

The arts

Williams Tells all

Theatre 3's 3rd Hit

Menagerie trois

Theatre 3's production of Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* does full justice to what has been named one of the finest modern works of drama.

And well it should be; it's a beautiful play. When done well, it is incredibly moving, causing the audience to look within themselves.

Unfairly, Tennessee Williams has a reputation for writing flat, stark plays that present life without romanticism. Indeed, he said that *The Glass Menagerie* would be the last play in which he would say anything good about human beings. For all that, he still paints wonderful portraits of human beings who are all the more lovable because the rosy colors are absent, and because they are so familiar and strike such responsive chords in us. Who could forget Stanley Kowalski, the character that started Marlon Brando on the road to godfatherdom, standing in his white muscle shirt, insanely yelling "Stella!"

Also, Williams gives us situations we've all faced or at least thought about. The one in *The Glass Menagerie* is typical. It is a memory play; the memories and dreams of the past, of jonquils, gentleman callers and high school hopes are overtaken by the harsh, drab reality of the present - a warehouse where people go to movies to move, and create a glass world to escape. Who has not felt the helpless frustration that happens when your hopes for the misty future fade away as you try to grab them?

Of course, that is only a small part of what it is all about. Analyzing the play is a hell of a lot easier than attempting to execute it. It seems that the greater the play, the harder it is

to do it well and bring out all that it has to offer.

It must be hardest of all for the actors, because it appears that the characters in the play are so clear cut and well defined. Amanda - the talkative pushy mother, an aging Southern belle. Tom - the frustrated poet, trapped in an unpoetic existence. Laura - the shy, introverted girl who shuts herself up because of an imagined fault. Jim - the opposite of Laura. (But is he really?)

The Theatre 3 production is directed by Mark Schoenberg, who must have been disturbed when the audience laughed at what seemed to be the wrong places. Not that Williams is humorless, but his wit is of a wistful kind. Some of the lines may seem funny, but are meant to describe pathos, rather than comedy.

The play began on a wrong note, I thought, it was curiously slow during the first half. The pathos of the situation did not come through - it all seemed a bit light. Intentionally or not, C. Holte Davidson (Tom), Linda Rabinovitch (Amanda) and Susan Andre (Laura) got a number of laughs I thought were uncalled for. Such laughs should have been of a nervous pitying quality but they were not. The audience laughed at the characters instead of with them.

The second part was much better, with its long scene between Jim (Craig Gardner) and Laura. Susan Andre as Laura overcame the audience's titters to create a beautiful and tragic creature trapped in a world of her own making. It redeemed the first half and made the play a success.

The Glass Menagerie runs until Feb. 7 at the Centennial Library Theatre.

by Steven J. Adams



Williams, Tennessee. *Memoirs* Doubleday 1975, 252 pp.

Tennessee Williams has a bad reputation - and his autobiography doesn't do much to improve it.

Memoirs is a chatty book - in simple, undramatic language Williams tells us of his complex, dramatic life. A prolific, gifted writer, Williams has produced almost fifty plays, four short

story collections, one volume of poetry and two novels from the turbulence of his life. But the man and his life seem to have suffered from much neglect, with all his energy going into writing. For a while his plays usually received critical acclaim, (though often long after the fact) Williams' personal life seems to have been somewhat of a failure.

Williams is homosexual and he apologizes that so much of the book is devoted to his "amatory activities", saying: "I was late coming out, and when I did it was with one hell of a bang." But thankfully, he does not apologize for his sexual bias, nor does he attempt to euphemize during his frequent discussion of it. There is no indication that he considers homosexuality an affliction, it is plain that his greatest hardship is the loneliness that "has always shadowed" his days. He tells us that his friends do not love him, but only tolerate him. But he doesn't tell us why this is so, nor does he seem to know why he has never been able to sustain his relationships with other people. Instead, he dramatizes his aloneness, one-night-stands with total strangers, "cruising" the streets and parks in search of a bed-mate, and hotel rooms - so many hotel rooms.

The book is littered with descriptions of this lonely life. He has lived the famous line he wrote for *Blanche in A Streetcar Named Desire*: "I have always depended upon the kindness of strangers."

But it was difficult to muster much sympathy for this man who has lived in so many rented rooms with so many borrowed, transient lovers. Instead, pity is the reaction that surfaces; an emotion that does not marry well with respect. It is hard to respect the man - easy to dislike him. But perhaps this impersonal dislike is a result of the discomfort one experiences in any connection with Tennessee Williams; his fiction and drama are not designed to make his audience comfortable, quite the opposite. Reading about the writer's life is just as discomfiting.

For those who need to admire an author as a person before they can admire his work, this is not the book to read. It is not a book that will please writers, either. For writing is the only thread that so tenuously holds the man together; after an early play was panned by critics, Williams got drunk and lunged for a window, but was restrained by friends. He says he did not know whether or not he intended to jump, but that he "already knew that writing was my life and its failure would be my death."

Tennessee Williams is still very much alive.

Northern Light auditions

On Feb. 2 and 3 from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Northern Light Theatre will host comprehensive auditions for any member of the Actors' Equity Association of Canada or the Association of Canadian Radio and Television Artists. Representatives from many media sources will attend; radio and television producers, theatre directors, ad agency representatives and film directors.

It is hoped that this opportunity will lead to better use of the fine professional talent pool developing here in Edmonton.

By necessity auditions will be limited to fifteen minutes in

length, involving a three minute prepared piece - classical or modern - and an unprepared reading of a different style. Auditions will be conducted by Northern Light Theatre Director Scott Swan with media representatives forming the audience.

Artists are required to bring an up-to-date resume and one picture for our files. Audition appointments can be made by phoning 429-3110.



This Saturday - Horn hot stuff

The celebrated Paul Horn Quintet will perform this Saturday night at SUB Theatre.

Flautist Horn recorded dates with greats like Miles Davis, Duke Ellington, Nat King Cole, Ravi Shankar and last but not least, Frank Sinatra, before deciding to form his own band in 1960.

The two-time Grammy winner does not believe in musical labels. "There is no more jazz-rock or folk-rock, only music," he says. "And my music is sound meant for everyone's ears." He must be right, for Paul Horn concerts attract a widely-varied audience wherever he goes.

Widely respected in jazz circles, Horn has been honored recently by *Who's Who in America*, *Men of Achievement*, and the *Blue Book* of England. He also has been a winner of

jazz polls conducted by *Down Beat* and *Playboy* magazines.

There will be two performances, at 7:30 and 9:30 pm, with tickets available at the HUB box office.

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Thursday, Jan. 29 at 7:30 p.m.

"Don't Look Now"

R.A.

Friday, Jan. 30 at 7:30 p.m.

"Abbott & Costello Meet Frankenstein"

Family

Sunday, Feb. 1 at 2:00 p.m.

"The Lion in Winter"

Adult NSFC

THE EDMONTON ART GALLERY THEATRE ADMISSION \$2.00