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Provincetown Tennessee Williams Theater Festival
Tennessee Williams’ Circle of Friends
Thurs, September 25 – Sunday, September 28, 2014

Life is partly what we make it, and partly what it is made
by the friends we choose.  –Tennessee Williams

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.

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.”
Plays Written By Tennessee Williams:

**Period of Adjustment**

In this comedy that appeared on Broadway in 1960, two Korean War army buddies meet up after the war to spend a holiday together – one on his honeymoon, one in a long contentious marriage. Touching on treatment of veterans, unemployment, and sexual dysfunction, this play will resonate with today’s audiences.

This production comes from **Wellfleet Harbor Actors Theater** in Wellfleet, MA, directed by New York theater and opera director, **Michael Unger**.

**A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur** (Crev CORE)

A circle of women friends strive to protect each other from disappointments in love, but not always successfully. Set in the 1930s, this play explores women’s changing roles and their search for identity and belonging.

Though one of Williams’ late plays, he returns to the pleasing lyric cadences of his earlier writing in this 1979 text. This play became the basis for the highly successful TV series *The Golden Girls* in the 1980s.

From the **Gremlin Theater** in St. Paul, MN, directed by **Jef Hall Flavin**.

**Vieux Carré** (View Ka-RAY)

A fresh-faced young writer moves into a New Orleans boardinghouse in the French Quarter and is befriended by his lonesome harridan of a landlady and surrounded by eccentric characters desperately seeking connection.

This play is based on Williams’ own experience in 1938, but it took him until 1977 to express the riches of this time through his art.

From Binghamton New York’s **KNOW Theater**, directed by **Brandt Reiter**, starring New Orleans based **Desiree Ledet** as the sharp-tongued Mrs. Wire.

**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 Efird**.

Efird is known for interpreting theatrical texts through non-verbal narratives. In fact her dance, “The Road to Paradise” -- based on Williams’ letters, poems and diaries -- was the first performance of the first season of the TW Festival in 2005. Since then she has appeared in North Carolina Dance Festival, NC, Meredith College, NC, and Goose Route Dance Festival, among other venues.

Plays by Friends of Tennessee Williams

**Member of the Wedding** by Carson McCullers

McCullers wrote “Member of the Wedding” sitting at the same table with Williams in Nantucket during the summer of 1946. He was writing “Summer and Smoke.” Williams said, “She was the only person I have ever been able to work with in the
same room, and we got along beautifully."

In this play, 12 year old tomboy Frankie wants to go along on her brother’s honeymoon, while Berenice, the family’s housekeeper, offers her counsel.

Produced by Boston’s New Urban Theatre Laboratory, which staged the highly acclaimed *Gift of An Orange* at TW Festival 2012, and went on to the New Orleans Literary Festival in 2013.

**In the Summer House** by Jane Bowles

In 1940, Williams fled his doomed romance in Provincetown and ran off to Mexico where he met a married couple in Acapulco, Jane and Paul Bowles. Jane was working on a play, “In the Summer House,” about a possessive mother who threatens to send her brooding daughter to business school. Williams helped arrange a grant so Bowles could take time to create a second act. In 1956 he traveled to Ann Arbor, Michigan to see it performed, and gave it consistent praise in interviews and in his Memoirs.

This rarely performed cult classic thrilled Provincetown audiences last year in a remarkable outdoor staging of Act II around the pool at the Boatslip, directed by Festival curator, David Kaplan. It ended with a cliffhanger, literally. Did Mrs. Constable’s daughter slip or did Mrs. Eastman’s daughter push her over the cliff to her death?

This year both acts will answer that question. Both Act I and II will be presented in 2014 in and around the waters of the Provincetown Bay. The play stars favorite Festival stars from past years, Irene Glezos, Brenda Currin and Beth Bartley.

