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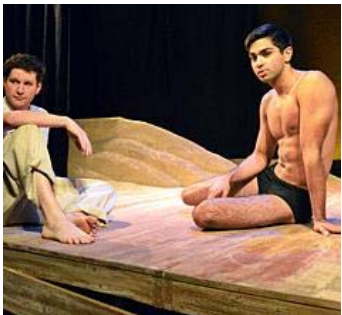
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"Something Cloudy, Something Clear"

by Richard Dodds
Bay Area Reporter
Friday Jan 11, 2013

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Aaron Wilton plays a young writer who becomes infatuated with a draft dodger (Kayal Khanna) during a summer at the beach in Tennessee Williams' "Something Cloudy, Something Clear." Photo: Gilbert Johnson

It's rare when you can experience a great playwright collaborating with himself at both the beginning and end of his career. Certainly, Tennessee Williams had the proclivity to return to plays that missed the mark the first time around, making changes in plot, tone, and even titles. But "Something Cloudy, Something Clear" differs from these other adjustments. Instead he is working with a short play written in 1941 - three years before the world took note with The Glass Menagerie - and interweaving two of the characters from it 40 years later, for rueful ruminations on what took place on a Provincetown beach in 1940.

Theatre Rhino Executive Director John Fisher has an interest in exploring the crannies of the Williams canon plays that are often overlooked, having entered 2012 with "The Two-Character Play," and now another new year with "Something Cloudy, Something Clear" at the Eureka Theatre. The 1940s play that drew Williams back to his typewriter 40 years later was titled "The Parade," or "Approaching the End of a Summer," and it's unlikely he could have

imagined a society that would allow it someday to be produced.

The end of that summer brought an end to Williams' first head-over-heels romance, and the play was his personal eulogy to the affair. Not even the name of the object of abject desire has been changed. He is Kip, a draft-dodger from Canada with a resemblance to Nijinsky who sways the playwright away from his usual habit of messy one-night-stands. But Kip comes with a wife, sort of, who also serves as a pimp, sort of, and this menage a trois can't quite figure out what to do with itself.

While you can certainly hear viscous Williams poetry in the dialogue, it seldom finds the lift or humor that's found even in the playwright's heavy-handed later works, owing in part, perhaps, to the solid Aaron Wilton's earthbound performance as the young playwright. It is also hard to hear poetry as Gwen Kingston declares her lines as if she were a character in a musical comedy on her way to a box social. Kayal Khanna takes more of an understated approach to Kip, while Jeffrey Biddle and Maryssa Wanlass play a series of visitors to Provincetown including a B-movie villain actually named Bugsy.

Gilbert Johnson's scenic design captures the feel of sand-swept dunes around a Provincetown beach shack. But what the play and this production can't capture is an essence of Williams that usually can be counted upon to make an appearance - be it graceful or clumsy - in whatever bears the playwright's name.

"Something Cloudy, Something Clear" will run through Jan. 13 at the Eureka Theatre. Tickets are \$15-\$30. Call (800) 838-3006 or go to www.therhino.org.



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