


PAPA/Provincetown
Theatre **Company**
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Welcome to THE NIGHT OF THE IGUANA, the Third show of our 23rd Season. With the support of our members, you the audience, the Provincetown Art Association and Museum, our contributors and supporters, and the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities, we hope to make this one of our most productive and successful seasons.

It is with sadness and pride that we dedicate this season to Nicky Wells, our friend, patron and supporter. It was Nicky and Ray Martan Wells who brought our dream of a year-round home for the performing arts closer to reality with their generous donation of land.

Our next production will be an original play THE MIRROR DARKENS, written by company member Frederick Glover, opening April 3. Please come share it with us. Meanwhile, enjoy the show!



P.A.P.A.'s future home.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Stuart Bishop
Patty Cozzi
J. Tobias Everett
Laura Green

Max Reagan
Larry Riley
Alix Ritchie
Paula Schuppert

Please remember that PAPA/PTC is a community organization. We welcome new members, new ideas, new energy. You can help on stage, backstage, on committees, in administration — almost everywhere. We invite your participation and support. Please call us at 487-3146.

The P.A.P.A./Provincetown Theatre Company's 1985-86 Season is funded in part by the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities, a state agency, whose funds are recommended by the Governor and the legislature.

PAPA/
Provincetown Theatre Company
presents/
The Night of the Iguana/



LOVETT 86

**Provincetown
Theatre Company**
inc.

The Performing Arm of P.A.P.A.,
The Provincetown Academy of the Performing Arts and Museum

In the Spring of 1963, the Provincetown Theatre Workshop presented its first production in the Parish House of St. Mary of the Harbor. The group had formed earlier that winter, when some twenty local residents were spontaneously drawn together by their mutual interest in drama.

On the program that night were Chekhov's "The Anniversary" and an original fantasy, "Circles in the Snow," by Workshop member Connie Black—a combination that presaged much of our future work.

From this quiet but successful beginning, the Provincetown Theatre Company has grown, and is soon to begin a new journey as the Provincetown Academy of the Performing Arts and Museum (PAPA).

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The next winter, the group moved to the Provincetown Art Association, built a stage in the storeroom and produced two more original dramas. For the next nine winters, we continued to write, direct and act in our own productions. The group also produced a wide selection of plays from theatres all over the world, plus two original revues on the theme of "What do you do in Provincetown in the Winter?" which brought the entire town to its feet.

Then as now, the group consisted of a creative mix of professional, semi-professional and dedicated amateur artists. The Workshop approach has continued to provide the bridge between the fostering of original work by new playwrights, the learning of classical theatre techniques for actors and directors, and the performance of both.

In the years that followed, new talent came to light and a number of exciting productions ensued, with the Company's work continuing to be a mixture of existing material, original adaptations and new plays. The 1978-79 season, for instance, saw both the world premiere of "Snapshot" by Ralph Frederick and the musical "Eva Braun," written and directed by Charles Horne and James Bennet. In subsequent seasons, we offered original works by three Provincetown playwrights, including "Beyond the Revolt of Mamie Stover," "November Twice" and "Horizon Lines," plus a number of creatively successful productions of contemporary plays and musicals, even an all-community version of "A Christmas Carol." We continued to sponsor seminars and workshops in pursuit of learning and excellence in the theatre arts.

With the beginning of the 1982-83 season, the Company returned to the Provincetown Art Association and Museum as its permanent winter home from October to May. The two organizations support each other fully and cooperate in many cultural efforts. The existence of a consistent space

in which to work and perform has allowed us to enhance our productions, plan our seasons and expand our horizons. That has included the debut last season of the PTC SECOND STAGE series, which is specifically devoted to the development and performance of new and experimental work.

Thus we have continued our goals of sponsoring new playwrights, new directors and experimental theatre as well as performing the classics and contemporary plays. Symbolic of this commitment was last season's "A Provincetown Evening / 3 Plays" featuring works by two well-known Provincetown playwrights (Glaspell and Williams) and a new playwright, Frederic Glover, whose play "The Mirror Darkens" about the Provincetown Players will close this season. This year, just as we have since our inception 23 years ago, the PTC looks upon furthering Provincetown's unique theatrical heritage and fostering new works as part of its community theatre mission.

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1984 marked a new milestone in the history of the Company and in its commitment to the community. We celebrated the birth of PAPA — The Provincetown Academy of the Performing Arts and Museum — and a gift of land from long-time Company members Nicky and Ray Martan Wells on which to build a theatre school and performance facility. PAPA is devoted to the learning, performing and general fostering of the theatrical arts, and the Provincetown Theatre Company will continue as its performing arm, providing community theatre and a home for new works as it has for the past 23 years.

The PAPA theatre and learning facility will be a community-based center for the performing arts. It will be open to all, and will seek to advance the interests of the arts and the Lower Cape community jointly. Educational programs will nourish the community and the arts, providing a training ground in the theatrical disciplines and continuing the workshop tradition which has for so long been a part of our heritage. The theatre area itself is expected to provide flexible seating in the 50-200 seat range. Our Building Fund is already underway, and we welcome your donations. (Your gifts are tax deductible.)

