

Play Review: "The Glass Menagerie" directed by Dr. Terry Rogers

by RACHEL S. CRUZ

Staff Writer

Opening night for UNCW's interpretation of Tennessee Williams' "The Glass Menagerie" answered the call for a quality, well-realized piece of work. The technical elements support and help to illustrate each line, as do the actors' interpretations of the play. It is clear that director Dr. Terry Rogers has a vision, and sees to it that his cast and crew make that happen.

Casting of this production is first-rate. Senior McLean Alley, who plays Tom, is an experienced actor, which is evident through the entire show. His character is fully realized and he certainly experiments with it to produce a powerful and resonant man of the 1940s.

Laura, who is played by freshman Angie Peck, is a character that undergoes a specific change in the second act. Going from shy and timid to a lively and

passionate Laura, Peck moves at just the right speed and put her own flair into the lines. She does an excellent job of taking Laura through the fear and into the enthusiasm she feels as the play progresses.

Senior Carol Marie Smith plays Tom's mother, Amanda, the most prominent character, and she pulls it off quite well. Her high-pitched Southern drawl works well for the overbearing, set-inher-ways character.

Junior Matt Lutz fantastically plays Jim, Tom's hopelessly adorable friend. Not introduced until the second act, Lutz's Jim brings enough energy and a completeness of character to serve as a catalyst for each character change that follows. From his rate of speech down to his posture, it is clear that Lutz has enough experience and enthusiasm to carry him far.

The set is fairly elaborate and provided a beautiful picture of a 1940's

apartment in the South. Portrayed as a dining room and a sunken living room, the authentic-looking set contains elements that helped the purposeful blocking.

A dinner table, sofa and chair, where most of the action takes place, is placed before the backdrop of wooden walls, a mirror and other furniture. Most of the dialogue, which is often strained and tense, occurs between Amanda and either Tom or Laura, with the three main pieces of furniture operating as places of refuge. Whether it is Tom pacing from one end of the stage to the other during Amanda's bickering, only to collapse in frustration on the chair, or Laura's retreat to the sofa to avoid confrontation, all the action is done quite well. The strategic blocking gives the audience the same feeling of monotony and aggravation Tom and Laura felt.

Not until Amanda and Tom are on the fire escape porch do we finally see the

fondness of their mother and son relationship. It is also on this porch that we see Tom's vulnerability, his drunkenness in an attempt to escape his unadventurous life, and his deep feelings for Laura at the last scene.

Likewise, Laura does not begin to hold her head up confidently or even smile until she is invited to sit on the floor, away from the furniture, with Jim. For this, the audience is able to see the feelings Tom has for the apartment and his dull lifestyle.

Effects with the costuming are also achieved quite nicely. Done by designer Alexandra Sargent, the costuming is just as meaningful as the lines. Whether it is Tom's everyday, deliberately normal slacks and shirts to illustrate his mundane attitude toward life, or Amanda's over-the-top, clearly out-dated dress to show her need to continue to live in the past, each article of clothing brings the characters to life.

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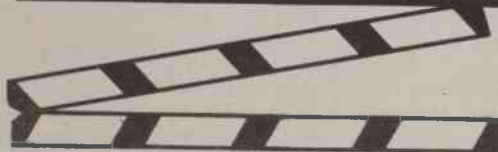
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