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The role of Tennessee Williams in Tennessee Williams in QUARTER Time, adapted by John Dennis: a production thesis in acting

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THE ROLE OF TENNESSEE WILLIAMS IN
TENNESSEE WILLIAMS IN QUARTER TIME, ADAPTED BY JOHN DENNIS:
A PRODUCTION THESIS IN ACTING

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts

in

The Department of Theatre

by
Derek Mudd
B.A., Morehead State University, 1994
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I dedicate this thesis to my partner Christopher Krejci. Thanks for joining me on this Baton Rouge adventure.

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ABSTRACT

In February 2006, Swine Palace Productions premiered a collection of scenes from the works of Tennessee Williams titled *Tennessee Williams in QUARTER Time*. This thesis describes from start to finish the process through which the author created the role of Tennessee Williams for that production. This thesis includes an Introduction, Character Analysis, Actor's Score, reactions to the show in performance, a Conclusion, and four appendices.

INTRODUCTION

The wind howls and thunder roars. Lightning illuminates the scene briefly. There is the sound of a large tree crashing to the ground pulling electric lines out of transformers with a pop and sizzle. Somewhere a car alarm sounds. Amidst all of this, I enter. It is a tricky entrance; for the most part I can be seen by the audience in flashes. There is so much debris spread out on the back part of the set that I have to step over several things along the way in the dark. I walk up a set of stairs to my spot atop the stage: an oversized jester head with glowing red eyes. I sit down, on the stage, but out of the view of the audience and wait for my cue.

In the winter of 2006, Swine Palace Productions presented a collection of scenes from the work of Tennessee Williams titled, *Tennessee Williams in QUARTER Time*. This marked the first (and only) time that a production of selections from the works of Williams had been performed. I portrayed Tennessee Williams in the show, narrating and introducing the scenes. Given that *QUARTER Time* was an original production, I feel it necessary to describe at length the manner in which the show came into being.

Just a week after classes started for the Fall 2005 semester at Louisiana State University, Hurricane Katrina made landfall, changing the lives of everyone in Southern Louisiana. Swine Palace Productions, the professional theatre associated with Louisiana State University, had already set its season of shows based on its projected funding. Katrina's landfall in August 2005 led to a rapid restructuring of Swine Palace's schedule. One of the theater's major funders reallocated money to Katrina relief efforts. As a result Swine Palace was unable to continue the season as planned. Consequently the MFA showcase performance of *Arms and the Man* was

moved to Swine Palace's main stage, the more expensive *Big Love* was reduced in scope and became an LSU Theatre show, and *Tobacco Road* was cancelled due to expense.

To fill the slot left open by *Tobacco Road*, John Dennis, Professor of Theatre at LSU and head of the MFA in Acting Program offered to develop a new work in response to the hurricane. The concept was a sort of love letter to New Orleans culled from the works of Tennessee Williams. Swine Palace attempted to secure the rights for the show from Tennessee Williams' estate. The Williams' estate refused at first. Williams had never wanted his plays to be taken out of context, so his estate was reluctant to allow Swine Palace to do it. Swine Palace Artistic Director Michael Tick wrote an impassioned letter to the estate, addressing how the hurricane had changed our lives (see Appendix A). The Williams' estate recanted, and released the rights with the understanding that it was a one-time exception. *Tennessee Williams in QUARTER Time* was then scheduled for an early February 2006 opening.

During the Fall 2005 semester, John Dennis was on sabbatical. This gave him the opportunity to revisit the entire Tennessee Williams' cannon. This included not only the plays but his poems, letters, and memoirs as well. Dennis began selecting plays that were either directly set in New Orleans, along the Gulf Coast, or were somehow influenced by Williams' experiences in both. For the letters and memoirs, he had something different in mind.

Dennis served as adapter of *QUARTER Time* and director. He began casting the show toward the end of the fall semester. Auditions were done privately with Dennis working with each actor on particular roles that he had in mind. I was flattered when Dennis pulled me aside and asked me to look at possibly playing Tennessee Williams himself. Dennis wanted Williams to be a character within the play, introducing the selections, and stepping into certain roles from his plays. Dennis asked me to look at the first volume of *The Selected Letters of Tennessee*

Williams. Dennis loaned me his own copy, which was the paperback edition. The cover showed a clean-shaven Williams in a tattered sweater. Dennis said this was the Tennessee he wanted me to play.

I began reading Williams' letters with attention to his time in New Orleans, particularly his first move there in 1939. One letter in particular expressed such high praise of the city, that I decided to read it for the audition. I sat in Dennis' office and read the letter, using my best southern accent, lengthening out vowel sounds and ignoring "r's", shortening the long "i" sound to "ah." Dennis was pleased with my reading. I remember him saying, "I think this is going to work." He also asked me to have Tennessee chuckle at himself more, make little jokes, but also look for where he might be caustic or bitter.

We began work on the show on January 3rd, two weeks before classes began for the semester. There was an air of excitement, as the cast included not only the current class of MFA Acting students, but many graduates of the program going back to the first MFA class at LSU. I had contracted a sinus infection during my week in Texas over the break, and was feeling quite miserable.

The script that we encountered on that first day took more than four hours to read. Dennis worked together with dramaturg Gordon Walker to trim and edit the production while rehearsals continued. The character of Tennessee Williams himself was still an unknown. Dennis was trying to decide if there would be three Tennessees in the show. This left me in a bit of quandary as to where to begin my work on the show. I familiarized myself with all of the text assigned to Tennessee, and continued to work on character. It wasn't until the third week of rehearsals that the role really began to materialize. I was to play the only Tennessee, introducing and commenting on each scene from his plays.

In the end, the production included scenes from the plays *Out Cry*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *Vieux Carré*, *Summer and Smoke*, *Period of Adjustment*, *Camino Real*, *The Kingdom of Earth*, *Mr. Paradise*, and *A Streetcar Named Desire*. A portion of the screenplay for *This Property is Condemned*, poetic monologues from *The Fugitive Kind*, and three other Williams poems were also included. The introductory monologues from the Williams character were pieced together from his letters, memoirs, and interviews. Editing on my dialogue in the show continued right up to opening night, and additional changes occurred during the run.

The design elements of the show were heavily influenced by Dennis' comments in the script:

The Setting:

The environment is a theatre which seems to have been struck by a severe storm. It shows the effects of flooding and loss. It is awash with the possessions of both a theatre and a once vibrant city. All of the inhabitants' and theatre's possessions seem to have flowed into this space including a car, a refrigerator, a bathtub, furniture, luggage, personal items – anything available for destruction is here.

If you look carefully, a water-line can be traced around the debris and playing area.

There is also a sound of settling – the slow grinding of a halt to life. Water is dripping in various parts of the clutter.

Nels Anderson's set design reflected all of this. The Reilly Theatre, where the show was performed, is enormous. It was once LSU's livestock judging pavilion. The space was converted to a theatre in the late nineties to house Swine Palace Productions. *QUARTER Time* was performed using the entire space. The main playing area was a raked stage basically wallpapered with the pages of newspapers and magazines. Two elevated platforms towered on either side of the stage. Topping the stage right tower, a giant papier maché jester head sat. This served as my home base during the show. Power lines hung down over the stage between two tall towers. Junk

was piled everywhere, including the aforementioned car and refrigerator. Scaffolding added to the back wall of the theatre for an earlier production was also utilized.

Eun Jin Cho created a remarkable tableau of sound to begin the show. Wind, thunder, and all of the sounds of a natural disaster rang through the space, creating the sensation that the hurricane had just occurred. The costumes, designed by Polly Boersig, made the actors look as if they had waded through two feet of filthy water. Lighting such an immense space was the daunting task faced by Louis Gagliano. The show made use of spotlights to bring focus to certain characters throughout the space.

Tennessee Williams in QUARTER Time opened on February 1 and ran through February 19, 2006. (Please see the Appendix for program information, and reviews of the show.)

