



University of Delaware gives truthful take on 'Menagerie'

Ensemble up to challenge of classic

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"This play, this production anyway, is no Hallmark card ... the confrontations are ugly and honest and gritty. And that kind of depth, that grit, in contrast to the poetic nature of the play, is theatrically honest."

That's the opinion of Kathleen Pirkl Tague, one of the four actors in the equity Resident Ensemble Players' current incarnation of "The Glass Menagerie" at the University of Delaware.

Amen to Tague as the Tennessee Williams masterpiece gets a masterful turn from director John Langs. Velvet-voiced Langs is both clear-eyed architect and reverent archivist of this perhaps greatest 20th-century (1944) American stage tragedy.

Williams' most autobiographical memory drama (he called it "poetic realism") pulls us into the claustrophobic, if commodious, semi-shabby 1937 St. Louis apartment where, in the face of life's brutal realities, one desperate family struggles to understand one another's dreams.

However, their Velcro of guilt, blame, shame and memory becomes too frayed to ever again reliably hold them together.

Tague sees her character, the faded Southern belle and oppressively self-sacrificing mother, Amanda Wingfield, as "an enormous spirit ... a huge, powerful personality." The actress rises to the challenge but needs to stabilize her Southern drawl.

Carine Montbertrand plays the fragile, glass-figurine-collecting daughter, Laura Wingfield, with exquisite care and grace. The REP's marquee actor, Michael Gotch, scores again as Laura's poetic, idealistic brother, Tom

Wingfield. And Eric Mathews is solid as Laura's extroverted, advice-spewing, long-awaited gentleman caller.

The set, and the music throughout, have an almost beautiful tawdriness that complement the play's themes and balance out the moments of well-placed, well-paced humor.

John Langs has attempted to make, in his words, "a phenomenally truthful moment." He and the REP have succeeded.