

Performances have power

Thursday, May 5, 1984 O&E

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Performances of the Actors Alliance Theatre Company production of Tennessee Williams' "Suddenly Last Summer" continue at 8:30 p.m. Fridays-Saturdays and 6:30 p.m. Sundays through May 27 at Lyceum International, 30800 Evergreen Road, Southfield. For reservations, call 842-1226 from noon to 6 p.m.

By J. Timothy Penn
special writer

Absorbing and emotional performances by Bethany Carpenter as Mrs. Venable and Annette DePetris as Catherine Holly kept my attention on opening night at the Actors Alliance Theatre Company's production of "Suddenly Last Summer."

Carpenter's portrayal of the matron of the "Old South" family got off to a slightly shaky start. In the initial moments, Carpenter seemed to be reaching for the proper characterization and tempo. She found it quickly and never lost it. Her character, indeed, got stronger as the play progressed.

DePetris, on the other hand, was strong from the moment that she set foot on the stage of the theater-in-the-round. She was particularly powerful in the play's closing moments.

Even though DePetris does not look the part that she played, she carried it off flawlessly. She played the ups and downs of the character well — turning off and turning on the various manners of Catherine Holly.

review

ANOTHER DISTINGUISHED performance was provided by Monica Decker as Sister Felicity, guardian of the allegedly demented cousin of Sebastian Venable.

The story of this Tennessee Williams work is best remembered from the movie with Katharine Hepburn.

Bill Clynne, as the ambitious Dr. Cukrowicz, at times seemed less confident in his character than did DePetris and Carpenter.

At one point in particular, he did not seem to be perplexed enough about the dilemma he was facing and his potential role

in the seemingly plain of Mrs. Venable. Clynne played the role much more effectively when paired with DePetris than when playing against Carpenter.

He, too, was more tentative early in the production. Perhaps, both he and Carpenter were taken aback by the audience — or more precisely the lack thereof. The cast and crew easily outnumbered the audience on opening night. However, once rolling, the cast performed without a hitch.

FINE PERFORMANCES also were given by Emily Schreiber as Miss Foxhill, Peggy

Thorp as Mrs. Holly and Paul Hopper as George Holly. Hopper was particularly effective in his sibling rivalry moments with DePetris.

A few technical shortcomings or distractions failed to hurt the overall effort. But a word to the director: The sound of the birds chirping in the background was overused and became almost distracting at times. Secondly, the use of a humane lighter seemed a bit inappropriate. Did they have those back then?

Overall, however, the production of director Jeffrey Nathan and crew is highly commendable and deserves more than a score in the audience.

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Bethany Carpenter (left) is Mrs. Venable. Emily Schreiber is her companion, Miss Foxhill, in "Suddenly Last Summer" at the Actors Alliance Theatre.

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