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A Streetcar Named Desire (1981)

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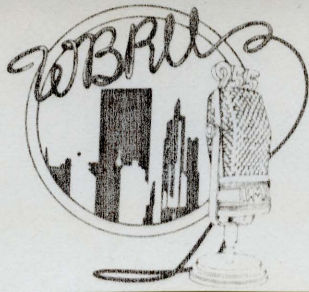
WBRU Cultural Affairs Review of A Streetcar Named Desire

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WBRU Cultural Affairs Review: "A Streetcar Named Desire"

The Providence College production of "A Streetcar Named Desire" is a moving and energetic rendition of the Tennessee Williams American classic. Though by no means flawless, this adaptation is worth seeing for one very simple reason: it works.

The play, which examines the sheltered and unstable character, Blanche DuBois, suffers primarily from the auditory inadequacies of the theatre itself; an archaic structure within which the players' subtle words of anguish are often incomprehensible. This problem, however, is more than compensated for by Mary Farrell's even-handed direction, set designer Jim Eddy's accurate recreation of the squalor of New Orleans' French Quarter, and by several solid performances by the spirited PC acting troupe.

As the two sisters, Stella Kowalski and Blanche DuBois, Mary Ellen Baxter and Kathleen O'Neil, respectively, cut sensuous figures on the stage, thereby enforcing the steamy atmosphere so vital to the general tone of the work. In the latter role, Miss O'Neil often speeds her delivery and her Southern accent sometimes drifts into a squeaky monotone; but her precise mannerisms and superb animation make her an engaging and believable Blanche. Though she adds nothing new to the role of Stella, Miss Baxter performs consistently, serving as a buffer between the two emotional extremes represented by her husband Stanley and her sister.

In a powerful portrayal, Joe Trimble, as Stanley Kowalski, achieves the animalistic effect inherent in the character as illustrated by his forceful confrontations with the two women as he attempts to uncover the mysteries of Blanche's clouded past. The best overall performance of the night, however, is not turned in by one of these principal characters, but rather by Wally Dunn with his portrayal of Blanche's tentative suitor, Howard Mitchell. Dunn plays the part with just the right mixture

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of naive and working class frustration and his rapport with Miss O'Neill provides the viewer with some of the play's most charming moments.

"A Streetcar Named Desire" is a long play, but the talented Providence College players make the night an enjoyable one for the serious theater-goer. "Streetcar" will conclude its run on March 8 at Harkins Hall on the PC campus.