

• METRO •

# NEW ORLEANS

SECTION

**B**

A/B

Saturday, June 8, 1991

## Race relations get a refreshing review

By RICHARD DODDS  
*Theater critic*

### A review

"Junebug/Jack," the new collaboration between Junebug Theater Project of New Orleans and the Roadside Theater of Kentucky, offers a different take on race relations. Rather than recycling warm platitudes or shaking angry fists, "Junebug/Jack" — on view through Sunday in Delgado Community College's main auditorium — demonstrates a sensitivity to black-white differences while also highlighting

some of those areas where traditions, legends, experiences, interests and even music overlap.

We hear how "Dixie," the anthem of the Confederacy, is a close cousin to a song associated with the emancipation celebrations of Juneteenth. Our roots have become all tangled together, the piece is saying, and there is more to be gained in nurturing these cross-pollinated heritages than in antagonistically yanking them apart.

"Junebug/Jack" is a collage of songs, stories, tall tales and historical anecdotes. John O'Neal and Michael Keck from Junebug provide the black perspective, often with a rural Southern slant, while Tommy Bledsoe, Kim Cole, Angelyn DeBord and Ron Short of Roadside focus on white culture, their emphasis being the mountain folks of Appalachia. True to the themes expressed in the piece, the two groups slide in and out of the others' moments before drawing in the audience with a bit of participation that's actually fun for a change.

Some of the high points include a wonderful piece of storytelling by Short and DeBord about a young boy who outwits a powerful farmer, terrific singing by Keck and a brief return of

O'Neal's famous Junebug Jabbo Jones character.

The 75-minute piece, which is reportedly still evolving, loses some of its steam and focus near the end, both musically and in its stories. But recovery is swift in

the finale, and Thursday night there were a lot of smiles on faces of many colors.

Final performances are today at 8 p.m. and Sunday at 7 p.m. For ticket information call 899-1365.