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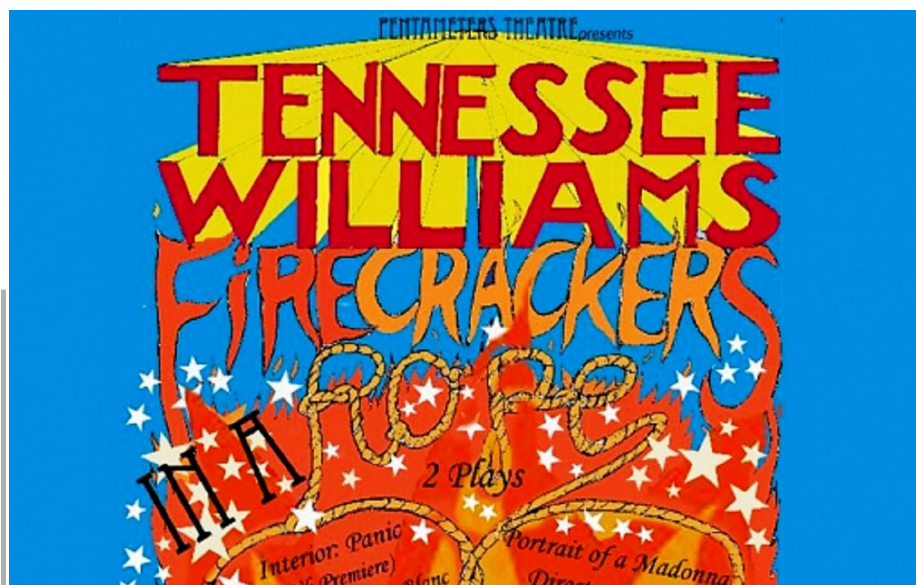
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Tennessee Williams' Interior: Panic and Portrait of a Madonna at Pentameters

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Published: 21 March, 2013
 by CATHERINE GOWERS

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS FIRECRACKERS IN A ROPE Pentameters Theatre

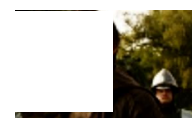
THE intimate setting of Pentameters Theatre plays host to some of the rarely performed one-act plays of the great American playwright Tennessee Williams: *Interior: Panic* (1946) and *Portrait of a Madonna* (1941, revised 1944).

Written before *A Streetcar Named Desire*, both plays focus on distressed southern belles who are plagued by mental illness, but with very different consequences.

Interior: Panic tells the story of the troubled Blanche Shannon (Jaymie Addicott), who has come to live with her younger sister Grace (Clare Harlow), and Grace's husband Jack (Harry Anton).

The sisters' close relationship is being shaken by Blanche's erratic behaviour and seeming descent into madness, as Grace struggles to help her.

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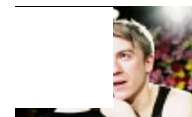
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The cramped setting of the New Orleans household is perfectly presented by the cleverly detailed staging. The increasing household issues create a fantastically tense atmosphere.

The performances are outstanding throughout, and Addicott is intriguing to watch, producing a wide-eyed, shaking portrayal of a woman who veers between awareness and denial of her mental state.

Portrait of a Madonna features Miss Lucretia Collins (Victoria Kempton), an aged southern belle who is convinced that the man she once loved, Richard, is sneaking into her flat every night.

Having received a call from Miss Collins, the manager (Seamus Newham) sends the porter (Dermot Dolan) and the elevator boy (Liam Nooney) to investigate the matter.

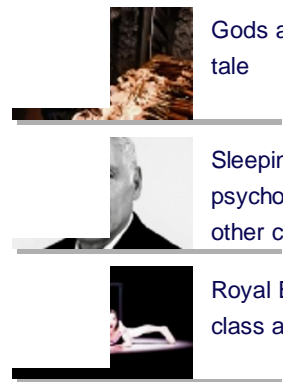
The cluttered flat sets the scene for a play which is at times comedic, and at others melancholic. Kempton is an excellent lead, drawing both innocence and worldly knowledge from her character.

Dolan and Nooney provide excellent contrasts to one another, with their respectively compassionate and mocking responses to Miss Collins's tales.

Both plays successfully provide moving portrayals of women who have lost their grip on reality, and the fates which they succumb to.

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