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Most of all, neither our history nor our future could exist without your participation. Theatre, especially community theatre, is a collaborative and social art. So in this, our 23rd season, come work with us, enjoy our plays, support us. We are your theatre!

**P.A.P.A./
PROVINCETOWN
THEATRE COMPANY**

Nov. 7 — 24

LA RONDE

Jan. 2 — 19

**A FUNNY THING HAPPENED
ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM**

Feb. 13 — Mar. 2

THE NIGHT OF THE IGUANA

April 3 — 20

THE MIRROR DARKENS

460 COMMERCIAL STREET

TICKETS/INFORMATION: 487-2695, 487-3466

review

theatre

'The Night of the Iguana': anguish in paradise

The Night of the Iguana by Tennessee Williams. Directed by Max Reagan. Performances held Thursday through Saturday, Feb. 20 - 23 and Feb. 27 - March 2, 8 pm at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum, 460 Commercial St., Provincetown. A Provincetown Theatre Company production. Info and ticket reservations: 487-2695.

Tennessee Williams' Tony Award winning play is set in a run-down hotel off the tourist path in a West Mexico rain forest. The set designed by Richard Smith for this production is gorgeous in its lushness. Huge, bright flowers and trees make it a virtual paradise. As in so many of Williams' works, however, there is danger in beauty and pleasure; and this paradise is filled with human anguish.

It is within these boundaries that a defrocked minister, a sexually insatiable widow and a Nantucket spinster learn that God is a "cruel, senile old delinquent" at whose mercy we helplessly lie. It is only through human kindness, through emotional contact that we find meaning in our lives.

Maxine, played by Karyn Lebel, is the recent widow of a game fisherman who retired to the tropics. She now runs their hotel, seemingly untouched by her husband's death. She lives for the sexual satisfaction which is provided by her hired native help.

She gladly accomodates busloads of Bible-toting Texans, led off the main sight-seeing route by a divinely-inspired tour guide, The Reverend T. Lawrence Shannon. He in turn receives a kick-back, all the rum cocoas he can hold and the innkeeper's affection.

His sanity is rocked on one particular trip when he seduces 16-year-old soprano Charlotte Goodall on tour with his latest group, the Baptist Ladies' College Ensemble.

What ensues afterward is a struggle for power and the tour bus key between Shannon and self-appointed group leader Miss Judith Fellowes (played beautifully by Melissa Becker), when she finds out what he's done.

Shannon is in no condition for a battle of wills; he lost his nerve about the time he lost his church back in Virginia, having seduced one of his young parishioners. He is a priest without faith and a man without direction. Maxine tries to soothe him with booze and sex, but he is inconsolable, haunted by his personal spook.

Into the midst of this heat and passion and anxiety comes



photo by Frederick M. Henley

Karyn Lebel and Kevin Shenk in 'The Night of the Iguana'

Hannah Jelkes (Kevin Shenk) is a quick sketch artist who travels the world, working the hotel circuit with her grandfather Nonno (Jim Forsberg). Together they hustle to sell a poem here and a watercolor there. They have been around the world many times over and have always made, she says, "expenses and a little more."

Their luck runs dry when Nonno suffers a series of strokes, loses his memory, and is unable to finish his final poem, the first he's attempted to write in 20 years.

Shenk's portrayal of Jelkes is letter-perfect and that is disconcerting. She is so prim through so many vile instances that we lose sympathy for her. Williams seems unsure whether or not he likes her. She is not like most people. His sympathies lean more toward the real and passionate.

Although the play is not light-hearted, there are some

to date. He seems to have an affinity for Williams. He understands Williams' poetic cadences naturally. The language rolls off his tongue easily and eloquently. His passion is tangible.

Maxine needs to be the woman to heal Shannon's tortured soul. Lebel's characterization is both tough and touching. She reaches out through sex and we sympathize with her desperation.

Eileen Kelly, as the young seduced Charlotte Goodall, has a haunting way of braying "Larry" at Shannon. It is a voice sure to haunt his dreams.

This is a complex and very long story, but it comes off beautifully because the ensemble handles the material professionally. They do not take Williams too seriously and let his sarcastic humor shine through.

Change of pace for theater company

'Iguana' is intense, h

By Caren Chesler

The Provincetown Theater Company's production of Tennessee Williams's *The Night of the Iguana* may be worth seeing for those who don't mind being shouted at, amused every now and then, and leaving the theater somewhat depressed.

The play is heavy. The intensity is something very different from the theater company's first two productions this season, *La Ronde*, and *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*.

Most plays have a powerhouse character. Valerie Santuccio stole the show in *A Funny Thing*. Bill Meves undoubtedly wins the honor in the Williams's play for his performance of the deeply disturbed Reverend T. Lawrence Shannon.

The play is a few days in the life of the morally decaying, defrocked minister, Shannon, and his brief encounter with hope, incarnated in Hannah Jelkes, a New England spinster, played by Kevin Shenk.

