

'Last Summer' is in Northwest Philadelphia during the winter

by Rita Charleston

A prominent southern family mourns the sudden and unexpected loss of its only son, Sebastian. The genteel murmur of a mother's sorrow cannot mask the whispers of doubt and secrets held by his cousin Catherine. She was there. She saw what happened to the beloved Sebastian. But if his mother has her way, what Catherine saw will be cut from her brain forever.

Written for the stage by Tennessee Williams in 1958, "Suddenly Last Summer" was adapted into a 1959 film starring Elizabeth Taylor, Montgomery Clift and Katharine Hepburn and has long been viewed as one of the most poetic and shocking plays of Williams' career.

This production, presented by Old Academy Players, 3544 Indian Queen Lane in East Falls and directed by Rob Rosiello, runs through Sunday, March 19. Rosiello, who admits he has a special spot in his heart for the works of Williams, originally intended to become a writer. But roles in several musicals in high school quickly changed his mind.

"My first show was 'George M.' Next I did 'Annie.' And by the time I was a senior, I had a lead role in 'Pajama Game.' That's when I realized I could do both acting and playwriting, creating a marriage of sorts between the two things I really loved."

So after graduation it was off to the College of New Jersey to study theater, then to Villanova University for his Master's Degree in Theater. And he says he's been involved in theater continuously ever since. "And while I don't do musicals much anymore, several years ago I did 'The Robber Baron.' I've also directed a production of 'Grand Hotel,' and last year worked on 'Company.' So I still keep a foot in the musical door but not as much as I used to."

Wearing many hats and claiming he loves them all, Rosiello, who asked that his age not be mentioned, was last seen on stage as Alfred Lunt in "Ten Chim-



The Tennessee Williams classic, directed by Rob Rosiello (seen here), runs through Sunday, March 19.

neys." Some of his directing credits include "The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe" and "Love! Valour! Compassion!" among others. He was a

member of the Barrymore award-winning ensemble of "Angels in America," taught theater at Montgomery County Community College and served as a teaching assistant in playwriting at Primary Stage Off-Broadway Theater in New York City.

Additionally, Rosiello produced the national tour for the winner of the first five seasons of "RuPaul's Drag Race." His next project will be directing "The Laramie Project" at Town and Country Players in Doylestown, where he currently serves as the president.

But for now, Rosiello says he chose "Suddenly Last Summer" because he's always loved mysteries. "Growing up, I was a huge fan of Agatha Christie, and I've always loved the subtle family mysteries I find in all of Williams' plays. 'Suddenly' is not done very often, so it's a great opportunity for me to tell the story my way. I think this play and our production are challenging, beautiful and a great opportunity for some really great theater."

Tickets are \$15. More information at 215-843-1109 or <https://oldacademyplayers.org>.