

Stella! oops, wrong play

Marc Cote interviews Dawn Moore and Bill Murdoch, director and designer for Cap Theatre's production of the production of the Tennessee Williams' play, *Ten Blocks on the Camino Real*.

Dawn smiles and says, "I don't know what's interesting anymore. I need an audience to gain perspective."

There are many things about the play that are interesting. Unlike many directors with many plays, Dawn hasn't become desenchanted with the play. It's a young playwright's play, it has a certain wildness and energy.

It's a really good vehicle for young actors—it has exhuberance, but maintains the seriousness of the underlying theme. A very theatrical script—not realistic at all—not the standard Tennessee Williams.

It makes use of the theatre as a theatre. The play was first produced when realism was most important, when the fourth wall idea was still used. Williams broke with that tradition. The play moves on and off the stage, making use of the theatre's space.

The choice of *Ten Blocks on the Camino Real* had to do with Williams being in Vancouver last fall. Both Dawn and Bill had to read the play for their classes at UBC.





Dawn liked the episodic structure of the play—something she hadn't come across before. She also read the later, full-length *Camino Real*, but felt that it was too long and without some of the energy of the earlier one-act.

To expand the first play, Dawn adapted it—making it a little longer—which isn't unreasonable as Williams himself still wants to change the play.

The production works together as a true ensemble. They work in a kind of evolutionary process; things change and go with new ideas, rather than going with the pre-conceived notions and enforcing them on the actors. Everyone works on the set as well as some aspect of production, as well as performing. It's a lot of work, but we're enjoying it. This is the true ideal of an ensemble and not a collection. It helps that most of the actors have gone through Theatre 100 and 200 together.

We're all familiar with each other and the programme. There's a lot of co-operation and everything's coming along quickly. That's important: that the students learn to work well as a company because when they get out of the programme they should be ready to join other companies. The course has a practical aim.

It's interesting that most of the cast is under 30. We have young actors playing old characters who are obsessed with a fear of death. We didn't want to dress the actors up and put a lot of make-up on them in order to make them look old. What we've done is interesting and I think it works. The actors aren't playing an old age, but an old attitude. This is in keeping with the play—it's not about people becoming older, but their attitudes about death and the later part of their lives.

Many of the characters are famous literary figures: Camille, Casanova, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza.

Here are these characters, at the end of the line, in this pseudo-Spanish South American town where there's been no rain. Imagine us here in BC trying to imagine a place where it doesn't rain. But this is a creative art and so we must be creative.

One of the most attractive qualities of the play were the variations in the scenes. There are public scene like the fiestas, and private scenes like the ones between Casanova and Camile.

The tone shifts quickly between comic and dramatic, realistic and surrealistic.

The show is particularly appropriate for the eighties. The script, as well as the set, shows the economic disparities between one side of the street and the other. Characters either live in the grand hotel, or they live under the public stairs.

There are characters who are afraid of moving on, of taking chance.

Although the play is serious, it does have humor. What is most remarkable is the huge sense of optimism at the end. But, I don't want to give away the end...

This show depends on the actors. The tensions come from their characterizations and inter-actions. It's actor's theatre, not what would be called a well-crafted play.

Over the past two years, Cap Theatre has presented *Under Milkwood*, *the Future is in Eggs*, *a Frugal Repast*, and *Shakespeare Must Die*. Last year the shows were entered in the North Shore Drama festival and were awarded a certificate for outstanding stage management, which is funny because we really don't have any backstage facilities. But we expect professionalism and we generally get it.

This is the largest production we've ever mounted—it's involving past students and people from the community, which we haven't done before. We're also getting help on the choreography—that's something we've never had in a show before: dancing. We have a huge cast—20 people, that's twice the size of our first production, *Under Milkwood*. We have students from the first year classes involved, which is again something else we've never done before.

Cap Theatre will be presenting, on March 26, 27 and 28, its most ambitious project to date: the one-act play by Tennessee Williams, *Ten Blocks on the Camino Real*. The play will be performed at Presentation House 333 Chesterfield Avenue, at 8:30. Tickets are available in advance from the Humanities Division for \$3.00. At the door they are \$4.00. As the play has a limited engagement it is suggested that tickets be purchased well in advance.