**The Lady Aoi** by Yukio Mishima

Williams met Mishima in 1957 on the street without knowing who he was and invited the elegantly dressed handsome Japanese man who spoke English with an aristocratic English accent to stop by for tea and martinis. The next day the writers were formally introduced to each other at the offices of New Directions, which published them both.

A mutual appreciation of the violence and beauty of Japan and the American South lasted until Mishima’s suicide. Mishima, Japan’s most powerful 20th century author, wrote several modern Noh plays that inspired Williams' “The Milk Train Doesn’t Stop Here Anymore,” “In a Bar in a Tokyo Hotel,” and “The Day on Which a Man Dies.”

In Mishima’s play, a ghostly apparition appears in a hospital room and unleashes a jealous fury. The South African performers of Abrahamse - Meyer Productions will be presenting this year’s version as a puppet play. Festival audiences know this team for the brilliant productions that had their U.S. premiere at the Festival in past years -- *Kingdom of Earth* (2012) and *The Milk Train Doesn’t Stop Here Anymore* (2013) -- and went on to garner multiple nominations and Cap du Fleur awards in Cape Town, South Africa.

**An Otherwise Hopeless Evening** – four plays by William Inge

Tennessee Williams was a St. Louis boy, and it moved him that the theatre critic from St. Louis, William Inge, came up to Chicago to watch “The Glass Menagerie” in its 1944 pre-Broadway run. Inge, too, was a playwright, and he had much in common with Williams, in particular a sensitivity to unspoken desire in repressed and repressive mid-century America. Williams introduced Inge to his agent and helped launch his career as a famous playwright. Inge never came out as a homosexual.

Four short recently published Inge plays (*The Tiny Closet, The Killing, The Boy in the Basement, The Love Death*) come to us from their original production at the Jewel Box Lounge in Kansas City, Missouri.
This theatrical mash-up taps the light and dark humor running through four outrageous stories of extraordinary men struggling to be themselves and reveals Inge's struggle to reconcile his sexuality with his conservative Midwestern upbringing.

The plays will be performed by an all-male cast with veteran drag queen De De Deville from Kansas City.

Underscored with abandon on a vintage 1950s organ, this bill offers audiences a fierce dose of farce, thrills, melodrama, and unflinching satire! Recommended for mature audiences, the production contains adult themes, nudity, and some strong language.

From the production company, A Hidden Splendor, directed by Travis Chamberlain, with an original art installation by artist Joseph Keehn II that explores the relationship between Inge and Williams.

Coffee with John Lahr: Tennessee Williams & His Friends

John Lahr, the biographer of the long-awaited Williams biography, titled Mad Pilgrimage of the Flesh, in a talk with Williams editor Thomas Keith, discusses Williams’ sweet and sour friendships with movie stars, other writers, hangers-on, Tallulah Bankhead and people you’ve never heard of who made up Tennessee Williams’ circle of friends.

Lahr’s previous biographies include Prick Up Your Ears, about Joe Orton) and Notes on a Cowardly Lion, about his father Bert Lahr. In 2002, Former drama critic for the New Yorker, Lahr became the first drama critic ever to win a Tony Award for his part in writing actress Elaine Stritch’s one–woman show, Elaine Stritch at Liberty.

Attached is an original illustration for the Festival by David Chick

About Provincetown Tennessee Williams Theater Festival:

The Provincetown Tennessee Williams Theater Festival was founded in 2006 in the birthplace of American Modern Theater where Williams worked on many of his major plays during the 1940s. The TW Festival is the nation’s largest performing arts festival dedicated to celebrating and expanding the understanding of America’s great playwright. Theater artists from around the globe perform classic and innovative productions to celebrate Williams’ enduring influence in the 21st Century. It will take place in various venues in the seaside village of Provincetown from Thursday, September 25 through Sunday, September 28, 2014. For more visit www.twptown.org

The Festival is funded in part by the Provincetown Tourism Fund and Provincetown Cultural Council and presented by the Crown and Anchor.

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