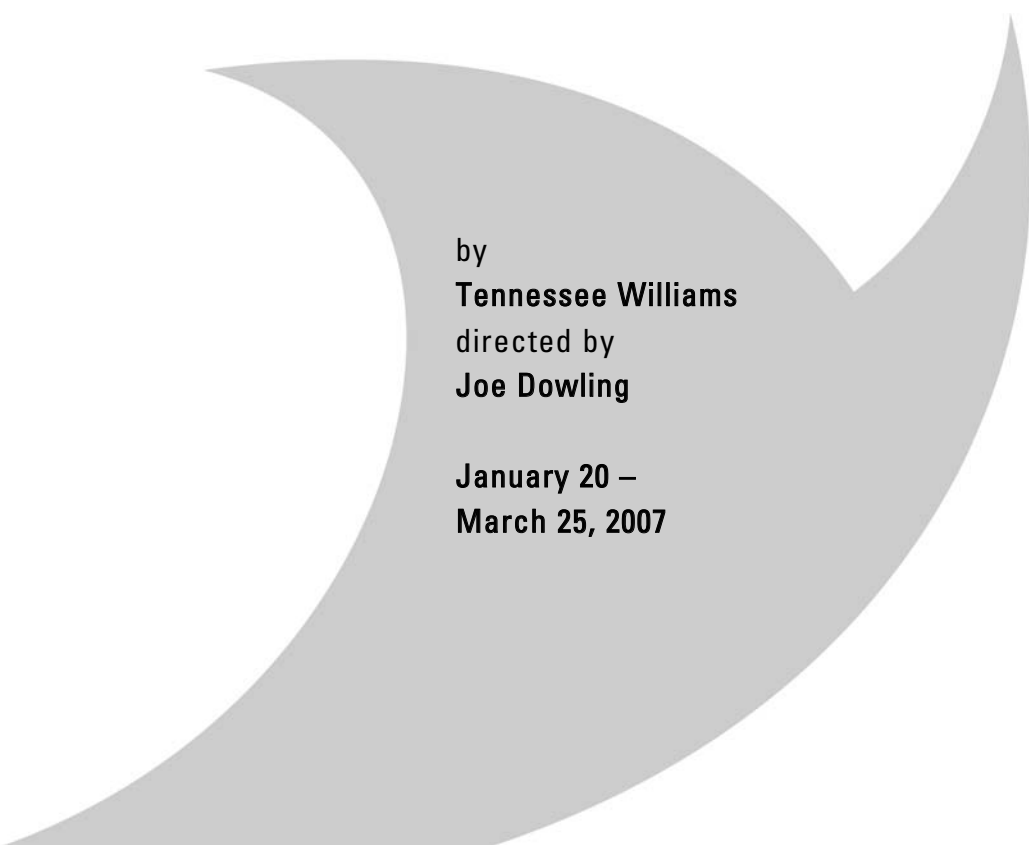


STUDY GUIDE

THE GLASS MENAGERIE



by
Tennessee Williams
directed by
Joe Dowling

**January 20 –
March 25, 2007**

**Study Guide Last Updated:
January 31, 2007**

Guthrie Theater

818 South 2nd Street Minneapolis, MN 55415

Joe Dowling Director

THE GLASS MENAGERIE

by Tennessee Williams

directed by Joe Dowling

This production is sponsored by Ameriprise Financial.

A Study Guide published by the Guthrie Theater

Editor/Dramaturg: Jo Holcomb

Research: Jo Holcomb

Produced with the support of:

Sheila Livingston, Jacque Frazzini, Catherine McGuire, Patricia Vaillancourt

All rights reserved. With the exception of classroom use by teachers, no part of this Study Guide may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying or recording, or by an information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers. Some materials published herein are written especially for our Guide. Others are reprinted by permission of their publishers.

Study guides are made possible by



Children's **Foundation**

The Guthrie Theater receives support from the National Endowment for the Arts. This activity is made possible in part by the Minnesota State Arts Board, through an appropriation by the Minnesota State Legislature. The Minnesota State Arts Board received additional funds to support this activity from the National Endowment for the Arts.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

STUDY GUIDE

THE PLAY

Synopsis and About the Play	4
Letter on <i>The Glass Menagerie</i> by Tennessee Williams	6
I am More Faithful than I Intended to Be by Edwina Dakin Williams	7
Immortal Shadows by Stark Young	9
The Sum of the Season by Rosamond Gilder	9
Production Note: <i>The Glass Menagerie</i>	10

CHRONOLOGY

A Chronology of the Life of Tennessee Williams	11
Timeline of the Play	21

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Flood of Remembrance	22
The 1930s, A Montage by Frederick Lewis Allen	23
A Special Kind of History by Charles Nolte	25

GLOSSARY

A Glossary of Words and Phrases Found in the Play	28
---	----

THE GUTHRIE PRODUCTION

Notes from director Joe Dowling	30
Notes from set designer Richard Hoover	31
Notes from costume designer Ann Hould-Ward	32
Notes from lighting designer Jane Cox	33
Building the Production: Backstage Information about <i>The Glass Menagerie</i>	33

QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Suggested Questions	37
Classroom Activities	38

Synopsis and About the Play

The Glass Menagerie begins as Tom Wingfield introduces himself and the text as a play told from his memory. He becomes both the narrator of the story and a main character in the action as he introduces the other characters. Tom is the sole breadwinner for the Wingfield family; his father deserted the family sixteen years earlier (a telephone man who fell in love with long distances). Tom's mother, Amanda, was left alone to raise him and his sister Laura. Tom joins the action of the play and his mother and sister at dinner. Over the course of the evening, Amanda learns that Laura, afraid of confronting her mother, has been deceiving her and "wasting precious money." Instead of attending Rubicam's Business College as expected, Laura has been taking walks in the park and visiting museums to avoid school, and the nervous indigestion it gives her. Fraught with frustration, Amanda decides the only course for Laura is to get married. Amanda asks her if there is any boy in particular in which she has interest, and Laura reveals that she used to have a crush on Jim O'Connor, the high school hero; but she does not know what has happened to him. Later that evening, after an argument between Amanda and Tom, Amanda seizes the opportunity and moment alone to ask Tom to bring home some male friends to meet Laura. Tom promises to try his best. A few days later, Tom tells Amanda that a colleague of his, Jim O'Connor, is coming over the next evening for dinner. Amanda is delighted; she makes frenzied, elaborate preparations, and attends to every detail of Laura's appearance. When Laura learns that the guest is Jim O'Connor, she tells her mother that she will not be able to face him. She is so nervous about the young man's arrival that she becomes sick; she begs to be excused before Jim arrives. Amanda, however, will stand no refusals and forces Laura to answer the door when the guest arrives. Laura's debilitating fear becomes so intense that she is unable to join the others for dinner.

After dinner, Amanda asks Tom to help her wash the dishes and sends Jim to the living room to be with Laura. Under Jim's warm and charismatic influence, Laura overcomes her nerves and the two enjoy each other's company and conversation. There is a mutual attraction and Jim kisses Laura. Whereupon, Jim quickly reveals that he is engaged to be married and apologizes for his hasty actions. When Amanda reenters the scene, Jim discloses his engagement to her, as well. Amanda rashly blames Tom for playing a cruel joke on them by bringing over an engaged man. Tom defends himself, saying that he had no idea that Jim was engaged. At the end of the play, Tom takes on the role of narrator again. He has left home to pursue his dreams of adventure. He wrestles with the guilt of deserting his mother and sister, not unlike his father had done previously. Unable to forgive himself, *Glass Menagerie* is Tom's reckoning with his decision and its emotional and psychological repercussions.

With *The Glass Menagerie*, Tennessee Williams crafted a drama that not only transformed the landscape of American theater but also introduced us to some of the most powerful and resonant characters ever to be realized on stage: Amanda, the determined, suffocating mother, a southern belle whose own disappointments fuel her desire to create a different life for her children; Laura, whose disabling shyness compels her to retreat into a private world populated with delicate glass creatures and old phonograph records; Jim O'Connor, the much-anticipated gentleman caller, a high school success story struggling to live up to his past; and Tom, the stand-in for the author himself, the frustrated writer caught between his sense of obligation to his mother and sister and his own passionate need to escape from the tedium of the workaday world to a place of adventure and fulfillment. These characters, quite apart from the play they inhabit, have become a part of our cultural lexicon and they continue to capture the imagination of audiences, actors, directors and other writers, who look to them as the

embodiment of desire and frustrated dreams.

While much of what we know and remember about *The Glass Menagerie* has to do with the stunning honesty and vulnerability with which Williams crafts his characters — all based on the writer's own difficult and damaged family — what is perhaps most surprising is the relevance of the particular historical and sociological circumstances which are revealed through the voice of Tom as the narrator. The play, written during the final years of the Second World War but set during the time of the Spanish Civil War, begins not with an immediate description of the women whom Tom both loves and craves to escape, but rather with a short treatise on its historical moment: Tom dreams of shedding the monotony and slow death of his factory job and family responsibilities for the adventure promised by a life in the Merchant Marines. But Tom also recognizes the constraints placed on his desires. Part of the huge, disappointed and disillusioned middle class whose dreams had dissolved before its eyes during the Great Depression, Tom recognizes that his options for adventure are limited. Even Jim O'Conner, the gentleman caller who offers the one ray of hope for this struggling family, has been forced to curtail his dreams. The setting itself is also a reflection of the play's social and political landscape. He describes the Wingfields' apartment as belonging to "one of those vast hive-like conglomerations of cellular living units that flower as warty growths in overcrowded urban centers of lower middle-class population and are symptomatic of the impulse of this largest and fundamentally enslaved section of American society to avoid fluidity and differentiation and to exist and function as one interfused mass of automatism." This disillusioned view of an America defined by its unfulfilled promises and disappointments make the time and place an important character of the drama, haunting the lives of Tom, Amanda and Laura as much as their own interior dreams and desires do.

