Honolulu Weekly Hot Pick March 14

Magno opus

The New York Times called ***The Romance of Magno Rubio*** "one of the best shows of the off-Broadway season" and during its run, it garnered eight Obie awards. In a theatrical season of soul-less musicals and claptrap comedy, both of which seem designed to take our minds off the crap that our nation is currently swimming in, Lonnie Carter's play dares to point out the flaws in the system and in the humans who embrace those flaws, even to their detriment.

The setting is a farm bunkhouse in California and the characters are Filipino farm workers digging hard for the American dream. One of them, Magno Rubio, begins a long-distance correspondence with a woman named Clarabelle who is soon asking him for jewelry and money. As his bunkmates watch Rubio succumb to his idealistic romance, their reactions range from support to suspicion to outright contempt.

The play is based on a short story by Carlos Bulosan, the Filipino-American who was his generation's literary voice on racism, oppression, and discriminatory work practices, and who was hounded for years by Hoover's FBI. In Magno Rubio, Bulosan's voice echos on.

-Steve Wagenseller

Kumu Kahua Theatre, 46 Merchant St., Thu.-Sat. 8pm, Sun. 2pm (no 3/23 performance), show runs through 4/13, $5-$16, [kumukahua.org], 536-4441