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'Tennessee Williams' Circle of Friends' at Ptown Festival

Wednesday Aug 20, 2014

The 9th Tennessee Williams Theater Festival, **"Tennessee Williams' Circle of Friends,"** features humor, love, disappointment and healing that springs from friendships.

The theme of friendship is developed in performances in plays and dance from around the country and from South Africa. The four-day celebration of Williams' creative force includes plays that Williams wrote in which friendship plays a pivotal role, and plays written by some well-known friends who were themselves major creative forces -- Carson McCullers, Yukio Mishima, Jane Bowles, and William Inge.

"Williams always folds laughter into his plays, often ironic laughter. In his plays about friendship that our audiences will see this season, "Period of Adjustment" and "A Lovely Sunday at Creve Coeur," the laughter is overt and happily life-affirming" says David Kaplan, curator of the Festival.

"Williams orbited within a constellation of writers who were stars," Kaplan continued.

"They shared a view of the world, ideas about the value of art, and secrets. Our audience will also, I hope, share those ideas and secrets while discovering Williams' affinity to the writings of his friends."

From the Town Hall to the beachside, performances will take place at various venues in the town where Williams spent several summers writing some of his masterpieces.



Jane Froiland as Helena in "A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur" (Source: Gremlin Theatre)

The plays written by Tennessee Williams in the festival are "Period of Adjustment," a rare comedy by the author that will resonate with today's audiences; "A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur," the basis for the highly successful TV series "The Golden Girls;" "Vieux Carré," eccentric characters in the French Quarter desperately seeking connection; and

"I Wish You'd Keep Still," Two dances inspired by two Williams' one act plays: "Why Do You Smoke So Much, Lily" (1935) and "Something Unspoken" (1951), choreographed by Carson Efirid.

While the plays by the friends of Tennessee Williams will be "Member of the Wedding" by Carson McCullers, "She was the only person I have ever been able to work with in the same room," said Williams; "In the Summer House" by Jane Bowles, Williams helped arrange a grant so Bowles could take time to create a second act; "The Lady Aoi"



Juliet Brett as Molly and Jack Dilday as Lionel in "In The Summer House" (Source:Josh Andrus)

by Yukio Mishima, Williams met Mishima in 1957 on the street and invited the elegantly dressed handsome Japanese man for tea and martinis; and "An Otherwise Hopeless Evening - four plays by William Inge," Williams introduced Inge to his agent and helped launch his career as a famous playwright. Inge never came out as a homosexual.

Jef Hall-Flavin, executive director of the Festival says, "We offer our audiences a deeper understanding of Williams, his life, his work, his creative force. We have a special talk with John Lahr, former theater critic for The New Yorker and author of the newest biography on Williams. In Williams 101, directors and actors offer more insight about their work. For graduate level students, our Tennessee Williams Institute offers immersion in performances and seminars with several scholars."

"We also have several parties and mixers so that our international crowd can get to know each other," Hall-Flavin says. "We expect many new friends will be made."