First produced in 1944 in Chicago, *The Glass Menagerie* introduced Williams as an important new voice in American theater. With this striking and innovative work, Williams struck a chord. When the play opened at the Playhouse Theatre on Broadway on March 31, 1945, it received rave reviews and instantly became a huge commercial and artistic success. The play ran for 561 performances; in April 1945 the prestigious New York Drama Critics' Circle named *The Glass Menagerie* best American play of the year. This stunning success heralded a time of great creative productivity for Williams; he would soon craft some of his most celebrated and memorable works. *Summer and Smoke*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Rose Tattoo*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* — all followed in the next decade, solidifying Williams' place as a major American dramatist.

In his book *The Other American Drama*, critic Marc Robinson makes a case for the renewed importance of Williams, along with the need to view his art with fresh eyes:

"Tennessee Williams spent a lifetime trying to escape clichés, those about his theatre and those about the people his theatre portrays, but the clichés still cling to him. They simplify his evolution as a writer and, what is perhaps worse, they persistently attract readers eager to diagnose his characters rather than listen to them. 'Lonely outcasts,' 'sadly maimed,' 'torn by the passion of life' — the same phrases returned to herald each play no matter how much richer it was than the last one, no matter how complicated and tentative its conjuring of emotion. To read Williams now, decades away from his period of greatest celebrity and after his subsequent notoriety has subsided, requires one first to weed out those epithets and clear a generous approach to his art. We think we know his world, so familiar does the summary of each play sound, but in fact we know only the accolades, or only the tone of the put-down. We're sure that our theatre has moved on from the kind of writing Williams did, as perhaps it has, but after reading the writers who succeeded him in our devotion, his plays astonish us anew. They set a standard for emotional truthfulness that most playwrights still fail to match."

Letter on *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams

Editor's Note: The following excerpts have been selected from the published letters of Tennessee Williams to his friend Donald Windham. In them, Williams writes about the original production of The Glass Menagerie which he refers to at first as "The Gentleman Caller."

April 22, 1943

I am out of cigarettes and very nervous so I cannot write much of a letter. I have been writing with tigerish intensity on "The Gentleman Caller" every day, and today I felt like I was going to just blow up, so I quit. What I am doing to that quiet little play I don't know.

July 28, 1943

"The Gentleman Caller" remains my chief work, but it goes slowly. I feel no overwhelming interest in it. It lacks the violence that excited me, so I piddle around with it. My picture work is to make a scenario out of "Billy the Kid" material — as good an assignment I could hope for, but I am lazy about it and barely am started.

July ?, 1944

I have just finished the "caller" and am slowly retyping it. I think I will submit the short version first and if people like it, will add the rest. It is not a very exciting business but it keeps me occupied while I wait for the energy to do something more important.

August 18 or 25, 1944

Have finished "The Caller." No doubt it goes in my reservoir of noble efforts.

It is the *last* play I will try to write for the now existing theater.

December 18, 1944

Editor's Note: By this time, The Glass Menagerie was rehearsing in Chicago.

We're having a bloody time of it here — as expected. Yesterday, Sunday evening, I thought the situation was hopeless — as Taylor was ad libbing practically every speech and the show sounded like the Aunt Jemima Pancake hour. We all got drunk, and this A.M. Taylor was even *worse*. I finally lost my temper and when she made one of her little insertions I screamed over the footlights, "My God, what corn!" She screamed back I was a fool and playwrights made her sick — that she had not only been a star for forty years but had made a living as a writer which was better than I had done — then she came back after lunch and suddenly began giving a real acting performance — so good that Julia and I, the sentimental element in the company, wept. So I don't know what to think or expect

What characters! This company is more amusing than the show!

Everybody makes drunken declarations of love to everybody. Such intense indiscriminate congeniality always gets on my nerves.

January 11, 1945

It is four A.M. but I feel like talking to you a little. The show is doing swell now. Weekends almost capacity and

other nights about fifteen hundred and still building. So it looks like we'll remain here — they're selling tickets up till Feb. 10th. Everybody except Dowling is eager to get into New York — especially Laurette. She gets better all the time. However I guess it's wise to milk Chicago a little before we face another set of critics. No important changes in the script — except I've gotten my own drunk scene in place of Dowling's ad-lib — and the second narration, which you didn't like, has been taken out. Five lines added at the end and the final tableau blacked out — which made Laurette furious. Nobody told her she was going to be blacked out — they were scared to. So they just clacked her — Julie came up to the candles — Laurette comes up right behind her! Last night Laurette got in a fight with Eddie backstage and missed her cue after the love scene — Julie gives Tony the broken glass and says "a souvenir" which is Laurette's entrance cue. No Laurette. So Julie raises her voice and repeats it. Still no Laurette. Tony says — "Thank you for the — *souvenir*." Julie drifts over to the glass cabinet and ad-libs — "here is another just like it." "Aw, gee, thanks!" says Tony. Still no Laurette. Julie is about to start back for a third souvenir when they get the old bag on — still frothing! But she is the whole show.