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Anytime I play an historical figure my approach to analyzing the character changes substantially from the process that I would use to approach a fictional character. Instead of creating the character from the text and my imagination, I have a wealth of factual information to examine. This is both a blessing and a curse. I could never do enough research, and there is no possible way that my research could ever encapsulate every aspect of the man that was Tennessee Williams. He was not only an historical figure, but an icon, one of the most important American writers who ever lived. He was famous in his lifetime, and indeed, borderline notorious. For these reasons, I have been very selective in the material that I have chosen to speak to in this character analysis.

I approached the role first with my own impressions of who Tennessee Williams might have been. My own knowledge of Tennessee Williams informed my take on the character before I started to do research. Being a theatre practitioner for over fifteen years before coming to the role, I had preconceived notions about Williams. I have read, performed in, and viewed a great number of his plays over the years.

My analysis is further informed by the research I conducted after being cast in *QUARTER Time*. As mentioned in my introduction, I read many of the letters in the *Selected Letters of Tennessee Williams Volume 1*. I focused on reading the letters he wrote either while living in, or pertaining to New Orleans. I also read Williams' *Memoirs* during my holiday break in December 2005. I made a point to read as much as I could about Williams and conducted a good deal of internet research.

I crafted the role using a combination of my impressions and research, which I offer in this character analysis with one added proviso. I have learned in approaching other historical

figures over the years that an actor cannot ever fully create this person in the context of a play. The words and text have been selected for a particular purpose. You still have to play the character as written, not the person who actually lived.

Finding Tennessee's Voice

Creating a voice for Tennessee Williams was the most influential part of my journey. His voice influenced every other part of the character.

I began by trying to find recordings of William's voice. Tennessee was known for his warm, albeit affected, deep Southern American accent. Unfortunately, the majority of the recordings I found were of a very mature Tennessee. His voice in these recordings had already been affected by years of substance abuse.

Happily, I came across a radio program on NPR discussing the find of some cardboard acetate records that he made at a penny arcade in New Orleans. Although grainy, and only a few samples were featured on the show, I started to figure out his unique voice. I e-mailed a link to the recording to the voice coach for *QUARTER Time*, Christine Menzies. Menzies caught something that I had neglected. For instance, I had been pronouncing New Orleans the way that most natives of the city pronounce it: "nawlins." On the recordings, Williams pronounces it "nor-lee-enz." I began trying to incorporate this into the show.

Circumstances

Honestly, I had to get quite creative about the circumstances for the character of Tennessee Williams. The problem in creating this character is that the Tennessee that we see in the play is quite peculiar. Since his text is culled from both letters and memoirs, this Tennessee appears omniscient. Although in appearance I resembled (somewhat) the young man from the

cover of the paperback edition of the letters, this Tennessee has intimate knowledge of his later plays.

My job as an actor working on this production was to somehow put these pieces together into something that is theatrically viable. In the end, this Tennessee is not a man that ever existed. During dress rehearsals, I tried to make myself look like Tennessee did in photographs. I grew a mustache, trimmed it, and slicked my hair back in an attempt to create the look of Tennessee. After the first dress, Director John Dennis gave me a note to shave the mustache, and not slick my hair back or make any attempt to look like Tennessee. This inspired me to think of the character I was playing in a new way. I had the image of the ghost of Tennessee Williams taking possession of a thirty-three year-old man who was living in an apartment in the French Quarter of New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina. Williams has possessed him, returning to the city that was so influential to him, to help New Orleans survive the aftermath of the hurricane. During the course of an evening, he addresses his “audience” (which is probably in his head) and revisits his triumphs and failures to make a plea for the city to endure and recover from the blow it has been dealt.

Although, it is not the purpose of this thesis to serve as a biography of Tennessee Williams, there are many things from his life that I found important to playing the role. (A short biography of Tennessee William’s was included in the program, a copy of which is provided in the Appendix.)

His formative years were spent in St. Louis, a city that his family moved to after leaving the south. Both sides of his family were from respected Tennessee families, but they had lost their wealth and status. His family life was repressive and Tennessee felt out of place in St. Louis. He had diphtheria as a child, and was sickly for most of his young life. I was struck by the

number of times that he seemed to be in ill health. I wondered if he wasn't a hypochondriac. Perhaps his ill health was affected by his psychological issues. It took him several years to work through college, but he started to have some success at writing there. Tennessee was extremely close to his sister Rose, who suffered a mental break down shortly before Tennessee moved to New Orleans in 1939. The city tantalized the young Tennessee, and he finally had his first homosexual encounter at the age of 26. This dichotomy between his repressive upbringing and the freedom of New Orleans was a very important aspect of Tennessee that I wanted to bring to the role. His memoirs and letters show Williams to have an almost feverish desire for men. He was quite sexually active, but at the same time weak and fragile.

Tennessee struggled as a writer for several years, traveling all over the country in the process. His letters from this period reflect his incessant moving. Eventually, *The Glass Menagerie* was produced on Broadway and made him an instant star. He continued to have success with his plays for the next decade, but then he went into a decline. His works were not met with the same success and he resented it. His sister remained important to him, and his wealth made it possible for him to pay for the care of his sister for the rest of his life. Tennessee struggled with both his physical and mental health his entire life. In his letters and memoirs he always seemed to believe he would die young. he refers several times to his ill health in the *Memoirs*, which were published in 1972. He endured for much longer than I believe he expected. He died in 1983 after choking on a bottle cap at the age of 71.

Major Relationships

The unconventional nature of my role in *QUARTER Time* lends itself to an unconventional approach to isolating the character's major relationships in the show. Williams does not actually interact with very many other characters in the play, with the exception of

intervening in *Out Cry*, and taking on the role of The Writer in *Vieux Carré*. Because of this, the most important relationships for my character are the audience, the plays, and the city of New Orleans.

Audience

Since Tennessee's monologues are directly addressed to the audience, my relationship to the audience is obviously the most important relationship for my character. Every night this relationship would be slightly different, given the reactions of the audience. During the first act, I was sitting onstage, hidden from the audience most of the time. This gave me the opportunity to hear each scene, and gauge the audience reaction to each. I imagined that the audience, like myself, had some interest in preserving the culture of New Orleans. I also assumed that they were familiar with Tennessee Williams. My main objective was to embolden them, to give them the strength to move forward.

The Plays

I feel it is important to briefly discuss each scene in *QUARTER Time* in an effort to explore Williams attitude towards each, and what importance each piece might have to the overall arc of the show. I felt Tennessee would have a fatherly view of his creations. Indeed, my position looming over the stage fed into this sense of an almost godlike enjoyment of my creations. Each scene had it's own distinct flavor, which I have tried to sum up with a short quote.

Out Cry: “You and your sister are insane”

In *QUARTER Time*, Tennessee mentions that he thinks *Out Cry* is his best play since *Streetcar Named Desire*. He is obviously proud of the work. I read *Out Cry* very late in the game, during the week the show opened. I began to see that Clare and Felice represented not only Williams and his sister, but could also be different facets of Williams personality. I was also struck by a line of Clare’s that is included in *QUARTER Time*: “it’s all one endless continuum of endurance...survival.” Endurance became my key in to *QUARTER Time*. This was the main theme that I wished to help convey. My character breaks his status as narrator by intervening in this first scene of the show. I magically drop a flask of brandy into the hands of Felice, delivering some much needed fortitude to two characters trapped in a mad world. This action shows Tennessee’s care for the Felice and Clare.

The Glass Menagerie: “What are we going to do the rest of our lives?”

The Glass Menagerie is partly autobiographical. This was the play that made Williams famous. Tom is Tennessee’s real name, of course. Laura seems to represent Rose. Amanda’s domination of the household parallels Tennessee’s own repressive home life.

Vieux Carré: “An almost invisible gesture of forgiveness”

Vieux Carré is also autobiographical. It tells the tale of Tennessee’s early days in New Orleans living in a boarding house on Toulouse Street. The Writer, a thinly veiled proxy for Williams, narrates the play. The scene in *QUARTER Time* deals directly with a sexual encounter between the Writer and Nightingale, a painter who also lives in the boarding house. It is believed that this represents Williams first sexual experience with another man.

