



"*Ensemble 2.0* is one of my favorite one-weekend only shows. The second iteration of a staged reading, developed by and for the St. Louis Festival, the show presents the letters of Tennessee Williams, his family members, and a few others, as narrated and guided by Williams' long-time agent and friend. Kari Ely, as the agent, and Paul Cereghino, as a young Tennessee Williams, anchor a solid cast. The staged reading is vibrant and the entire Williams family are articulate writers. Even when they turn quarrelsome and peevish it's interesting, oddly but pleasantly formal to modern ears, and always well penned.

Ely's agent provides the necessary exposition, as well as injecting personal observation, in a finely tuned performance that keeps the family drama at a skillfully tactful arms' length. She's personable and clearly fond of the entire Williams clan, but always with a critical, somewhat analytical eye. Cereghino exudes passionate energy and youthful disdain with an astute reading of Williams' often purposeful turns of phrase. Characteristically lacking remorse, he delivers an emotionally connected and transparent interpretation of Williams that captivates.

The show is bookended with music from composer and accompanist Tor Hyams and vocalist Lisa Rothauser. The effect is splendidly theatrical, taking us into and out of a world of letters through a score with a sense of Sondheim that draws you in. Rothauser capably translates Hyams' songs into something almost poetic. A combination of rhythm, melody, and lyrics that suits Williams' tense, sultry work and playfully sensual disposition. The dramatic reading with music leaves me wanting a version 3.0 in 2018."

~Tina Farmer, KDHX Media