Being fetted and lionized on a small scale has convinced me or rather confirmed my suspicion that success is a bore. People are never so unattractive as when they think you are worth impressing.

March 8, 1945

"The menagerie" is no lie about this company — and neither is glass! I sometimes wonder if we'll all really get to New York in one piece. The play backstage is far more exciting than the one on!

From *Tennessee Williams' Letters to Donald Windham, 1940-1965*. Edited with comments by Donald Windham. New York: Penguin Books, 1976, 1977.

I am More Faithful than I Intended to Be by Edwina Dakin Williams

Despite advice from theatrical friends that *The Glass Menagerie* would never be a success because of its fragile plot and unhappy ending, Mr. Dowling went ahead trying to raise money. Some of the backers wanted Tom to change the ending and allow the sister and gentleman caller to fall in love but he firmly refused. Finally Mr. Dowling persuaded Louis J. Singer, a banker who had put money into a few Broadway productions, to invest \$75,000 and the four parts of *Menagerie* were then cast. Mr. Dowling was to be the son, Laurette Taylor the mother, Julie Haydon the sister, and Anthony Ross the gentleman caller.

Chicago was chosen for the out-of-town opening. Tom asked me to come up and I was delighted, but at attending my first premiere and at the feeling my son needed me.

I arrived in time to see a rehearsal

Laurette was a genius in the rapidity with which she acquired a southern accent. Describing herself as "a Southerner out of Ireland," she said she had never been below Washington, D.C., except to Florida, but she had visited Southern Italy, if that helped. At first she kept charging up and down the stage, her head wrapped in a bandanna, looking like a Southern mammy and talking like one. I whispered to Tom, "A Southern lady doesn't sound like a Southern mammy imitating a Southern lady." Laurette toned it down for the opening and thereafter.

She tried at first, according to a newspaper interview, to learn a Southern accent by imitating Tom. At one point

interrupted her to say, "Youah ayaccent's too think, Mis' Tayluh."

"But I'm trying to imitate yours, Tennessee," she said.

"*Mah* accent?" Tom said in surprise. "Ah don't hayev any ayaccent."

The evening of the premiere was the night after Christmas, Tuesday, December 26, 1944. Everything seemed against the play, even the weather. The streets were so ice-laden we could not find a taxi to take us to the Civic Theatre and had to walk. The gale blowing off Lake Michigan literally hurled us through the theater door. . . .

I had not read *Menagerie*, knew nothing of its story except the snatches I glimpsed at rehearsals. After the curtain went up, I became lost in the magic of the words and the superb performance of its four players. You couldn't call Laurette or Julie pretty but they imbued their parts with a strong spiritual quality.

This was the first of Tom's plays I had seen, unless you count *The Magic Tower*, and I was thrilled to think he had created a play without a wasted word and one in which every moment added drama. I don't think there's been a play like it, before or since.

The audience, too, seemed spellbound throughout and particularly when Mr. Dowling stood to one side of the stage and uttered the words. "I didn't go to the moon, I went much further — for time is the longest distance between two places Oh Laura, Laura, I tried to leave you behind me, but I am more faithful than I intended to be! I reach for a cigarette, I cross the street, I run into the movies or a bar, I buy a drink, I speak out the nearest stranger — anything that can blow your candles out!"

At this moment, in the corner of the stage behind a thin veil of a curtain, Julie bend low over the candles in her tenement home as Mr. Dowling said sadly, "— for nowadays the world is lit by lightning! Blow out your candles, Laura and so good-bye"

And the curtain dropped slowly on the world premiere of *The Glass Menagerie*.

At first it was so quiet I thought the audience didn't like the play. A young woman behind me clapped wildly, as though to make up for the lack of applause, and I heard her remark indignantly, "These Chicago audiences make me mad! This is a beautiful play."

Then, all of a sudden, a tumultuous clapping of hands broke out. The audience had been recovering from the mood into which the play had plunged it. Gratefully I turned to the young woman, who I later found out was a student of English at the University of Chicago, and asked, "Would you like to meet the author? I'm his mother." When Tom arrived to take me backstage, I introduced the young woman, breathless with excitement, and we invited her to go behind the scenes with us.

I wanted to congratulate Laurette, who had brought down the house with her amazing performance as Amanda Wingfield, the faded, fretful, dominating mother lost in the dream world of her past, bullying her son into finding a gentleman caller for his abnormally shy sister.

I entered Laurette's dressing room, not knowing what to expect, for she was sometimes quite eccentric. She was

sitting with her feet propped up on the radiator, trying to keep warm. Before I had a chance to get a word out, she greeted me.

"Well, how did you like you'seff, Mis' Williams?" she asked.

I was so shocked I didn't know what to say. It had not occurred to me as I watched Tom's play that I was Amanda.

Tom's own description of Amanda as stated in the play held that she was "a little woman of great but confused vitality clinging frantically to another time and place. Her characterization must be carefully created, not copied from type. She is not paranoiac, but her life is paranoia. There is much to admire in Amanda, and as much to love and pity as there is to laugh at. Certainly she has endurance and a kind of heroism, and though her foolishness makes her unwittingly cruel at times, there is tenderness in her slight person."