For *QUARTER Time*, my character takes on the role of the Writer in this scene. This further solidifies the autobiographical nature of *Vieux Carré*. This also requires a further breakdown of the character analysis. First of all, I tried to play the Writer as a young Williams. This was quite a different character than the all-knowing Williams who introduced each piece. The Writer is far more vulnerable and lost. The life that he embarks on in moving to New Orleans and living in the boarding house does not seem to be working out. He is desperate and lonely. He is repulsed by his landlady and his living situation, but intrigued by the painter, Nightingale, who sneaks into his room.

The Rose Tattoo: “Love and affection is what I got to offer in this lonely old world”

In an earlier version of the *QUARTER Time* script, there is a detailed introduction to this scene. Williams apparently used to ride his bicycle along the gulf coast from New Orleans into Mississippi. Near Pass Christian he discovered little towns of Italian immigrants that he found to be magical. *The Rose Tattoo* is his love letter to those people.

Summer and Smoke: “I have had certain difficulties and disadvantages to cope with.”

Many of Tennessee’s female characters also resemble himself. Alma Winemiller is a good example of this. She is frail and uptight, but eventually becomes her opposite. The text that precedes the scene shows a large amount of pride in the character and the play, though he states it was a “tough nut to crack.”

Period of Adjustment: “He was a patient in neurological at Barnes Hospital.”

This play was Williams attempt to write a commercial success. In my research, I found that Williams’ psychiatrist suggested that the reason he was so often depressed was due to the subject matter he chose to write about. *Period of Adjustment* was Williams’ attempt to write a comedy. The result was a very dark play that no one found as funny as the author.

Camino Real: “I am sincere”

Camino Real represents a huge departure for Williams. This was one of his most expressionistic plays. He presents it within the context of *QUARTER Time* as a challenge to the audience. Obviously, the influence of his time spent in Mexico colors the work. He was quite ill when inspired to write *Camino Real*, and felt that his days of success were behind him. This scene represents a sort of turning point in the show. I chose to let myself drift into melancholy, as he recalls the very hard times that he lived through in writing this play.

Poetry Jam: “They say live, live, live, live.”

The poetry jam was made up of monologues from Williams’ plays, along with some of his poetry. He takes silent pride in these little pieces of himself. Each one has it’s own flavor. I allowed myself to be affected by each. After introducing them, I remain on stage to watch them. I listen to the actors, and survey the audience for responses. The scene ends with Carol’s monologue from *The Fugitive Kind*, from which the above quote comes. It felt as if I was speaking through the actor, telling the audience to get out there and live.

Kingdom of Earth: “A long, painful struggle that’s bound to be useless”

Kingdom of Earth opened the second act of *QUARTER Time*. The play represents another of Williams’ plays that did not meet with critical success. It is an experiment with Southern Grotesque that was nearly universally panned. He is quite bitter about this. I entered after this scene was finished to respond. I chose to introduce the scene with a wine glass in my hand. The text for this response is critical of critics and always received a good deal of laughter.

This Property is Condemned: “I don’t have time for inexperienced people.”

After responding to *Kingdom of Earth*, Tennessee introduces *This Property is Condemned*, a screenplay. I remain on stage to watch this scene after introducing it.

A Streetcar Named Desire: “Sometimes – there’s God – so quickly.”

By the time we get to *Streetcar*, I as Tennessee am terribly drunk and embittered. The vision that inspires the play becomes a hallucination of sorts. As I described it, the lights would come up on another part of the stage revealing Blanche sitting in a chair, in much the same way that I describe. Although she is unseen by me, I dream of, and am aware of her. We have come back to one of Williams’ great successes after many of his failures. He is quite proud of *Streetcar*, and this scene brings the show’s focus back to New Orleans.

Mr. Paradise: “Today the world is interested in gunpowder.”

Although the character of Williams does not introduce or comment on this scene, it is included in the show, and therefore, I include it here. Perhaps the most important aspect of this particular scene for me as an actor was waiting in the wings afterwards. For the first time in the

show, a different actor enters from the giant jester head, another version of Tennessee. For the last few minutes of the scene I sat just offstage, on the steps that leading up to the jester head, waiting to enter after the actor playing Mr. Paradise left the stage. I always felt that we were passing the mantle of Tennessee between us., in the same way that I had passed it on to Tom in *Glass Menagerie* at the beginning of the show.

New Orleans

The city of New Orleans itself is another major relationship for Williams. It is the city that Williams came to love, and wrote so much about. Luckily, I had my own knowledge and love of the city to inform my character.

Traps

While the voice of Tennessee may be one of my great strengths in playing the role, it was also one of the greatest difficulties. It is so easy with Southern accents to become lax and sing the lines. By singing the lines I mean that the intonations become set, like a piece of music and don't stay alive and in the moment.

Delivering monologues to an audience represents a second trap. Without a scene partner, it would be very easy to let the role become mechanical. I fought to stay connected to the audience every night. Before every entrance I would try to get as in the moment as possible and make the lines as spontaneous as I possibly could. I felt challenged to keep the piece fresh every night.

ACTOR'S SCORE

On the following pages is my Actor's Score for *Tennessee Williams in QUARTER Time*.

The score shows the focus, tactics, and physical score for my work on the role of Tennessee Williams.

	Focus	Tactic	Physical Score
<p>CLARE: Do you have your brandy flask on you?</p> <p>FELICE: No, it's for after the performance, not before.</p> <p>CLARE: There can't be a performance.</p> <p>FELICE: What is there going to be?</p> <p>CLARE: An announcement that the company and the stagehands and the sets have been destroyed, so the performance is canceled.</p> <p>FELICE [<i>gently and firmly</i>]: no. There'll be a performance of <i>The Two-Character Play</i>. [TENNESSEE enters from clown head. They hear something, but not the source.]</p> <p>CLARE: Do you think—do you think they really do think we're insane, or were they just being bitchy because</p>	Felice and Clare	Absorb	Step out of the clown head and watch them for a moment

	Focus	Tactic	Physical Score
<p>the long tour has been such a long disappointment?</p> <p>FELICE: Since they've quit, I see no reason to think about what they think.</p> <p>CLARE: Why are we talking to each other like this as if_____</p> <p>TENNESSEE: I have tricks in my pocket. I have things up my sleeve.</p> <p>My brother, who is a nut, and advertises himself as Tennessee Williams' brother, converted me to Catholicism but then turned around and had me put in a loony bin!</p>	Audience	<p>Comfort</p> <p>Tantalize</p> <p>Joke about myself</p>	<p>Giggle at Clare.</p> <p>Pull flask out of pocket.</p> <p>Drop flask down into Felice's hand</p> <p>Watch Clare and Felice exit</p> <p>Cross to railing</p>

	Focus	Tactic	Physical Score
<p>I was in it for three months in 1969 at Christmastime. I couldn't write anything there. A record for silence in my life.</p> <p>After I got out, I wrote many things. It didn't stop me from writing. I rewrote "Out Cry" around 1970. After my deep depression.</p> <p>I think it's my best play since Streetcar Named Desire. But the critics don't understand it. But they will one day. I have never stopped working on it.</p> <p>It's a very personal play. It is my own human outcry. All of my plays deal with an outcry for help in a world where my characters are refugees in a nightmare of debris,</p>		<p>Challenge</p> <p>Draw a connection</p>	

	Focus	Tactic	Physical Score
<p>displaced from society, or world which has rejected or bruised them in some manner. I have always wanted the stories of these characters to be told.</p> <p>Even my own life before the loony bin was a story. In “The Glass Menagerie,” I held a mirror up to the memory of three lives. My mother’s my sister’s and my own</p> <p>TENNESEE and TOM:</p> <p>Yes I have tricks in my pocket</p> <p>TOM:</p> <p>I have things up my sleeve....</p> <p>[Scene from <i>The Glass Menagerie</i>.]</p>	Tom		Exit

