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A Beautiful Production of Tennessee Williams "Something Cloudy, Something Clear"

It is indeed uncommon to see this Tennessee William's play these days and the Theatre Rhinoceros is presenting that rare look to see one of the playwright's most daring plays. "Something Cloudy, Something Clear" is Williams' dream like autobiographic play written in 1975. It was considered experimental for its time. However it is not totally about the playwright's early life since the drama speaks for us all. We all have moments in which we recall definite portions of our lives with astonishing clarity. "Life finally seems to occur all at one time" as the play's main character, August, tells us.

Tennessee William's final play is different from "The Glass Menagerie" since in this play Williams in not a narrator outside the action looking back at an earlier time but the author playing the part of a playwright and existing in two time frames simultaneously. The poetry of the drama is fresh here: it feels distinctively Williams. You feel each of the central three characters both from outside and inside with flashing sympathy and criticism. . It's an astonishing work and gorgeously rendered by John Fisher and the Rhinoceros Company

The play is set in Provincetown in the summer of 1940. Twenty Nine year old August (Aaron Wilton), as ambitious playwright living in a beach house and an noticeable stand-in for Tennessee himself, has the "hots" for young Kim (Kayal Khanna), an unemployed Canadian dancer and draft dodger who is suffering from a brain tumor. Sly August tries to meet Kip through his "sister" Clair (Gwen Kingston) who also had diabetes problems and she is happy enough to pimp Kip since, as she explains to August, they are both the sort of people who have to live off others. This sort of reminds me of Blanche Du Bois's reliance of the kindness of strangers in "A Streetcar Named Desire".

There is a sub plot involving August rewriting "Battle of Angels" for his intended Broadway debut ("Battle" ultimately fold in its disastrous Boston tryout). The injections of some of the past characters into his present world seems to be a bit awkward but we are introduced to the arrival at the beach house Tallulah Bankhead, who will play the lead in August's new play (although actually she didn't). Tallulah's outrageous behavior, as spectacularly evoked by Maryssa Wanlass serves a comedy relief in this drama

Aaron Wilton as August makes an extremely appealing figure and he has the gestures and nuances of Tennessee Wilson along with a nice Southern accent. Rayal Khanna is charismatic as Kip and even does dance moments reminiscent of Martha Graham in the first act. The match of these two men is exciting. Gwen Kingston is excellent as a person who doesn't have a coy bone in her body as the fiercely protective Clair. Maryssa Wanlass is especially strong as actress Caroline Wales who champions the young playwright's work and reads his sexuality clearly. Jeffrey Biddle gives good account of himself in various roles including a gagster named Bugsy, a Merchant Seaman and Maurice the producer of the play.

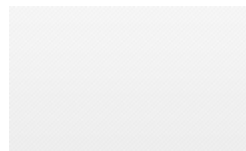
Scenic Designer has devised an interesting beach set made mostly of wooden planks. John Fisher direction is sharp. "Something Cloudy, Something Clear" runs through January 19th at the Eureka Theatre, 215 Jackson Street, san Francisco. For tickets call 800-838-3006 or on line at www.TheRhino.org

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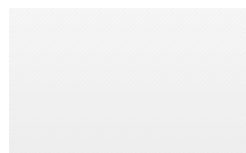
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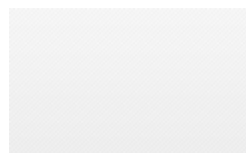
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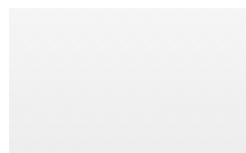
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