Tom has contradicted himself when asked if the play were based on his life. Once he told a reporter it was a "memory play," adding, "My mother and sister will never forgive me for that." Then again, he denied it was autobiographical, calling it "a dream or fantasy play. The gentleman caller is meant to be a symbol of the world and its attitude toward the unrealistic dreamers who are three characters in this play."

I think it is high time the ghost of Amanda was laid. I am *not* Amanda. I'm sure that if Tom stops to think, he realizes I am not. The only resemblance I have to Amanda is that we both like jonquils.

From: *Remember Me to Tom*. By Edwina Dakin Williams as told to Lucy Freeman. St. Louis: Sunrise Publishing Co., Inc. © 1936 by Edwina Dakin Williams, Walter DAKin Williams, and Lucy Freeman.

Editor's Note: Following are the remarks of two critics after the original production of The Glass Menagerie.

Immortal Shadows by Stark Young

[*The Glass Menagerie*] gives every one of the four characters that it presents a glowing, rich opportunity, genuine emotional motivations, a rhythm of situations that are alive, and speech that is fresh, living, abundant and free of stale theater diction. The author is not awed by the usual sterilities of our play-writing patterns. On the other hand he is too imaginative, genuine, or has too much good taste, to be coy about the free devices on which his play is built, a true, rich talent, feeling once the intelligence of it is well anchored. . . .

The part Miss Taylor plays [Amanda Wingfield] is, quite aside from her rendering of it, the best written role that I have seen in a play for years. All the language and all the motifs are free and true; I recognized them inch by inch. . . . One of the things most needed in the theater is a sense of language, a sense of texture in speech, vibration and impulse in speech. Behind the Souther speech in the mother's part is the echo of great literature, or at least a respect for it. There is the sense in it of her having been born out of a great tradition, not out of a box. It has much echo and music in it.

From: *Immortal Shadows*, © Stark Young. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

The Sum of the Season by Rosamond Gilder

Just as the 1944-45 season, pushed into the wings by mighty public events, was about to subside into featureless

anonymity, a minor miracle took place. In the middle of routine productions that were only remarkable for their ability to restate platitudes in outworn forms, and to make money in the process, the theater suddenly asserted itself in its own best terms. Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* proved once again what magic can be wrought when playwright, actor and artist meet on common ground. The play as performed by Laurette Taylor in Jo Mielziner's sets, under Eddie Dowling's direction (assisted by Margo Jones), is something more than the sum of all its parts; it has significance and abundance of life, a variety and complexity that is the hallmark of this total effect. Not since Saroyan's *My Heart's in the Highlands* dropped into town one day in the spring of 1939, has there been a production as encouraging to those who believe in the theater as a form of significant expression and not exclusively as an entertainment racket.

Not that *The Glass Menagerie* is not good entertainment. The queue at the box-office; the applause of the critics in Chicago, where it opened, as well as in New York; the laughter that ripples through the audience as the inter-relationships between four people — mother, son, crippled daughter and "gentleman caller" — unfold on a mist-shrouded stage all bear witness to the fact that "what the public wants" is a valid work of art no matter how unexpected its form or tragic its content. For Mr. Williams' play is steeped in tears: the pathos of remembered things, the longings, the futilities, the frustrations at the heart of life.

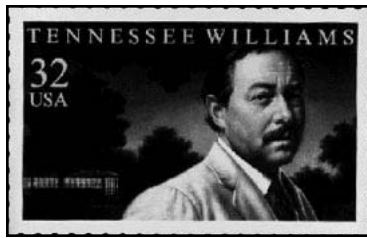
From: *Theatre Arts*, April 1945, Volume 29.

Production Notes: *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams

Being a "memory play", *The Glass Menagerie* can be presented with unusual freedom from convention. Because of its considerably delicate or tenuous material, atmospheric touches and subtleties of direction play a particularly important part. Expressionism and all other unconventional techniques in drama have only one valid aim, and that is a closer approach to truth. When a play employs unconventional techniques, it is not, or certainly shouldn't be, trying to escape its responsibility of dealing with reality, or interpreting experience, but is actually or should be attempting to find a closer approach, a more penetrating and vivid expression of things as they are. The straight realistic play with its genuine Frigidaire and authentic ice-cubes, its characters that speak exactly as its audience speaks, corresponds to the academic landscape and has the same virtue of a photographic likeness. Everyone should know nowadays the unimportance of the photographic in art: that truth, life, or reality is an organic thing which the poetic imagination can represent or suggest, in essence, only through transformation, though changing into other forms than those which were merely present in appearance.

These remarks are not meant as a preface only to this particular play. They have to do with a conception of a new, plastic theater which must take the place of the exhausted theater of realistic conventions if the theater is to resume vitality as a part of our culture.