	Focus	Tactic	Physical Score
<p>TOM: I didn't go to the moon...</p> <p>TENNESSEE: I went much further, for time is the longest distance between two places.</p> <p>Not long after that, I was fired for writing a poem on the lid of a shoebox. I left St. Louis on December 26th stayed the night with my grandparents in Memphis from there I mailed several plays to the Group Theatre contest in New York. I signed them "Tennessee Williams." I arrived in New Orleans December 28th and set out immediately to explore the Vieux Carre.</p> <p>December 29</p> <p>New Orleans, Louisiana</p>	<p>Laura</p> <p>Audience</p> <p>Mother</p>	<p>Apologize</p> <p>Joke</p> <p>Impress</p>	<p>Enter with sheet over arm, watch what happens</p>

	Focus	Tactic	Physical Score
<p>And always the ominous presence of the Mississippi, its brownish blend of marsh water and river mud snaking its way around the crescent curve of the city, pressing against the levees that keep the city from turning into a vast swamp.</p> <p>I have found an attic room in a boarding house on Toulouse Street in Vieux Carre, for two dollars a week. I share my life with at least ten people of varying occupations and dreams.</p> <p>One more thing: the landlady refuses to replace light bulbs anywhere in the building, thereby putting the boarders in perpetual darkness.</p> <p>Love, Tom.</p> <p>[Scene from Vieux Carre begins.</p>	<p>Ms. Wire and the residents of the boarding house</p> <p>Self:</p>	<p>Feel the Mississippi</p> <p>Warn</p> <p>Impress</p> <p>Bitch</p> <p>Kiss</p>	<p>Step out onto main stage</p> <p>Walk into the scene of boarding house</p> <p>Lay down on stage</p> <p>Pull sheet up over myself</p>

	Focus	Tactic	Physical Score
(As the scene plays, I am alone in my room. I can't stop worrying. What am I going to do? What have I gotten myself into? I'm broke, lonely, and hundreds of miles away from home.)			
<p>NIGHTINGALE: ...I want to ask you something.</p> <p>WRITER: Huh?</p> <p>NIGHTINGALE: The word "landlady" as applied to Mrs. Wire and to all landladies that I've encountered in my life—isn't it the biggest one-word contradiction in the English language? (<i>The writer is embarrassed by Nightingale's intrusion and steady scrutiny.</i>) She owns the land, yes, but is the witch a lady? Mind if I switch on your light?</p> <p>WRITER: The bulb's burned out.</p>	Nightingale	<p>Accuse</p> <p>Tickle</p>	Sit up

	Focus	Tactic	Physical Score
<p>symphony orchestra and...</p> <p>NIGHTINGALE: No decent gay life at all?</p> <p>WRITER: You mean...Oh. No. There could be but...living at home...</p> <p>NIGHTINGALE: You are alone in the world, and I am, too. Listen. Rain!</p> <p><i>(They are silent. The sound of rain is heard on the roof.)</i></p> <p>Look. I'll give you two things for sleep. First, this. <i>(He draws back the sheets. The light dims.)</i> And then one of these pills I call my sandman special.</p>		Challenge	<p>Roll down stage</p> <p>Sit up</p> <p>Light a match</p>

	Focus	Tactic	Physical Score
<p>of...forgiveness?...through understanding?...Before she dissolved into sleep...</p> <p>TENNESSEE:</p> <p>Postcard to Mother</p> <p>February 18th</p> <p>New Orleans, Louisiana</p> <p>A musician under contract in Hollywood has offered me free transportation to the west coast. I am leaving this morning. Will stop for several days in El Paso, Texas.</p> <p>You can write me there, General Delivery, enclose a small cheque. Love, Tom.</p>	Audience	<p>Shock</p> <p>Entice</p> <p>Plead</p>	<p>Lay back down to sleep</p> <p>Sit up</p> <p>Stand up</p> <p>Walk back over to the staircase</p>

	Focus	Tactic	Physical Score
<p>Hawthorne, California</p> <p>May 4</p> <p>Dear Mother,</p> <p>I have decided not to live in Hollywood. It is full of sham and corruption and the atmosphere of the place is putrid.</p> <p>Of course, there is a great deal of money to be made out there. One of the farm hands says, "It you stand on a corner in Hollywood for any length of time, a seagull will fly over and crap money on your head." Love, Tom.</p> <p>A very strange life for me to be living after the Vieux Carre. I will return there someday. And if not, when I write about those places, people will say it's ridiculous, such people and things don't exist.</p>		<p>Chastise</p> <p>Apologize</p> <p>Impress</p>	<p>Climb</p> <p>Look out over balcony</p> <p>Grab shirt and tie</p> <p>Exit to clown head</p>

	Focus	Tactic	Physical Score
[Scene from <i>The Rose Tattoo</i> .]			
<p>TENNESSEE</p> <p>Carson McCullers and I set up housekeeping in 1946 in Nantucket.</p> <p>She had the downstairs guest room and Santo and I slept upstairs.</p> <p>That summer, we sat at opposite ends of a table and worked together, she on her dramatization of “The Member of the Wedding” and I on “Summer and Smoke,” and in the evenings, we read aloud to each other our day’s work.</p> <p>Her cat gave birth to a large number of kittens on her bed</p>	Audience	<p>Revel</p> <p>Impress</p> <p>Side step</p> <p>Press on</p> <p>Share</p>	<p>Step out to balcony</p> <p>Descend stair case</p> <p>Pick up piano bench</p> <p>Move to center stage</p> <p>Sit down on piano bench</p>

	Focus	Tactic	Physical Score
<p>while Santo served as midwife by giving the cat whiskey to keep her energy up. I had never seen a cat drink whiskey before.</p> <p>The play was a tough nut to crack. Miss Alma may very well be my best female portrait, but John gave me problems. I wrote several drafts of it and then took up where I had left off with “Streetcar” which I was calling “The Poker Night.”</p> <p>“Summer and Smoke” opened in New York in 1948. I sat with Carson McCullers and as the curtain came down, I said, “Let’s get out of here and get some whiskey.” It was a difficult birth!</p>		<p>Confide</p> <p>Entice</p> <p>Jab</p>	<p>Begin walking back to staircase</p> <p>Ascend staircase</p>

	Focus	Tactic	Physical Score
[Scene from <i>Summer and Smoke</i> .]			Exit
<p>TENNESSEE</p> <p>“Period of Adjustment.” I thought it would be my most popular play. I suppose I had another thing coming for me.</p> <p>I called it a comedy. A complex comedy – it was funny, yes.</p> <p>So is “Streetcar” funny.</p> <p>Blanche is a scream in that thing. I would laugh like hell when I wrote both of them.</p>	<p>Audience</p> <p>(Why are they laughing?)</p>	<p>Complain</p> <p>Demand</p> <p>Scold</p>	<p>Enter</p> <p>Exit</p>

	Focus	Tactic	Physical Score
[Scene from <i>Period of Adjustment</i> .]			
<p>TENNESSEE</p> <p>My idea for Camino Real first came to me when I was sick in a desolate corner of Mexico.</p> <p>It is my look at fascism.</p> <p>Ill, friendless, and penniless – I felt as though escape was impossible. And I thought I would never write an important play again. I thought...that those huge cloudy symbols of high romance that used to lift me up each morning...had gone like migratory birds that wouldn't fly back with any change of season.</p>	<p>Audience</p> <p>Memory</p> <p>Audience</p>	<p>Relive</p>	<p>Enter and cross to railing</p>

	Focus	Tactic	Physical Score
<p>Cypress Hill in my car. And we'll hear the dead people talk. They do talk there. They chatter together like birds on Cypress Hill, but all they say is one word and that one word is "live," they say "Live, live, live, live!" It's all they've learned, it's the only advice they can give. = Just live... Simple! – A very simple instruction....</p>		<p>Teach</p> <p>Embrace</p>	<p>Back up slowly</p> <p>mouthng "live, live"</p> <p>Exit</p>
<p>TENNESSEE</p> <p>Certain nasty reviewers were particularly nasty about this play, "Kingdom of Earth." I have kept a list of their names for future reference.</p> <p>"This Property is Condemned." It was a screenplay I wrote in the aforementioned Hollywood.</p>	<p>Audience</p> <p>The scene and Tom</p>	<p>Chastise</p> <p>Condemn</p> <p>Paint a picture</p>	<p>Enter with wine glass, quite drunk</p> <p>Sit down and watch</p>

