



school of fine arts *eastern illinois university*

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DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE ARTS

EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY TO PRESENT "SUMMER AND SMOKE"

A tender and haunting drama from the pen of America's foremost dramatist has been chosen for the final fall production at Eastern Illinois University's Theatre. This is Tennessee Williams' "Summer and Smoke," which will open at the Fine Arts Center Theatre November 14 at 8:00 pm and continues there November 15, 21, 22, and 23.

Though this drama is complete in itself, it might be said to form the third item in a notable trilogy by Tennessee Williams, of which his previous successes, the Pulitzer Prize-winning "A Streetcar Named Desire" and "The Glass Menagerie" are its other components. Although the heroines of the three plays are different, they are alike in being in each case a woman struggling to overcome a desperate predicament.

Alma Winemiller, in "Summer and Smoke," like Blanche du Bois in "A Streetcar Named Desire," is a Southern spinster, younger than Blanche, but no less frustrated. Alma is also as painfully lonely as the pathetic Laura who collected glass animals in "The Glass Menagerie."

But Alma's circumstances, and her story, in "Summer and Smoke," are quite different. She is the vocal-teaching daughter of an Episcopal minister and a half-demented mother, living in a small Mississippi town. From childhood she has loved the boy named John who lives next door and taunts her cruelly. She has grown up into a painfully self-conscious young woman, excessively proper, prematurely spinsterish.

When John returns from medical school to assist his father in his practice, Alma makes a bid for his affections that is doomed from the outset to failure. He jibes at her affectations of speech and prissy ways, her habit of referring to the Fourth of July "pyrotechnical display" when she means fireworks. Hurt, she tries to argue him out of his wild-oats profligacy, and assumes a sterner primness than ever before when he idly suggests she discover with him that love is not all spiritual.

The play shows how through a brooding summer and winter in the little Mississippi town Alma muddles through awkward coquetry and needless bloodshed in one particular melodramatic incident, seeking to avoid the lonely bleakness that looms before her. Her tragedy is complete when, as a result of the melodramatic incident, John gives up his wild-oats, settles down to adult responsibilities, and becomes engaged to a wholesome girl who had once been a vocal-pupil of Alma's.

According to one New York dramatic critic, writing of "Summer and Smoke" upon its Broadway opening, Tennessee Williams has never been more successful in creating a mood than in this play. He has cast over his story of a pathetic young woman's bid for happiness, according to

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this critic, so rich an atmosphere of life in a small Southern town that audiences feel as if they had been living in Tennessee Williams' Glorious Hill, Miss., by the end of the evening.