokes. The show runs at a break-neck pace.

"We just kind of wanted to make it that kind of show, and video is something we wanted to explore," Tish said.

When the duo finishes its run in Brookline, Tish and Jones will pack their wigs and props and head to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Scotland. Their show will be one of 1,867 shows staged in Edinburgh between Aug. 2-28, but it's exactly the type of venue for which Tish and Jones were hoping.

"I wanted to share my form of artistic expression on an international stage," Tish said. "Once I started jelling with Ron on this show, it started to go from there."

After Scotland, Tish and Jones see a future on tour in the United States. They said they've gotten interest from synagogues and from religious groups and schools, among others. In the



COURTESY PHOTO

Ron Jones, left, and Larry Jay Tish will perform "The Black Jew Dialogues" this weekend at the Puppet Showplace Theater in Brookline Village.

meantime, the tandem is enjoying the reaction they've gotten from audiences in Brookline, Gloucester, Lowell and Somerville, among other Massachusetts venues.

"From every single performance we have done, people have said how much the show has evoked in them, and how

much they believe other people should see this thing," Jones said.

"The Black Jew Dialogues" is being performed at the Puppet Showplace Theatre, 32 Station St., in Brookline Village July 20, 21 and 22 at 8 p.m. For tickets, call 617-792-6977 or visit theblackjewdialogues.com. Tickets are \$15 each.