	Focus	Tactic	Physical Score
time “Blanche’s Chair in the Moon,” which is a very bad title. But it was from that image, you know, of a woman sitting by a window, that “Streetcar” came to me.			Exit
<p>Out Cry II</p> <p>CLARE Are you lost in the play?</p> <p>FELICE: Yes, it’s a warm August day. We’ll find beauty in this hell!</p> <p>CLARE [<i>raising a hand, tenderly, to his head.</i>] :</p> <p>FELICE: Go straight to the giant sunflower.</p> <p>CLARE: Quick as that?</p> <p>FELICE: That quick! We cannot remain refugees</p>	Felice and Clare	Save Felice and Clare	Enter from clown head

	Focus	Tactic	Physical Score
<p>forever.</p> <p>CLARE: Felice, look out the window. There's a giant sunflower out there that's grown as tall as the house. <i>[she walks away not believing]</i></p> <p><i>[he draws a long breath, then leans out the window.]</i></p> <p>FELICE: Oh yes, I see it. Its color's so brilliant that it seems to be shouting! <i>(I see it, Clare, I see it! I can see it! I can't see it!...etc)</i></p> <p><i>[She crosses to the sofa: lifts the pillow beneath which the revolver is concealed: gasps and drops the pillow back: looks toward Felice]</i></p> <p>FELICE: Shoot! I can't see anything!</p> <p><i>[Williams appears atop the spiral staircase and raises his hand.]</i></p> <p>CLARE t: Felice, look! <i>The flower grows high into the</i></p>			<p>Hold out hand over sunflower as it climbs up</p> <p>Descend staircase</p>

IN PERFORMANCE

During the run of the show, I felt quite exposed to the audience. Given the nature of the show, I had to remain onstage, hidden from the audience during most of the first act. I sat on an LSU Tigers seat cushion that I placed on top of a large speaker inside the giant clown head. From there I was able to observe scenes and listen to the audience. I challenged myself to remain a focused participant in the show even though the audience couldn't see me. I tried to gauge their reactions and let that feed my entrances and monologues.

During the scene from *Vieux Carré*, I felt the most exposed and raw. The unpredictable nature of audience reaction to Tennessee's initiation into homosexuality filled me with apprehension. This scene represents one of the scariest things that has happened to me on stage. I have played gay in many shows, but most of those were known quantities to the audience. I think this scene surprised our audience. I wondered to what extent undergraduates were aware of Williams' sexuality. The sexual encounter in *Vieux Carré* is brief, but provocative. Just as Nightingale and Tennessee make contact the scene shifts. I roll downstage, away from Nightingale. Once I was closer to the apron, I sat up, facing the audience. Then I looked out in embarrassment, challenging them, searching for accusation from those eyes. Any uncomfortable laughter lingering from the encounter quickly died out. I would then begin the monologue about the apparition of the Writer's grandmother, searching her eyes for a touch of forgiveness. I felt myself defying the audience, "If my grandmother could accept this, shouldn't you be able to?"

I discovered that I was developing a great ease in directly addressing the audience. Indeed, during my time at LSU I have been cast in a number of shows that called for direct address. It is a huge challenge to have an entire audience as a scene partner. It is difficult to

gauge what everyone is thinking, and I needed to stay alive and responsive every night. The narration had to remain spontaneous in order to keep the audience involved.

I never wanted to be the type of actor who was accused of living the roles that they are playing. I always tried to maintain a healthy distance between my work on stage and my private life. However, Tennessee affected me. He got under my skin, and indeed, I would say that I was depressed for most of the time that I worked on the show. While he could be joyful, Tennessee was mostly cynical, and even his joy was touched with a great sadness.

CONCLUSION

It was my great challenge to try to bring to the stage the real life Tennessee Williams. Director John Dennis and I agreed that it wasn't possible to actually bring Tennessee back to life. I simply tried to be myself in such a way that I was inspired by TW.

Given the challenge of our experience, and facing the aftermath of the worst natural disaster in the history of the United States, I hope that our audience appreciated what we were trying to do, and did not find it sensationalistic or opportunistic.

I was inspired by the show. Each night I came into contact with these characters again and again. I began to see the through-line connecting all of the stories that were selected for the show. I embraced the theme of endurance that became my own undercurrent for the show. In my research, I was impressed by the hardships and problems that Williams faced in his life. His characters reflect his own endurance, despite setbacks. His characters are all damaged in some way, "bruised from a world that has rejected them. Many of these characters seem to be versions of Williams: Tom in *Glass Menagerie*, The Writer in *Vieux Carré*, Alma Winemiller in *Summer and Smoke*, both the brother and sister in *Out Cry*, and of course, and most famously, Blanche Dubois in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. These are fragile characters that endure hardship and heartbreak. They all seem to not be ready for the stresses of actual life. Their willowy natures take them just to the breaking point and sometimes beyond, but they remain, in most cases intact.

I believe that the message our audiences took home from *QUARTER Time* was one of endurance, despite all obstacles. It is a message for those of us who endured the hardship of Katrina and Rita, and are still here to tell the tale. The show ends with Tennessee demanding that the city will live. If it doesn't, then the city's spirit will leave an indelible mark on us all, in much the same way that it forever marked Tennessee Williams.

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APPENDIX A
LETTER TO CASAROTTO RAMSAY & ASSOCIATES LIMITED

From: "Michael Tick" <mtick1@lsu.edu>
To: <tom@casarotto.uk.com>
Sent: Friday, September 09, 2005 1:16 PM
Subject: request for permission -- LSU/Swine Palace

tom@casarotto.uk.com

CASAROTTO RAMSAY & ASSOCIATES LIMITED
National House 60 - 66 Wardour Street London W1V 4ND United Kingdom

Dear Mr. Erhardt:

Thank you for taking my call today concerning Swine Palace and Louisiana State University (LSU) Department of Theatre's proposal to produce a series of Tennessee Williams' scenes over a 2 1/2 week period, commencing February 3, 2006. Because of Hurricane Katrina I was forced last week to cancel two of three productions slated for the 2005-06 season: Chuck Mee's Big Love and Jack Kirkland's Tobacco Road. As our nonprofit company is dependent upon \$250,000 in contributed income annually, and since our primary patrons are now directing ALL of their resources to hurricane relief and rebuilding, we really only had two choices: either close Swine Palace, the Equity company affiliated with LSU or curtail the season and release all but two Equity actors. Obviously, we want to keep our doors open, and assist if possible New Orleans' Southern Repertory Theatre, by placing their logo on all of our marketing materials.

As part of our restructuring effort, we would like to produce an evening of Tennessee Williams' scenes, specifically one scene from each of the following works:

A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur
A Streetcar Named Desire
Garden District
Kingdom of Earth
Not About Nightingales
Out Cry
Period of Adjustment
Small Craft Warnings
Sweet Bird of Youth
Ten Blocks on the Camino Real (from American Blues)
The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore

If I sounded a little desperate on the phone, please understand how difficult life has been in South Louisiana. To do our part, LSU has attempted to enroll many of the 75,000 displaced college students from the New Orleans area. We have also become the central base for federal and state recovery efforts. The Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals has set up a

Special Needs Shelter in the LSU Maddox Field House and converted the Pete Maravich Assembly Center into a triage facility and hospital. Several federal agencies set up bases of operation around campus. Emergency vehicles and buses are shuttling refugees to campus. Our track and field stadium has become a heliport. To date, 15,000 patients have been treated in these "field" facilities. Even our theatre technical director was "pulled" from our unit and given the responsibility of setting-up what has now become the largest temporary hospital in American history.

