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## Martin Returns to THT with The Glass Menagerie

By Sophie Braccini



El Beh plays Laura (forefront), Heidi Abbott plays Amanda (left) and Aleph Ayin is Tom in Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* Photo Stu Selland

actors bring immediacy to this play, their work is so present that it becomes visceral and alive. I needed four people who were going to dive in. They are not a traditional casting, but they are the best people for the play."

Aleph Ayin's Tom is raw, uncensored, with an internal violence that burst at times. "I am boiling inside," he says in the play, and the spectator senses it. His mother Amanda, played by Heidi Abbott, is there right alongside him. During rehearsal, Abbott encouraged Ayin to act out his emotions, "Making it physical breaks down what was getting in the way of really hearing it," she said.

Martin trusts her actors but pushes them to question Williams' every intention behind every word. "The play is impeccably structured, everything is intentional," she says, "but it is not a realistic play, it is between realistic and expressionist." The play is narrated in the past from the son's point of view; is he rewriting history, wanting to do things differently? At times a ghost seems to pull a veil over the scene and for a second the actors are suspended in time. The slight lapse in time adds to the charm and mystery of the play.

Laura, played by El Beh, and Jim, played by Michael Perez, form a very believable tandem of characters. She is fragile, and extremely touching, while Perez portrays with determination the young American blessed with optimism. Abbott obviously enjoys exploring the many facets of the great iconic mother character, Amanda.

"It is a great pleasure to work on a play written by such a master of language," said Ayin, "every comma matters, there is no gap, everything is meaningful and timeless. It's an unlimited world opening to you."

The enthusiasm and the energy that this group of young actors brings to the play should make this performance one of Town Hall Theater's big successes. "Susannah and I talked a lot early on about not wanting this play to feel like a museum piece - something that can happen when people approach such an iconic piece of classic theater," said Worsley, "But rather we wanted to concentrate on what in the play is relevant to contemporary audiences and find ways to make the play feel real and alive for us today. The works of Williams have been branded on the American psyche and have become part of our emotional lexicon, tools that we use to explore and understand ourselves and the world around us. We're confident that our audiences will be delighted and moved by this brilliant script and thoughtful production."

*The Glass Menagerie* will be at the Town Hall Theater from February 19 to March 19, with previews on February 17 and 18, at 3535 School Street in Lafayette. The shadow cast composed of teen actors will perform on February 27 and March 5. For tickets, call the box office at 283-1557 or go to [www.TownHallTheatre.com](http://www.TownHallTheatre.com).

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