

"Glass Menagerie" in Kenan Auditorium

By MEGAN O'BRIEN

A & E Editor

The art and theatre department's final production of the year, "The Glass Menagerie," by Tennessee Williams, will be performed at 8 p.m. April 6-9 and 3 p.m. April 9 in Kenan Auditorium.

Part of the department's goal in performing such a well-known play in Kenan, and giving complimentary tickets to UNCW and local high school students is to increase awareness of theater at UNCW.

"We invited more people as usual because we want to get the word out," said art and theatre department chair Dr. Kemille Moore.

The department tries to do one play in the auditorium every year, but since Kenan Auditorium is used by the community, academic classes and the play, Moore said it is not easy to work out practice time.

"It's really difficult," she said. "We've already had to move three classes. It's tough for theater in a space that's so heavily used that they can't get in there."

Because of these scheduling difficulties, and so the actors could get class credit for the play, director Dr. Terry Rogers cast it in December.

"I feel like I've been working forever on 'The Glass Menagerie,'" Rogers said. "Luckily it's such good material that it hasn't been dull."

Rogers first became interested in Tennessee Williams' plays when he was employed at Florida State University, working on the premiere of "Never, Never Ask His Name" by Mark Van Doren. A professional actress named Julie Hayden played the female lead, and she had also acted in the original Broadway production of "The Glass Menagerie."

"The high point of her career, she felt, was playing Laura in 'The Glass Menagerie,'" Rogers said.

One of the questions Rogers asked Hayden was how close the Broadway production came to Williams' vision of the play. According to Rogers, Hayden said they did not do everything Williams wanted, particularly the signs that came down from the ceiling telling the audience what happens in each scene, and that the acting leaned more toward the realistic than the expressionistic.

"They did keep things like minimal props, minimal costumes and things of that nature so there was an ambiguous nature to it," Rogers said. "When they have the dinner scene, for example, they did not have any food. They would pretend to push food with fingers, and you'd have a line about 'Don't push your food with your fingers, Tom' and that kind of thing. It was fascinating."

Rogers' interpretation of the play is fairly traditional, using very expressionistic images and colors. He describes expressionism as the way an individual, the character of Tom in "The Glass Menagerie," sees himself, the past and the world around him.

"...He sees it in a highly internal and personal way," Rogers said. "And rather than translate that into common language, like realism, in order to express it to an audience, it's an attempt to reproduce exactly what you're expressing in your mind, exactly the way that you're feeling it."

"The Glass Menagerie" is a memory play, meaning that the audience sees the past as Tom remembers it, rather than the way it really was.

Rogers wanted to reproduce the Broadway play as Williams wanted it. They wanted to completely reproduce the original design, but it is still under the copyright of the original designer's estate.

"It's like most productions, the design and directing has taken on kind of a give and take as it goes toward the end," Rogers said.

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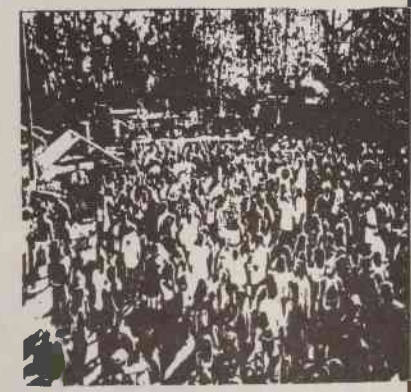
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