The University of New Orleans and LSU Medical School are relocating their administrative offices (and faculty and some students) to campus. Administrators are facing decisions about what to do for the remainder of the semester and how to rebuild.

Each day the scale of LSU's role in this disaster is changing. The outpouring of public concern and desire to help is overwhelming, both inside and outside of the LSU family. Families of many of our students have come to campus to seek shelter. University of New Orleans and LSU Medical School faculty and staff are in desperate need of short-term and longer-term accommodations.

Swine Palace and LSU Theatre staff and students have spoken to many evacuees in temporary hospitals and shelters on campus. Their stories certainly confirm what CNN and others are reporting. But what the stories don't focus on (at least, not yet) are the thousands who have evacuated to Baton Rouge; by some estimate our city population has doubled; traffic is awful.

In closing, we certainly hope that you have the influence to persuade the Tennessee Williams' estate to grant this special request. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Warmest regards,

Michael Tick

Michael S. Tick
Chair, LSU Department of Theatre
Artistic Director, Swine Palace
249 Hatcher Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70808
225.578.3531 phone
225.578.4135 fax

APPENDIX B
FROM THE PROGRAM

SWINE PALACE
IN ASSOCIATION WITH LSU THEATRE
Michael S. Tick Kristin Sosnowsky
Producing Artistic Director presents Managing Director

Tennessee Williams in QUARTER Time

*From the works of Tennessee Williams
Conceived and Directed by John Dennis*

<i>Set Designer</i>	Nels Anderson**
<i>Costume Designer</i>	Polly Boersig**
<i>Lighting Designer</i>	Louis Gagliano
<i>Sound Designer</i>	Eun-Jin Cho
<i>Choreographer</i>	Molly Buchmann
<i>Vocal Coach</i>	Christine Menzies
<i>Production Stage Manager</i>	Karli Henderson*

Swine Palace is a constituent of Theatre Communications Group (TCG),
the national organization for the American Theatre.

Tennessee Williams in QUARTER Time is presented by special arrangement with
Samuel French, Inc. on behalf of the University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee.

This program is supported in part by funds from the Louisiana State Arts Council and the Louisiana Division of the Arts and by the Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge through the Decentralized Arts Funding Program. * Swine Palace is a recipient organization of the Community Fund for the Arts. Supported by a grant from the Louisiana State Arts Council through the Louisiana Division of the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts. This program is made possible in part by a Project Assistance Grant from the Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge, funded by the City of Baton Rouge and the Parish of East Baton Rouge, the Louisiana State Arts Council through the Division of the Arts, Office of Culture, Recreation and Tourism and the National Endowment for the Arts. Additional support is provided by the LSU Performing Arts Fee.



Taryn and William Calhoun, Jr.

* Member of Actors' Equity Association. ** Member of United Scenic Artists.



In association with
Louisiana State University
President - William L. Jenkins
Chancellor - Sean O'Keefe
Executive Vice Chancellor &
Provost - Risa I. Palm
Dean, College of Music &
Dramatic Arts - Ronald D. Ross

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Contact Information

Mailing Address:

Reilly Theatre
Tower Drive-LSU
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

Box Office:

(225) 578-3527
10:30 am - 5:00 pm
Monday-Friday
and one hour before
performances

Administrative Phone:

(225) 578-3533
www.swinepalace.org



Michael S. Tick



Kristin Sosnowsky

Dear Friends,


Welcome to the world premiere of *Tennessee Williams in QUARTER Time*, a rare theatrical event that we are thrilled to produce.

As many of you know, shortly after Hurricane Katrina we made the decision to postpone Jack Kirkland's American classic, *Tobacco Road*, so that we could honor New Orleans' greatest playwright. Coming up with the idea to produce excerpts from Tennessee Williams' canon was the easy part; persuading the London literary agent and the Tennessee Williams Estate to sanction it proved a little more difficult. But once permission was granted, we turned to John Dennis to conceive and direct this production, which he himself titled. Thank you, John, for dedicating months to this effort.

We are also indebted to our company of professional actors, who graciously and selflessly worked on *Tennessee Williams in QUARTER Time* at a reduced salary. To our M.F.A. alums — Joe Chrest (1989); Andrea Frankle (2001); Shawn Halliday (2005); Libby King (2003), and to company member Cristine McMurdo-Wallis — we offer our heartfelt thanks for your unwavering support and dedication

Together, Swine Palace and LSU Theatre are committed to making the great State of Louisiana even stronger and better than ever!


Michael S. Tick
Producing Artistic Director


Kristin Sosnowsky
Managing Director

ps: ...don't forget to order your tickets for upcoming productions, *She Stoops to Conquer* and *Always...Patsy Cline*.

CAST

(in alphabetical order)

Kesha Bullard	<i>Nursie, Esmerelda, Woman</i>
Joseph H. Chrest*	<i>Nightingale, Chicken, Mitch</i>
.....	<i>Mr. Paradise, Ralph</i>
Andrea Frankle*	<i>Jane, Alma, Carol, Blanche</i>
Shawn Halliday	<i>Felice, Alvaro, Stanley</i>
Mark Jaynes	<i>Tom, Val, Tom</i>
Libby King	<i>Willie, Isabel</i>
Daniel LeBlanc	<i>Roger, Thug</i>
Cristine McMurdo-Wallis*	<i>Clare, Amanda, Serafina</i>
Reuben Mitchell	<i>John, Kilroy</i>
Derek Mudd	<i>Tennessee Williams, Writer</i>
Amber Nelson	<i>Girl</i>
Ron Reeder	<i>Salesman, Lot</i>
Anna Richardson	<i>Laura, Stella</i>
Nikki Travis	<i>Mrs. Wire, Myrtle</i>
Chris Urti	<i>Thug, Man</i>

* Member of Actors' Equity Association.

There will be one 15 minute intermission.

Special Thanks

LaRoy Hodges, Jeff Pike
and Samuel French, Inc.

Cover Photography by Alexey Sergeev



As a courtesy to the actors and the audience, please silence all cell phones, pagers, watches, and other devices with audible alarms during the performance. The use of audio, video, or photographic recording devices is strictly prohibited during the performance.



Actors' Equity Association was founded in 1913 to protect actors from the severe mistreatment that permeated the industry at that time. Since its inception, Equity has had only 13 presidents. Its current president is Patrick Quinn.

The 40,000-member association consists of distinguished stars and other professional actors and stage managers who work nation-wide, from New York's Broadway to Los Angeles, from Minneapolis to Miami Beach, in

regional, stock, and dinner theatre, and in theatres for young audiences of tomorrow.

These actors and stage managers are committed to working in the theatre as a profession, not an avocation, and bring to you the finest professional training and experience. By presenting Equity productions, this theatre offers to you, our audience, the best entertainment presented by the finest quality actors and stage managers that your admission dollars can buy.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

My greatest affliction...is perhaps
the major theme of my writing,
the affliction of loneliness
that follows me like a shadow,
a very ponderous shadow too heavy to
drag after me all of my days and nights —Tennessee Williams, 1979

After my recent months spent reading the poems, letters, short stories, screenplays and plays of this man, I find him to be an all-embracing, generous poet dancing with great pain and boundless laughter. —John Dennis

"I am a southern writer who has two overriding devotions; my career as a writer and my sister, Rose." —Tennessee Williams

"The man was The Laureate of the refugee outcasts of the world." —Ted Kalem, *Time*

"Though his images were often violent, he was a poet of the human heart."
—Mel Gussow, *New York Times*

"It is impossible to name another modern playwright who has broken into America's consciousness with Williams' complex, vivid force. Despite publicity about drugs, alcoholism, homosexuality, and failures of his later plays, it is the award-winning playwright's work—the knives and poetry of flawed humanity—that remains." —Linda Winer, *Newsday*

"He came to the theatre bringing his poetry, his hardened edge of romantic adoration of the lost and the beautiful. For a while the theatre loved him and then he went back to searching in its pockets for soul. He chose a hard life that requires the skin of an alligator and the heart of a poet. He was my mentor, and to his everlasting honor, he persevered and bore all of us toward glory."
—Arthur Miller

In the days preceding his death he wanted to return to his apartment in the French Quarter to rest in his big brass bed, the site of "some of the happiest hours of my life." Just before he slipped away he scribbled me a note which read: "Get Me to the QUARTER." —John Uecker, Director

On the morning of February 25, 1983, he was found in New York's Hotel Elysee (which translates as "mythical paradise of the dead." And there on the thirteenth floor in the hotel's Sunflower Suite, the playwright's body was found slumped on the side of his bed. And on his bed was a photocopy of "Some of These Days," a short story by his friend James Purdy, across the top of which Purdy had written the lines of the young and ill-fated eighteenth century poet Thomas Chatterton:

Water witches crowned with reeds
Bear me to your lethal tides.