A Chronology of the Life of Tennessee Williams



- 1911** Thomas Lanier Williams born March 26 in Columbus, Mississippi to Cornelius Coffin and Edwina Dakin Williams. Rose Isabel and Walter Dakin, sister and brother, born in 1909 and 1919.

The baby was a beautiful girl and I called her Rose, after Mother. Two years later, in 1911, I had my second child, the boy I named Thomas Lanier Williams....He was to give much more to the world than either the world or I could give him.

Edwina Williams
Remember Me to Tom

- 1918** Family moves to St. Louis, Missouri

Gone was their own backyard in spacious Southern rectories, their carefree lives as the somewhat sheltered grandchildren of the Episcopal vicar, and gone too was a certain elevated social status they had accepted as completely natural.

Richard F. Leavitt
The World of Tennessee Williams

- 1928** First work published in *Smart Set*, an award winning essay answering the question, "Can a Good Wife be a Good Sport?"

- 1929-31** Attends the University of Missouri at Columbia.

- 1931-34** Begins work as a clerk for the International Shoe Company in St. Louis.

You think I'm in love with the Continental Shoemakers? You think I want to spend fifty-five years of my life down there in that — celotex interior! with fluorescent tubes?! Honest to God, I'd rather somebody picked up a crow-bar and battered out my brains — than go back mornings!

Tennessee Williams
Tom in *The Glass Menagerie*

- 1934** Writes "Moony's Kid Don't Cry," a one act play about a laborer and his infant son.

- 1935** First play produced in Memphis, Tennessee, "Cairo! Shanghai! Bombay!," a short play about two sailors on shore leave.

1936-37 Attends Washington University, St. Louis.

1937 His sister, Rose Williams, is institutionalized at Farmington State Hospital (Missouri) for schizophrenia which will lead, later, to a prefrontal lobotomy.

I don't believe that my sister was actually foolish. I think the petals of her mind had simply closed through fear, and it's no telling how much they had closed upon in the way of secret wisdom.

Tennessee Williams "Portrait of a Girl in Glass"

1939 Graduates with a B.A. degree in English from the University of Iowa.

Wins Group Theater prize of \$10 for *American Blues*, a collection of short plays, "Moony's Kid Don't Cry," "The Dark Room," and "Case of the Crushed Petunias."

Meets Audrey Wood who will become his agent.

Wins a Rockefeller fellowship of \$1,000, begins a period of travel (1939-44).

Writes *Battle of Angels* which is produced in Boston in 1940.

Mr. Tennessee Williams has certainly written an astonishing play, one of the strangest mixtures of poetry, realism, melodrama, comedy, whimsey, and eroticism that it has ever been our privilege to see upon the boards ... Mr. Williams' hero is Val Xavier, whose "eyes shine like a dog's in the dark." ... He tells his story to the heroine, Myra, the shopkeeper's wife ... Myra's husband is upstairs with an incurable disease ... it later appears that he is the personification of death, and very well he succeeds in his mission on earth. Meanwhile, Myra and Val are knowing a brief interlude of happiness; and Myra, who has always feared the idea of barrenness, is going to have a child by Val. But the gossips of the town and the bad woman, Cassandra Whiteside — you catch her place in the allegory? — have also fallen for Val's charms ... The husband ... now enters the picture. ... Myra is shot, and an angry crowd assembles to burn up the house with Val in it.

Alexander Williams

The Boston Herald, December 30, 1940

1940 Writes "The Long Goodbye," a one act play which is the precursor of *The Glass Menagerie*.

Begins writing "Portrait of a Girl in Glass," a short story on which *The Glass Menagerie* will be based.

1940-42 Writes several plays including "Hello from Bertha," "This Property is Condemned," "You Touched Me," and "I Rise in Flame, Cried the Phoenix," a play in which D.H. Lawrence, one of the literary influences on Williams' life, is a major character.

Lawrence felt the mystery and power of sex, as the primal life urge, and was the life-long adversary of those who wanted to keep the subject locked away in the cellars of prudery; ... his work is probably the greatest monument to the dark roots of creation.

Tennessee Williams

Author's Note, reprinted in *Theatre*, Volume VII.

Why did I want to write? Because I'm an artist. — What is an artist? — A man who loves life too intensely, a man who loves life till he hates her and has to strike out with his fist. ... I wrote! Fiercely, without any shame! This is life, I told them, life is like this! Wonderful! Dark! Terrific! They banned my books and they wanted to burn my pictures! That's how it is — When first you look at the sun it strikes you blind — Life's — blinding.

Tennessee Williams

Lawrence in "I Rise in Flame, Cried the Phoenix"

1943 Six month contract with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer results in a screenplay, *The Gentleman Caller*, the seminal version of *The Glass Menagerie*. The script is refused.

1943-44 Writes *The Glass Menagerie* which appears first in Chicago and then, in 1945, opens on Broadway.

On the Broadway opening night of Menagerie, the performers took bow after bow, and finally they tried to get me up on the stage. ... And I felt embarrassed; I don't think I felt any great sense of triumph. I think writing is continually a pursuit of a very evasive quarry, and you never quite catch it.

