



WORST OF WILLIAMS: (left to right) Amanda Plummer & Brad Dourif in Tennessee Williams' dreadful 'Two-Character Play'. Photo: Carol Rosegg

Zero (0) stars

Theater Review

Two-Character Play: One of Tennessee Williams' worst

THE TWO-CHARACTER PLAY

By Tennessee Williams

Directed by Gene David Kirk

The World Stages 5

340 West 50th Street

(212-239-6200), <http://thetwocharacterplay.com/>

By David NouNou

In a one sheet description/explanation inserted into the Playbill, it states that “Williams often referred to *The Two-Character Play* as one of his most important works having said 'It is my best play since *Cat*. Maybe better' and calling it his 'most personal play, a *cri de coeur*, and also “my most beautiful play since *Streetcar*.’” I don't know what drugs or delusional high he was on when he made that statement, but whatever he was under the influence of, I wished I was on as well to make my “sit-through” more bearable.

Originally titled *Out Cry*, it opened on March 1, 1973 to scathing reviews and lasted only 13 performances. I remember seeing it at the Lyceum Theatre with Michael York and Cara Duff-McCormack. I know I hated it then but, being a Tennessee Williams fan, I attributed it to my youth. I thought as one gets older, one's viewpoint changes with age. So, when this revival came around, I had to see it. Well, guess what? I'm 40 years older and realized youth had nothing to do with it. When you hear pointless blathering, it's still blathering at any age.

The two characters in this play are brother Felice (Brad Dourif) and sister Clare (Amanda Plummer). They are an acting team that has been abandoned by their troupe while on tour. They are in an unspecified locale before, during and after a performance of a play that Felice has written. The play reflects on their own past. We are to believe that, during the performance, reality and illusion blur. When too much truth comes out in the play and is unacceptable to them, they have a way of altering it to suit their needs. They are haunted by their fears of loneliness, confinement and definitely the loss of their sanity.

Ms. Plummer and Mr. Dourif certainly emote; they do try but it is a futile losing battle because the script is so undisciplined and absurd. Had this been written in the 1930s with its Pirandellian

style, it might have generated some curiosity. But as written in 1973 or 2013, it reeks of someone smoking pot and thinking every line written is a masterpiece, because how else could Williams have made such a ludicrous comment about this play?

One can't help but wonder how much influence Elia Kazan must have had on Mr. Williams' success with his better-known plays such as: *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Cat On A Hot Tin Roof*, *Camino Real*, *Sweet Bird Of Youth* and more. Would he have been able to write the classics he wrote had Mr. Kazan not been his director, insisting on rewrites and more rewrites?

I know there are college courses that make you read and discuss the best and the worst of contemporary playwrights. Tennessee Williams would be high on the list; we know what his best are, and they are constantly revived. However, toward the last 20 years of his life, he really wrote some epic bombs: *Period of Adjustment*, *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore*, *The Seven Descents of Myrtle*, *Vieux Carre*, among others, but his nadir has got to be *Out Cry/The Two-Character Play*, because no matter what title it uses, this is the play that should be discussed about how the mighty can fall and how deep they can sink. This is the most lugubrious and possibly the worst play he ever wrote.

Edited by Scott Harrah

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