



Suddenly Last Summer

Written by: Tennessee Williams
Directed by: Ian Pring & Catherine Fox-Kirk
Performed: Wednesday 27th-30th July 2011 at [St Anne's Hall](#).

	Cast		Crew	
	Violet Venable	Pat Driver	Producer	Sharron Stubbs
	Doctor Cucrowicz	Peter Brooker	Production Design	Catherine Fox Kirk
	Foxhill	Becca Duke	Costumes & Props	Wendy Leech
	Sister Felicity	Vicki Claringbold	Prompt	Catriona Lawrie
	Catharine Holly	Becca Stafford	Sound Design	Ian Pring
	Mrs Holly	Ruth Lo	Sound Operator	Beccy Gibson
	George Holly	Cameron Niven	Lighting Operator	Orna Joseph
			Publicity Design	Vanessa Marchant

Synopsis

Catherine Holly is in an asylum, traumatised by the death of her cousin Sebastian, who perished in lurid circumstances the previous summer. No-one will believe her account of how and why he died. Her aunt, desperate to protect Sebastian's reputation, wants to shut Catherine up, by bribing an ambitious young doctor to give her a lobotomy. But the doctor wants to hear Catherine's story first, and gradually the unspeakable truth about Sebastian begins to unfold...

One of the most famous and sensational of Williams's plays, this slice of Southern Gothic has featured many great actors in its stage and screen versions, including Diana Rigg, Elizabeth Taylor, Katherine Hepburn, Montgomery Clift and Natasha Richardson.

NODA Review by Tony Sweeney

General

This was a challenging play tackled with great skill by the New Stagers, who continue to produce excellent drama which is really appreciated by their highly supportive audiences. Tennessee Williams's complex plots and dialogue were given full emotional range, complete with authentic sounding southern accents. This was an exceptional piece of drama performed extremely well and with great passion, which left the appreciative audience riveted and enthralled throughout.

The play was dominated by two gigantic and exceptional performances from Pat Driver and Becca Stafford who gave full rein to the emotional undertones that gives the play its power and impact. They were ably supported by the other players whose contributions allowed the whole thing to tap into and explore the dark and overwhelming emotions without straying over the line. Well-cast and balanced throughout each played a key part in the overall impact.

The use of crying gulls was interesting but was at the same fairly loud level throughout. I felt it could have had greater dramatic effect if it has started

softly and built into a crescendo as the character of Violet described watching the gulls slaughter baby turtles on a beach with her son Sebastian. Given that was a simile for his own death; I thought this might have given it even greater impact.

Players

Pat Driver (Violet Venable) gave a superb performance as the over-possessive mother of Sebastian, who whilst never seen, was the glue that held the group and story together. She has considerable authority on stage, needed for the role of a rich, dominant and rather self-absorbed woman. Onstage throughout, her acting during the first act was very impressive, setting both the scene and the interplay between the various roles and leading to the climax of the play.

Peter Brooker (Dr. Cukrovicz) as a psychiatrist supported Violet throughout the first act, acting as a foil to her ramblings with both constraint and authority. Again he has a good and confident acting style well-suited to the role.

Becca Duke (Foxhill) as the maid performed well with a touch of timidity which was appropriate to the part as she was clearly bullied by the domineering Violet.

Becca Stafford (Catharine Holly) again gave a gigantic performance as Catherine. Her body movements were exceptional portraying an emotionally disturbed and highly unbalanced individual haunted by the memories around her time with Sebastian and his gruesome death. She was very convincing in the role which can't have been an easy one to play.

Victoria Claringbold (Sister Felicity) as a nun (complete with white habit and tennis shoes) had an interesting supporting role being custodian of Catharine. She managed to exude an air of religious authority and calm with good and controlled body language reacting authentically when burnt by a cigarette.

Ruth Lo (Mrs. Holly) as the rather neurotic sister of Violet's late husband, played the part well, at times cogent and at times positively manic; this was again an excellent supporting role done to perfection.

Cameron Niven (George Holly) as the rather lazy and wastrel grandson gave an excellent performance, inhabiting the role and giving it credibility. Though new to the group he was at ease throughout.

Director

Ian Pring and Catherine Fox-Kirk as co-directors seemed to have formed a really good partnership which taps into their complementary talents. Their passion for the play was evident and their use of a talented cast exceptional. The stage was used well with everyone really well-rehearsed and confident on stage.

Stage Management

The stage management was excellent throughout. A small stage was well used with entrances and exits seamless. Even the complications imposed through the inclusion of a wheelchair was dealt with well.

Sound

A good sound system was used in part to play music in keeping with the theme of the Deep South without reverting to clichés. The dialogue was clear throughout easily reaching the back of the hall.

Lighting

A good lighting rig was used to excellent effect.

Set design

An interesting set which was both striking and appropriate to the setting of a New Orleans garden. You could almost feel the humidity. Well designed and painted it provided an excellent backdrop which also added to the overall ambience.

Props

Good use of a range of props from garden furniture to a wheelchair all of which contributed to the production as a whole.

Costumes

We saw a range of costumes all of which fitted the 1930's theme.

Programme

An informative and comprehensive programme which detailed both the play and the cast as well as giving us some insight into the thinking behind the production.

Front of House

As always the front of house team were welcoming and efficient.

Production Photos (Click to enlarge)



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