PRODUCTION SYNOPSIS

ACT 1

Out Cry I
The Glass Menagerie
Vieux Carre'
The Rose Tattoo
Summer and Smoke
Period of Adjustment
Camino Real
Selected Poetry

INTERMISSION

ACT 2

Kingdom of Earth
This Property is Condemned
A Streetcar Named Desire
Mr. Paradise
Out Cry II

Production Notes



Thomas Lanier Williams was born in 1911 in Columbus, Mississippi, to Edwina Dakin and Cornelius Coffin Williams. His early childhood was spent in various towns in Mississippi and Tennessee, often with his maternal grandfather (who was an Episcopal priest) and grandmother. In 1918, the entire

family moved to St. Louis, Missouri, where Tom's father worked for a large shoe manufacturer and his mother ran up against the intense snobbery of old St. Louis society. Tom went to several colleges, among them Washington University in St. Louis, where he wrote a group of scenes for a playwriting class that would later become *The Glass Menagerie*. He acquired his nickname, Tennessee, while at the University of Iowa, where he graduated in 1938. Tennessee was deeply affected by his sister Rose's increasing mental instability. His parents finally agreed to a pre-frontal lobotomy for Rose in 1937, and Tennessee never forgave himself for not stopping them. Both his mother and his sister had a profound influence on all his work, and many of the famous women of Williams' plays are based on Edwina and Rose. After a disastrous attempt at screen-writing in Hollywood in the early 1940s, as well as itinerant work around the country and in Mexico, Williams premiered *The Glass Menagerie* in Chicago in 1944, and then on Broadway in 1945. It was an instant critical success, and Williams topped it just two years later with *A Streetcar Named Desire*, which won not only the Drama Critics Circle Award, but also the Pulitzer Prize. Although Williams had written other plays before then, these two firmly established him as one of the premiere playwrights of the mid-twentieth century. This success was quickly followed by *Summer and Smoke* in 1948 and *The Rose Tattoo* in 1950, which won the Tony Award for Best Play. Williams continued to write plays for the rest of his life, enjoying a jet-set lifestyle which included a great deal of drinking and drug use. He had permanent homes in Key West, New York and New Orleans, but traveled extensively throughout the United States and Europe. His life was not without disappointments. He was a prolific writer and not all of his plays achieved even moderate critical success, and his personal relationships were often stormy. In 1980, his latest work flopped on Broadway and he considered himself finished with the theatre. His mother died later that year. At the same time, theatres around the country were reviving his plays, one had been made into an opera, and several of his works were re-staged for television. Tennessee Williams died on February 25, 1983, after choking on a bottle cap. In death, as in life, he received mixed "reviews," and remains a figure of debate and argument. Many cities claim him as their own, including New Orleans, which has a Literary Festival named after him – a fitting tribute to a man whose life and works were deeply rooted in the rhythms and spirit of the French Quarter.

APPENDIX C
REVIEW FROM *THE ADVOCATE*, BATON ROUGE



Cristine McMurdo-Wallis, foreground, portrays Amanda in Tennessee Williams' 'The Glass Menagerie.' Fellow cast members Anna Richardson and Mark Jaynes appear in the background. Advocate staff photo by KERRY MALONEY

Slices of Tennessee

Play powerfully presents some of Williams' best works

BY J.D. VENTURA
Advocate staff writer

When Tennessee Williams died in 1983, the *New York Times* obituary noted that the playwright would be remembered for his "deep sympathy and expansive humor about outcasts in our society."

Thanks to Hurricane Katrina, thousands of New Orleanians were cast out of the city that Williams not only loved, but where he set some of his most famous works.

Which is precisely what makes Swine Palace's latest production, "Tennessee Williams in Quarter Time," so deeply personal and hauntingly evocative to anyone

'Tennessee Williams in Quarter Time'

WHEN: Performances at 7:30 p.m., Feb. 3, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 17 and 18; matinees, 2 p.m., Feb. 5 and 12.

WHERE: Reilly Theatre, Tower Drive, LSU campus.

TICKETS: Adults, \$25; faculty, staff, and seniors, \$15; students, \$12.

INFORMATION: Call (225) 578-3527 or visit <http://www.swinepalace.org>

affected by the disaster. The scenes from his various plays, some taking place in New Or-

leans, stand as bold testament to the place's rich history and its profound impact on American literature and culture.

Director John Dennis is to be commended for conceiving of and bringing to the Reilly's stage, in such a short amount of time, a production that serves as a powerful reminder of just what's at stake should New Orleans be forgotten.

That Dennis packaged the work so expertly is one of the chief strengths of "Quarter Time." The play is like a perfectly wrapped gift, opened gingerly out of respect for its marvelous presentation.

The stage is a post-hurricane

wasteland, complete with a thrown-out refrigerator, a debris-covered car and scattered garbage. Each act begins with a light and sound show that so effectively emulates a violent storm, the visceral response it elicits for some is downright uncomfortable.

We are immediately troubled. Which is a perfect state of mind to connect with Williams' tortured characters.

Nels Anderson must be singled out here for his set design. And Louis Gagliano (lighting) and Eun-Jin Cho (sound) do wonderful things, too, not just in recre-

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SLICES

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ating a hurricane, but also an earthquake that felt real and the glow of a fireworks display that was magical in its delicate simplicity.

Back to Dennis, however. Rather than let audience members struggle to orientate themselves with 11 scenes plucked from Williams' various works, the director resurrects the author in the form of Derek Mudd. Mudd's Williams is our guide, serving as a ghostly echo of the playwright's own words, taken from his memoirs, letters and poetry. He also is a sort of human Cliff Notes, giving the audience just enough context to enjoy the work.

Mudd is mesmerizing. His Williams is cool, sly, comic or conflicted, introspective and philosophical. Perched on elevated staging, he watches over his scenes with a knowing paternity that shows the actor did his homework.

The scenes, and Mudd's monologues, are full of observations about New Orleans, some merely colorful, but others poignantly relevant to the city's current predicament. When, for example, two characters scramble into a farmhouse attic in "Kingdom of Earth" after nearby levees break, the immediacy of the piece is intense and unnerving.

Much of the production's electricity is attributable to an almost untouchable cast. Swine Palace brought in three professional, "equity" actors for this show, and all three hold court commandingly.

"Quarter Time's" jewel is unquestionably Andrea Frankle. Her Blanche, from "A Streetcar Named Desire" (which is smartly withheld as sort of a finale at the end of the second act), perfectly captures the dark lyricism found in unmanageable despair. Blanche's fear of Stanley, played like a ticking time bomb by a captivating Shawn Halliday, is animalistic, an exhausted cat cornered by a fanged dog.

And her emotionally incremental confession about provoking her husband's suicide is like the slow, painful removal of a bandage from a festering, infected wound.

Like many of the other actors in the cast, Frankle's portrayal of

'Quarter Time' ... has few shortcomings. It does much service to Williams' works, which, when sewn together in such a fashion, explain much about human frailty and the sometimes infertile harvests of the human heart.

Blanche showcases the universal struggle to maintain dignity in the face of undeniable calamity.

