

## **“A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE “ – TENNESSEE WILLIAMS ROTHERFIELD PLAYERS FRIDAY 18 OCTOBER 2013**

Williams has many acknowledged influences and its not clear if his University English course would have exposed him to Dante's Inferno but the descent of Dante down through the nine levels of hell has many parallels with Blanche Dubois's descent from respectable plantation dwelling schoolteacher to delusional madness via the layers of lust, greed and jealousy thrown into this powerful and disturbing melting pot of a play.

As soon as she arrives on the set Kate Organ starts her brilliant drawing of Blanche's brittle flawed character – the external veneer of charm and control is gradually peeled away in the script to reveal her many weaknesses and moral lapses, Kate catches all these facets with consummate skill, creating a character with whose problems the audience can sympathise, despite their often self inflicted nature. We are left with the impression that even without the trigger of her teenage lover's suicide, the good ship Blanche would always have found a rock to founder upon – the family history as regaled shows many such weaknesses and sister Stella Kowalski, played with great presence, passion and sensitivity by Becky Syms has her own fair share of them. The way this pair played the complex shifting nodes of the sister's relationship was truly extraordinary.

Driving between the sisters like a filleting knife through a fish, Lawrence Robinson's slightly built Stanley alternates powerfully between great tenderness and love for Stella and flashes of the vicious jealousy arising in the breast of a man who feels he has not succeeded in life as he should. The convincing story of how the Kowalski marriage works despite Stanley's brutal outbursts is another triumph of both the actors skills, and Alison Organ's gifted director's grasp of William's stage vision

Underpinning the complex rhythms of the family, the well directed and acted character portraits of the supporting cast cemented the plot and highlighted the passions of the principals – David Penny as Pedro always exuded a significant essentially kindly presence, which worked well with Brian Wright's energetic Steve Huball, whose sometimes stormy relationship with wife Eunice, played with measured aplomb by Ros Williams had important sub plot echoes of the main action.

Central to Blanche's ultimate breakdown is the revelation of her tawdry recent past to would be lover Mitch – Chris Walton-Turner did a clever job of portraying this naïve quiet character's outrage as he discovers how he had nearly been fatefully misled as to Blanche's nature and intentions. Establishing layers of normal life to contrast with the turmoil in the Kowalski household drew out lovely little street life cameos from streetwalkers Gussie Penny and Deb Findlater, Sailor Scott Kingsnorth, flower seller Heather Block and not least Sammy Dawkin's gauche news collector- deserving special mention for playing the part on crutches with a broken ankle.

Of course none of this would have worked without the Production team led by James Gallifant – the set building and decoration met the usual high standards of Cassford, Tasker and Mellor Inc, as did the lighting and sound engineered by Everitt Truelove plc. Having to play 11 scenes in just one setting could have been boring but there was always something to hold the eye in this well designed set.

The pathos and angst of the final scene when Doctor Adam Hardy and Matron Deirdre come to take Blanche to an institution was a fitting end to this intense and powerful drama, the cast having played throughout at the top of their game. We suspect that, as the years role on, this exciting production will stay as vividly in the mind as the Players memorable 2005 Tennessee Williams Garden District production.

Peter Thompson