Tennessee Williams

Memoirs

1945 *The Glass Menagerie* wins the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award.
Begins writing *Summer and Smoke* which will first be produced in 1947.

One of the springs of Williams' inspiration is his fascination with the opposition between the old Adam which tends to keep us mired in a kind of primitive inertia, and our impulse to transcend it.

Harold Clurman

The Divine Pastime

1946 Writes "Twenty-Seven Wagons Full of Cotton," a one act play which was later adapted as the screenplay *Baby Doll* (1956).

1947 *A Streetcar Named Desire* opens in New York, and wins a second Drama Critics' Circle Award as well as the Pulitzer Prize (1948). The production is directed by Elia Kazan with a memorable cast including Marlon Brando as Stanley Kowalski and Jessica Tandy as Blanche DuBois.

In [The Glass Menagerie] the heroine lived in a world of illusion, and she became as remote from life and as fragile as her own glass animals. ... Blanche DuBois is an ill-fated member of the same family. ... It is the terrible loneliness, this solitary agony, that we feel unbearable. By comparison with this horror, the violent incidents of the plot — the drunken brawling, the lovemaking, the bad language — are seen (or should be seen) as subsidiary evils committed by people who are themselves not evil, who, indeed, in some important qualities, are positively good.

R.D. Smith

New Statesman, October 22, 1949

Williams' parents separate permanently.

- 1948** *One Arm and Other Stories*, a collection of Williams' short stories is published. It includes "Portrait of a Girl in Glass," the story upon which *The Glass Menagerie* is based.

In the five years' time I had nearly forgotten home. I had to forget it, I couldn't carry it with me. But once in a while, usually in a strange town before I have found companions, the shell of deliberate hardness is broken through. A door comes softly and irresistibly open. I hear the tired old music my unknown father left in the place he abandoned faithlessly as I. I see the faint and sorrowful radiance of the glass, hundreds of little transparent pieces of it in very delicate colors. I hold my breath, for if my sister's face appears among them — the night is hers!

Tennessee Williams "Portrait of a Girl in Glass"

Williams visits Rome.

- 1950** A novel, *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone*, is published.

Release of the first film version of *The Glass Menagerie*. (The latest version, 1987, was directed by Paul Newman.)

Writes "Talk to Me Like the Rain and Let Me Listen," a one act play in which a woman calms a man by using a seaside fantasy of peace and quiet.

- 1951** Release of the film version of *A Streetcar Named Desire* directed by Ella Kazan.

The Rose Tatoo opens in New York.

The Rose Tatoo is the Dionysian element in human life, its mystery, its beauty, its significance. ... It is the desire of an artist to work in new forms, however awkwardly at first, to break down barriers of what he has done before and after and to crash, perhaps fatally, into some area that the bell-harness and rope would like to forbid him ... Dionysus, being mystery, is never seen clearly.

Tennessee Williams
Vogue, March 15, 1951

- 1952** Film version of *A Streetcar Named Desire* wins the New York Film Critics' Circle Award.

Williams is elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters.

Writes *Sweet Bird of Youth* which will open in New York in 1959. It is the story of Chance Wayne, a small town boy who hopes to make it in New York as an actor and impress everyone back home. But after being drafted in the Navy he returns from the war in Korea and becomes the gigolo of a fading movie star. The plot revolves around his rekindled love for the sweetheart of his adolescence and the dramatic consequences of his homecoming.

Writes "Something Unspoken," a one act play which depicts two Southern women who talk about their unspoken feelings.

1953 *Camino Real* is produced in New York.

This is the mystique of romanticism, with special stress on the pity for the insulted arid injured, the persecuted minorities, the victims and outcasts. ... Williams also hankers for an unfettered theater, a theater free of bonds of naturalism, a theater where the poet in him can speak more personally and with a greater degree of self-revelation than the usual prosy play permits.

Harold Clurman
The Divine Pastime

1954 *Hard Candy: a Book of Stories*, Williams' second collection, is published.

1955 Tennessee Williams' grandfather, The Reverend Walter Edwin Dakin, dies.

Release of the film version of *The Rose Tatoo*.

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof opens in New York, and with it Williams wins his third Drama Critics' Circle Award and his second Pulitzer Prize.

It is the quintessence of life. It is the basic truth ... a delicately wrought exercise in human communications ... Mr. Williams' finest drama. It faces and speaks the truth.

Brooks Atkinson
New York Times, March 25, 1955

1956 *In the Winter of Cities*, Williams' first book of poetry, is published.

Release of the film *Baby Doll* which: is based on "Twenty-Seven Wagons Full of Cotton."

1957 Tennessee Williams' father, Cornelius Coffin Williams, dies.

Orpheus Descending opens in New York.