In the post-Katrina world, it's a theme that is as contemporary as it is literary.

Cristine McMurdo-Wallis as Amanda from "The Glass Menagerie" is yet another woman quite perfectly inhabited by demons thieving her dreams of a better life. In all three of her roles, she limps lusciously along, dragging her characters' hobbled hopes behind her.

Other standouts include Libby King, as the disillusioned tomboy Willie in "This Property Is Condemned." King's portrayal is perhaps one of the play's wispiest and most poignant.

Two criticisms: Coating the characters' costumes with hurricane mud just didn't work; and the dance number at the end looked at first like one of the routines from Michael Jackson's video "Thriller." Whether it was intentional or not, it didn't work, either. It was, in a sense, a bit of unwanted levity, even if its presumed intention was to show that the spirit of New Orleans will dance on.

But "Quarter Time" has few shortcomings. It does much service to Williams' works, which, when sewn together in such a fashion, explain much about human frailty and the sometimes infertile harvests of the human heart.

And, maybe more importantly, it shows that struggle, strife and ultimately, salvation, often come in indistinguishable forms, delivered in a lover's kiss or in a merciless storm as unforgettable as the work of a literary giant.



Advocate staff photo by KERRY

Andrea Frankle and Anna Richardson, from left, portray 'Th Menagerie' characters Blanche and Laura in the showcase of Tei Williams' works, 'In Quarter Time.'

APPENDIX D
REVIEW FROM THE TIMES-PICAYUNE, NEW ORLEANS

Pearls before Swine Palace audience in Baton Rouge

By David Cuthbert
 Theater writer

REVIEW

A '10' FOR 'TENNESSEE'

Lighting streaks across the sky as thunder and fearful storm sounds are heard.

Gradually, the lighting comes up on the detritus of what Tennessee Williams called "the most splendid city in the world."

The stage is dominated by the elevated, outsize, tattered head of the Rex Jester, as emblematic of loss as the Statue of Liberty in the original "Planet of the Apes." The piles of rubble include lowered shutters, the stripped chassis of a car, a dressmaker's dummy, piles of chairs, an ornamental fountain cracked in half and the inevitable refrigerator.

In "Tennessee Williams in QUARTER TIME," the playwright and his characters appear in excerpts from his plays, poetry, letters and essays that summon the actual and emotional storms that wind through his work.

Tempests appear in his plays as early as 1947's "Summer Storm" and as late as 1982's "A House Not Meant to Stand." John Dennis, director of the master of fine arts acting program at Louisiana State University, wanted to do a Katrina-influenced Williams collage that would highlight Williams' "deep-rooted connection to the Gulf Coast and his beloved New Orleans," seeing his vulnerable heroes and heroines as "evacuees from their surroundings."

The result is a masterful mosaic of Williams' words and themes, providing a topical overlay and evocative subtext.

The play is book-ended by scenes from "Out Cry" ("The Two-Character Play"), in which brother and sister actors Felice and Clare find themselves in a stage that is "a nightmare of debris, like the surface of a sea where some great ship's gone under, spewing up wreckage!" Their difficulties, Felice tells the audience, are due to "the perversities of the weather bird."

Watching them is the young playwright, on a circular iron grillwork platform surrounding the jester. "Yes, I have tricks in my pockets," he says, in the



Derek Mudd as young Tennessee in 'Tennessee Williams in Quarter Time.'

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS IN QUARTER TIME

What: The Swine Palace Theatre presents a production drawn from the works of Tennessee Williams, conceived and directed by John Dennis.

Where: Swine Palace/Theatre, Tower Drive, Louisiana State University campus, Baton Rouge.

When: Performances tonight, Sat., Wed., Thurs., Feb. 17 and 18 at 7:30 p.m.; Sun. and Feb. 19 at 2 p.m.

Tickets: \$25; seniors and LSU faculty and staff, \$15; students, \$12.

Call: (225) 576-3527, or www.swinepalace.org.

words of Tom Wingfield, his doppelganger in "The Glass Menagerie." "But I am the opposite of a stage magician. He gives you illusion that has the appear-

ance of truth. I give you truth in the pleasant guise of illusion."

This cues a distillation of "Menagerie" vignettes, Amanda with crippled daughter Laura,

Tom arguing with Amanda, to the point that he storms out of the St. Louis apartment and into "Vieux Carre," the play about living in the attic of a Toulouse Street rooming house, near "the ominous presence of the Mississippi." As The Writer, he meets leucue landlady Mrs. Wire and the artist Nightingale who seduces him by candlelight in a graphic moment that elicited a few gasps.

On the "Camino Real," Kilroy, the golden gloves champ with "the heart as big as the head of a baby" is chased by guards shooting guns and finds brief erotic-comic solace in the arms of Esmeralda, the gypsy girl whose virginity is restored with the moonrise.

A poetry section includes "Life Story," with its famous ending, "and that's how people burn to death in hotel rooms"; the beautiful, yearning "Mornings on Bourbon Street" ("the rotten sweet odor the Quarter had") and the less known "Kitchen Door Blues," one of his "Blue Mountain Ballads."

In the second act, Dennis takes the ramshackle "Kingdom of Earth" (The Seven Descents of Myrtle) and brilliantly compresses it into 10 minutes in which the three characters are introduced during a storm, the levee is dynamited and they must scramble to the rooftop of a decaying mansion to escape the flood.

The title "This Property is Condemned" has added resonance today, and Libby King plays the blithely tragic throw-away child Wilkie Starr like a soiled, baby Blanche DuBois.

"A Streetcar Named Desire" is richly represented by two highly charged sequences: Blanche confronting Stanley over the contents of her trunk and her coquettish episode with Mitch which leads to her hypnotic account of the suicide of her young husband. Here, in the direction and performances, moments of comedy and tragedy bleed into each other courtesy of Shawn Halliday's pugnacious Stanley, Anna Richardson's concerned Stella and the transcendent Andrea Frankie, showing us both Blanche's fragility and strength.

Finally, there is "Mr. Paradise," the obscure, satirical poet who knows — as Williams

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did — that “death is the only thing that could possibly restore my reputation.”

We end with circles-within-circles: Felice and Clare, now trapped in the empty theater, Tom-Tennessee repeating the opening lines of “Menagerie” and then, from the back of the house, a celebratory, Fellini-esque second line of characters comes toward us, the playwright dressed finally in white. And Tennessee laughs as the lights dim out.

The players are a nontradi-

tionally cast ensemble, and they can *all* speak Williams’ patois, thank the Lord. Cristine Murdo-Wallis, with a wonderfully pliant voice that plumbs Tallulah-like depths, is a tremulous Clare, a spot-on Amanda and an earthy Serafina. Mark Jaynes, a pencil-thin, expressive young actor with a shock of dark hair, is dream casting as Tom. There is no attempt to make Derek Mudd look like Williams, but we accept him as such because of his commitment to the role. Reuben Mitchell is a striking Kilroy, Nikki Travis a delightfully common Myrtle and Kesha Bullard an enticing Esmeralda.

Dennis directs with a bold, confident hand, equally at home in intimate scenes or the sweep of spectacle. Nels Anderson’s set has the haunted look of kaleidoscopic devastation, from which props are pulled, while Louis Gagliano’s sensitive lighting is exquisite. Apart from a few exceptions, Polly Boersig’s costumes sport water lines of mold and mildew, a wonderful touch.

Blanche didn’t want realism, she wanted magic, and in the last line of “Outcry,” Felice says, “Magic is the habit of our existence.” So it was with Williams, which Dennis understands and honors.

VITA

Derek Mudd was born in Louisville, Kentucky on May 11, 1972. He grew up just south of Louisville in Shepherdsville, Kentucky. He graduated *magna cum laude* from Morehead State University in Kentucky in 1994 with a double major in English and theatre. He moved to Austin, Texas in 1998. From 2001 to 2004 he served as the Administrator of Contracts and Evaluations for the Texas Commission on the Arts. He has performed in over seventy-five different productions.