Shannon has retreated to the Costa Verde, a hotel in the tropical jungle of Puerto Barrio, Mexico, to have an emotional breakdown, not his first, as the hotel manager, Maxine Faulk, played by Karyn Lebel, points out.

The play opens with Shannon as a tour guide for a busload of women from the Baptist Female College in Texas. He stops at the hotel seeking the companionship of his friend, Fred, Maxine's husband. But he finds that Fred is dead and Maxine has many lovers and would like nothing more than to make him one of them.

Hannah stumbles upon the hotel with her incapacitated grandfather, played by Jim Forsberg, a poet, who has recently suffered a stroke. The two have always travelled together and made money through the sale of watercolors that



Karyn Lebel, Bill Meves and Randy Roderick

Hannah paints and through her grandfather's recitations of his poetry.

For Shannon, Hannah is a glimmer of hope, if only temporary. For Maxine, Shannon is a welcome lover and companion. And for Tennessee Williams, Shannon is a typical character wallowing in self-deception and self-deprecation.

There are several ways to characterize despair and self destruction. The actor can use the more passive devices, such as quiet catatonia or nonsensical babbling, or he can play a more active role,

through violence or shouting. Meves uses the latter in his characterization of Shannon.

He delivers his lines as a man on the fringe of reality and lunacy, shouting hysterically throughout most of the play until his face is red and his breathing is strained. He is so relentless, one wonders if he collapses after each performance. He is superb.

Sometimes actors portray their characters too intensely. It can make the difference between drama and sensa-

tional melodrama, or a witty comedy and sloppy slapstick. Williams leaves little room for hyperbole because his material is intrinsically depressing.

Meves is an exception. Within the first five minutes of the play, Meves is yelling and wildly gesticulating, almost to the point where one wonders if turning his ear will lower the volume. But once the audience becomes desensitized to his shouting, the true pathos of his character becomes apparent.

Shannon deludes himself that he is still with the church, despite his anger and confusion about God and an occasional sexual encounter with jailbait. He was locked out of the church for shouting atheistic sermons to his congregation and seducing young girls. Throughout the play a ridiculously large gold cross hangs from his neck that glows whenever the stage lights hit it.

In one scene, Miss Judith Fellowes, played by Melissa Becker, leader of the girls on tour, and Jake Latta, a tour guide, played by Doug Best, sent by Blake Tours to replace Shannon, accuse him of being a fraud impersonating a minister.

After Shannon is fired from the company, he hangs over the verandah and watches the tour bus leave.

"There go my ladies, the last of my, ha, ha, ladies," he says. He then screams and tugs at the cross around his neck, trying to rip it off.

"Mr. Shannon, stop that!" Hannah screams, attempting to take Shannon's hands from the chain so that she can unclasp it.

"No, no, it won't come off, I'll have to break it off me," he says.

By this scene, Meves has clearly established his character's unstable state. Shannon is in pain and the audience wants nothing more than to help him.

Shenk, in the role of Hannah, unfor-

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'Iguana' is intense, heavy

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unately fell into the trap of sap. Shenk usually adds a touch of professionalism to community theater, having worked on Broadway and TV from age 6, as well as several local productions including PTC's A Thurber Carnival, where she was nominated for best supporting actress by The Association for Community Theatre Excellence.

But Shenk's performance as a "New England spinster who is pushing forty," is played too much like Dorothy in The Wizard of Oz.

It is most difficult to see her as a rock-like support for Shannon in his failing mental state when she cries as much as she does in the second act.

On the other hand, Forsberg as her grandfather, Nonno, was outstanding. Nonno is a truly lovable old man, who has lost what appear to have been keen mental faculties due to a stroke, but struggles to finish his last poem nonetheless.

"Hannah, tell the lady that my perambulator is temporary. I will soon be ready to crawl and then toddle and before long I will be leaping around here like an old mountain goat, ha, ha, ha," Forsberg

says from his wheelchair.

Forsberg's senility is believable and his tremors are realistic. One can't help but fall in love with the old geezer and thoroughly understand why Hannah would devote her life to doting on him.

Lebel performance seemed a little overdone. Her husky voice and long just-got-out-of-bed hairdo were appropro for the vampy Maxine, but she delivered all her lines in a stance that looked like she just got off a horse.

She, too, received an ACTE nomination for best supporting actress in A Thurber Carnival. Becker, as Judith Fellowes, was a class act. She played her role as shepherd of the girls' school like a "bull elephant on a rampage," as Shannon put it, or a favorite drill sergeant.

The set, designed by Richard Smith, should not go unmentioned, because it worked. Smith and his wife, Ewa Nogiec-Smith, painted walls of jungle and lush tropical plants and Meike Spierenburg's soft sculpture flowers added dimension. The verandah, equipped with hammock, was built by Peter Shenk and Donald Beal. The characters needed only to fan their faces for the audience to believe the stage was set in the heat of Mexico.





