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REVIEW: Cat On A Hot Tin Roof

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Madeleine Lambert (Maggie) and Steven DeMarco (Brick).

by *Steve Desroches*

The star of any Tennessee Williams' play is the writing. The rolling poetry inherent in the dialogue is a marvel in that it is so dripping with juicy meat hanging on the marrow that it feeds an audience into an intoxicating hypnosis; a veritable Bacchanalian orgy of the written word. That being said, in order for any production of his work to be successful it needs to let the writing take the spotlight through performance, direction, and staging. Wellfleet Harbor Actors Theater's production of the classic *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* marvelously revels in the work with shining performances and a gorgeous, flowing direction that captures a steamy summer night in the Mississippi Delta, allowing enough room for a little playful melodrama and sophistication to let the story within each line come through while maintaining its secrets and purity.

The actors that portray Big Daddy and Big Momma, appropriately enough, do the heavy lifting in this production. The performances of Keir Dullea and Mia Dillon create a kinetic energy that illuminates the entire production. Dullea starred as Brick in the 1974 Broadway revival of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and Dillon is a Tony nominee, and while both actors have long resumes, their main accomplishment is the generosity they show by giving room for each actor to create their own character without overshadowing, and by giving believable vulnerability to two towering characters of the American theater.

Madeleine Lambert as Maggie gives a soft desperation to the sexually charged character, providing a nobleness for her conniving ways presented not only as a means of survival, but a battle against the social mechanism of the Deep South in the 1950s that would keep a woman like her on the outside. She does beautiful battle with her sister-in-law Mae, portrayed with delightful wickedness by Amie Lytle. We hate Mae not because she is deceitful and snotty, nor because she is conniving, as most every character is. Rather it is because she embodies the only one that really has some respect for an establishment that even this ruling family can see has outlived its usefulness, if it ever had any. She plays the villain with a fine ease, keeping Mae from becoming a caricature and giving her humanity.

Steven DeMarco as Brick and Cliff Blake as his older brother Gooper both provide intense character studies of two different men who, in keeping with the times, often speak in code and innuendo, for vastly different reasons. Both provide strong performances. The direction by Elizabeth Falk is a dreamy mix of classic Williams with the fluidity of a ballet. In all, the production is a joy to watch.

Cat On A Hot Tin Roof is performed at the Wellfleet Harbor Actors Theater (WHAT), 2357 Route 6, Wellfleet, Thursdays through Mondays at 8 p.m., now through Sunday, September 22. For tickets (\$10/\$15/\$37) and information call 508.349.9428 or visit what.org. The production then moves to Provincetown Town Hall, 206 Commercial St., Friday, September 27 through Sunday, September 29 as part of the Provincetown Tennessee Williams Festival. For more information on the Festival visit www.twptown.org.

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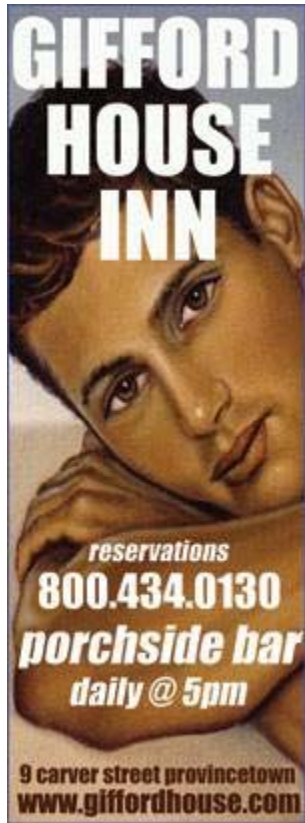
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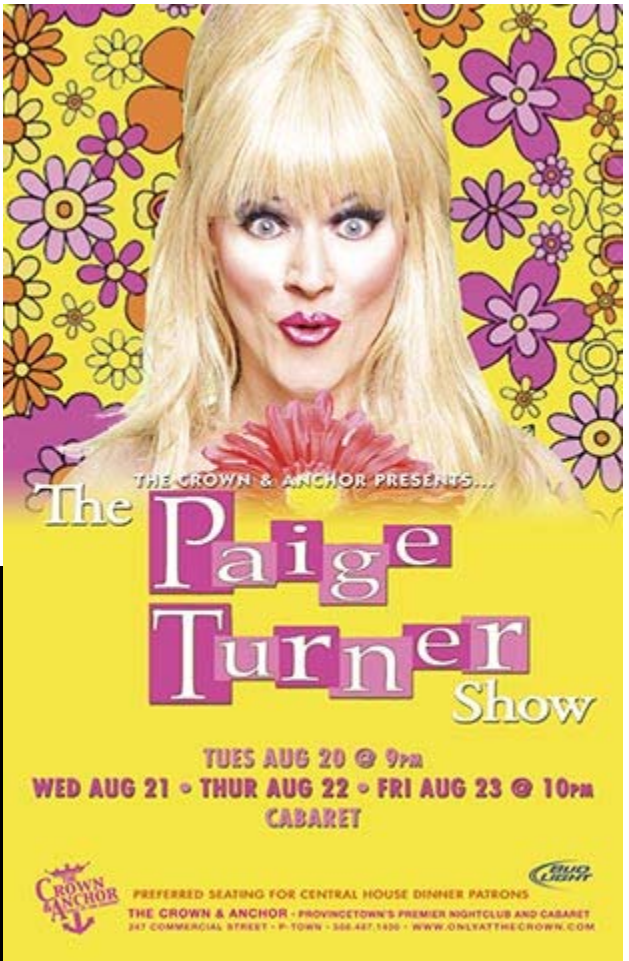


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