



IN THE HANDS OF A MASTER STORYTELLER

Renowned lighting designer puts himself in the hands of Tennessee Williams for his directing MFA

For Alan Brodie, the highly acclaimed Canadian lighting designer and now MFA directing candidate, his second opportunity to work on Tennessee Williams' classic *Summer and Smoke* is casting the play in a whole new light.

Brodie received accolades for his lighting design when the play was produced at the Shaw Festival in 2007. Now, as he works towards his master's degree in directing at UVic's Department of Theatre, Brodie brings his own vision of *Summer and Smoke* to the stage for the **Phoenix Theatre, running March 10-19, 2016.**

An Off-Broadway hit in 1952, Williams' play is set in the fictional small town of Glorious Hill, Mississippi, where carnal instincts and social propriety are at odds in Miss Alma, the daughter of a minister and an eccentric mother. She harbours a life-long infatuation with her restless and self-indulgent neighbour, John. Their bittersweet relationship – a quintessential struggle between body and spirit – circles them around a moral compass that leads to profound changes in both their lives.

In selecting *Summer and Smoke*, Brodie heeded the advice of his Masters supervisor, professor Brian Richmond, to put himself in the hands of a master storyteller. "I knew I wanted to direct something from the canon of the 20th Century American Drama, and the work of Tennessee Williams loomed large at every turn." Although *Summer and Smoke* is not the best-known of Williams' work, the playwright himself commented that its central character, "may very well be the best female portrait I have drawn in a play." "In researching *Summer and Smoke's* first production, I grew fascinated by Williams' embryonic, but later discarded ideas, to incorporate poetic, film-like elements into the show," commented Brodie. "For me, this is what getting my MFA is all about. Even with years in the theatre business, this MFA is giving me the opportunity to do essential research and consider all the facets of bringing a compelling vision of a classic to the stage." Renowned across Canada and the US, Brodie has received 10 Jessie Richardson awards, a Sterling Award, a Betty Mitchell Award, an Ovation Award, a Victoria Critic's Choice Spotlight Award and a Bay Area Theatre Critics' Circle Award for his work as a lighting designer. In 2012 he was shortlisted for the Siminovitch Prize in Theatre, Canada's most prestigious theatre award.

Brodie explores the American master's play with a cast of 14 theatre students and a talented creative team. Graduating student and costume designer **Tim Matthews** has rendered the fashion of Mississippi in 1916, referencing the divergent styles of the corseted, conservative older women, and the more free-flowing, progressive styles of younger women. In her final spring at the department, **Laura-Jane Wallace** has created sound designs that transport us audibly into the heat of the south. Composer and UVic's School of Music student, **Michael Chambers**, supports each character's development with a new score for the play. Lighting designer and MFA candidate **Eryn Griffith** has the benefit of working with two expert lighting designers – the director and the set designer – as all work to create opportunities for the Mississippi light to shine through. **Barbara Clerihue** is the stage manager.

With a bittersweetness suitable to the play itself, *Summer and Smoke* marks theatre professor **Allan Stichbury's** final set design for the Phoenix Theatre before his retirement this summer. Cleverly utilizing a revolving stage, his set design allows for the various locations of different scenes to be front-and-centre to the audience. Allan Stichbury has taught at UVic since 1988, while balancing a successful international career as a professional designer. Recently, Stichbury was influential in establishing the student exchange program between Bangkok University and UVic.

Director Alan Brodie will discuss his research into Tennessee Williams and his direction for *Summer and Smoke* on **Friday, March 11 at 7pm.** This free lecture is open to all (no matter which night you have tickets for) and will be recorded for podcast. The matinee on **Saturday March 19 at 2pm** features **Sign Language Interpretation** for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Performances for *Summer and Smoke* run as follows:

Public Previews @8pm: March 8 & 9

Evenings @8pm: (Mondays to Saturdays) March 10 (opening), 11 (with preshow lecture), 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19
***Matinee @2pm:** Saturday, March 19 * with Sign Language Interpretation

Preshow Lecture @7pm: Friday, March 12 with Director Alan Brodie

Sign Language Interpretation: Saturday, March 19 at 2pm with Nigel Howard and Jen Ferris.

Single Tickets: \$15 Student, \$20 Senior, \$25 Adult, \$25 Weekends@8pm, (Preview: \$7.50 after 5pm on show day)

Phoenix Box Office Opens: March 1 in person or by calling: **(250) 721-8000.**

Summer and Smoke

March 10 – 19, 2016

By Tennessee Williams

One woman's passionate and bittersweet story of love and longing in a small southern town.

Directed by Alan Brodie (MFA Candidate)

Set Designer: Allan Stichbury

Costume Designer: Tim Matthews

Lighting Designer: Eryn Griffith

Sound Designer: Laura-Jane Wallace

Composer: Michael Chambers

Dialect Coach: Iris MacGregor-Bannerman

Stage Manager: Barbara Clerihue

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