

## 10 highlights of this year's Tennessee W

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By Kathi Scrizzi Driscoll

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Tennessee, meet Will. You two playwrights will probably have a lot to talk about.

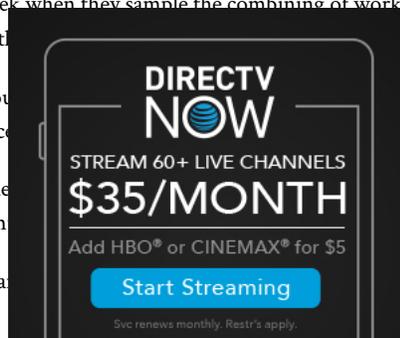
Tennessee, meet Will. You two playwrights will probably have a lot to talk about.

Or at least theater fans will next week when they sample the combining of works by Tennessee Williams and William Shakespeare that's the overarching theme of the Williams Theater Festival.

The schedule for the Thursday through Saturday festival offers a variety of and intriguing ways to look at the theatrical work of both men, and unusual places to experience the classic stories.

Organizers hope to offer a new understanding of the work. Besides plays, there will be classes, parties, donor events, movies and more education.

Details, tickets and a full schedule can be found at [capecodtimes.com](#) or [WilliamsFestival.com](#). Here are 10 of the most interesting aspects of the festival:



### **A South African "Hamlet" performed as "a tragedy at sea" in a shallow tank of water at Fisherman's Wharf:**

Cape Town's Abrahamse-Meyer Productions was inspired by records of a performance of Shakespeare's classic play on board a merchant ship in the early 1600s. Six actors will play six sailors who take on all the "Hamlet" roles – in a pool.

**Williams' "Sweet Bird of Youth" staged as a mirror to "Hamlet":** Abrahamse-Meyer will perform the two plays in repertory, with actor Marcel Meyer in both. In this "Sweet Bird," set in a Gulf Coast village, he'll play gigolo Chance Wayne as "another princely hero who is expected to save the day and does not." South African film and stage star Fiona Ramsay will play movie star Alexandra Del Lago.

**"Pericles" presented on a historic fishing schooner:** Die-Cast, a new Philadelphia-based company, will bring its inaugural production of Shakespeare's "Pericles" to the 66-foot replica of the schooner Rose Dorothea inside the Provincetown Library. Company founder/director Brenda Geffer has aimed for the show, which just debuted at the Philadelphia Fringe Festival, to change the relationship between audience, narrative and space/design used, and incorporates song, movement and poetry. Cape Cod native Hannah Van Sciver will be among the actors as Marina (daughter of hero Pericles) who must protect her life and sexuality as she is passed from pirates to pimps.

**"Ten Blocks on the Camino Real" transformed into a drum-fueled, outdoor production:** Abibigromma, the national drama company of Ghana, has played this show outdoors in Ghanaian marketplaces, and will perform at the bas-relief park behind Provincetown Town Hall as part of a multi-city U.S. tour. Directed by festival curator David Kaplan, this 1947 one-act play (which became Williams' full-length "Camino Real" in 1953) tells the story of a big-hearted boxer who falls in love with a gypsy's daughter. This production, performed in English, uses music and West African style to represent Ghanaian culture.

**Plays by both writers set up in hotel rooms:** "The 2017 Hotel Plays" will have audiences travel from room to room at the historic Gifford House to watch scenes from Williams' "Mr. Paradise" and "Talk to Me Like the Rain and Let Me Listen" plus Shakespeare's "Cymbeline" and "The Comedy of Errors." The shows and cast of 14 come from Providence,

from the award-winning Trinity Rep as well as the Spectrum Theatre Ensemble, made up of theater artists along the autism spectrum.

**An international Shakespeare cast exploring contemporary themes:**

Kaplan will direct a stripped-down version of the first three acts of Shakespeare's "Antony and Cleopatra" with actors from Turkey and Ghana, plus Everett Quinton from New York City's Ridiculous Theatrical Company. The one performance at Provincetown Town Hall is designed to bring together festival themes around the question: Who owns the right to tell your story – and how will history remember you as a result? The show is designed to explore "the reconciliation of opposites such as male and female, Rome and Egypt, modernity and tradition, love and death, and the mix of farce and tragedy we live with in America today."

**Clowning and slapstick used to recap the festival:** A fusion of Shakespeare's clowning and Williams' humor called "Dumb Show and Noise" will feature Cape-based professional clown Jay Stewart and performing partner Mike Smith in an almost silent show that hits on the highlights of the festival plays in what's described as a "water-logged free-for-all."

**An absurd one-act that takes audiences to a dystopian Key West:** Texas Tech University, with festival executive director Jef Hall-Flavin as director, will deliver what officials describe as "a lovely and lunatic" staging of the Williams one-act "The Gnädiges Fräulein." Hall-Flavin has said Williams, experimenting with a different form, offers "a refracted view of Key West as a metaphor for a dystopia" and combines tragedy, farce and slapstick in an absurdist drama about the "feral inhabitants of Cocaloony Key."

**Classes that offer an educational side to play-going:** The festival will again offer "Williams 101," this time a 90-minute lesson on Williams, Shakespeare and background to help enhance the festival experience, with scholar/host Patricia Navarra and guest artists. There will also be students attending the sixth annual immersive Tennessee Williams Institute through the week, with guest scholar Felicia Hardison Londré, professor of theater at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

**A chance to take a break with beer, coffee, cocktails and music:** A variety of gatherings will include a pirates ball, a morning coffee session, "Ballads and Beer" nights, and mixers between audience members and artists.



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