It has all Mr. Williams' ingredients in one dish: his early romanticism and later symbolism, the poeticism of his Rose Tatoo period, and his later sweatshirt realism. It has, too, all the usual conflicts: decadence and idealism, youth and age, innocence and corruption. And it keeps them up for over three hours. ... A footloose guitar player ... wanders into a decadent but symbolic Southern township, which; as Mr. Williams justifiably suggests, is the closest thing imaginable to hell on earth. He resists the advances of a wistful, young nymphomaniac ... but falls for the aging Eurydice. ... She is the daughter of another wandering minstrel, who had once run a bacchic clip joint until he was burnt out and killed by the KKK. ... The daughter discovers that her ailing husband has led the attack and she is determined to see him done for. Orpheus waits with her too long and is torn apart. ...

Catherine M. Arnolt
Tennessee Williams on File

1958 Release of a film version of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*

"Suddenly Last Summer" opens in New York along with "Something Unspoken." This double bill is called *Garden District*.

The story [of "Suddenly Last Summer"]. ... is concerned with the bloodcurdling manner in which a poet is said to have met his death. ... Like Dorian Gray ... this man was substantially immune to the ravages of vice. ... Considering all its manifestations, Mr. Williams' talent is one of the most singular of our time. You may not always be quite easy in its presence, but it is practically impossible to remain indifferent to it.

Wolcott Gibbs
New Yorker, January 18, 1958

1959 Release of the film version of "Suddenly Last Summer."

Sweet Bird of Youth, written in 1952, opens in New York.

1960 Release of *Fugitive Kind*, the film version of *Orpheus Descending*.

Three Players of a Summer Game, a third book of short stories, is published.

1961 Release of the film versions of *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* and *Summer and Smoke*.

Night of the Iguana opens in New York, and wins the Drama Critics' Circle Award.

"The going to pieces of T. Lawrence Shannon," a phrase from the play, might be its more appropriate title, for it focuses mainly on the degradation and breakdown of its central character, a crapulous and slightly psychotic Episcopalian minister ... thrown out of his church for "fornication and heresy."

Catherine M. Arnolt
Tennessee Williams on File

1962 Release of the film versions of *Sweet Bird of Youth* and *Period of Adjustment*.

In an interview conducted at this time Williams writes,

Well, I'm a compulsive writer — because what I am doing is creating imaginary worlds into which I can retreat from the real world because ... I've never made any kind of adjustment to the real world.

"Williams on Williams"
Interview with Lewis Funke and John E. Booth *Theatre Arts*, January, 1962

1963 "The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore" opens in New York.

Edwina Dakin Williams, the playwright's mother, publishes her autobiography, *Remember Me to Tom*. *Rehashing old memories is not pleasant, especially for me because I have always liked to forget the unpleasant. But if one is going to write an autobiography, not fiction, one has to permit memories, buried because they were painful, to rise to the surface. I have done the best I could to tell the truth as I saw it. The truth of our lives can only emerge as a tribute to Tom.*

Edwina Williams
Remember Me to Tom

1964 Release of the film version of *Night of the Iguana*.

1965 *Night of the Iguana* is produced in London and wins London Critics' Award for Best Foreign Play.

The playwright receives Brandeis University Creative Arts Award.

Release of a film version of *This Property is Condemned*.

Slapstick Tragedy, a double bill made up of "The Mutilated" and "Gnädiges Fraulein," opens in New York.

The plays are melancholy but masked avowals. The first, called "The Mutilated," might be described as a freakish Christmas Carol.... As in certain of his former plays, Williams in "The Mutilated" reveals his compassion — more, his sense of identification — with the insulted and the injured, the misfits and the maimed. ...

The second ... "The Gnädiges Fraulein" is ... a stylized essay in farcical fantasy altogether new for Williams. ... The Fraulein earns her keep in a godforsaken boarding house at the seaboard of the southernmost part of our States by fighting to catch fish in the waters whipped by the hurricanes which harass the place.

Harold Clurman
The Nation, March 14, 1966

The Knightly Quest: a Novella and Four Short Stories is published.

In an interview entitled "Williams: Twenty Years after *Glass Menagerie*," he states:

But these seemingly fragile people are the strong people really. They have a certain appearance of fragility, these neurotic people that I write about, but they are really strong. They're always spiritually stronger, sometimes physically stronger, too. They hold up better, though it costs them an awful lot.

Tennessee Williams Interview with Joanne Stang
New York Times, March 28, 1965

1967 The *Two Character Play* opens in New York.

1968 *The Seven Descents of Myrtle* opens in New York.

Release of the film *The Last of the Mobile Hot Shots*.

Release of *Boom!*, the film version of "The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore."

1969 Baptized into the Roman Catholic Church.

Receives awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and from the National Institute of Arts and Letters. Also receives an honorary doctoral degree in Humanities from the University of Missouri, Columbia.

"In a Bar of a Tokyo Hotel" opens in New York.

A portrait of an artist at the nadir of his career. ... In the turmoil of his nightmare exaltation he experiences the dread sensation of becoming identical with his work. ... This may be the prelude to the total disintegration of his talent; or it may possibly mark the threshold of a never-before-attained profundity of insight. The double awareness is killing him.

Harold Clurman
The Nation, June 2, 1969

1970 Williams is interviewed on television by David Frost.

FROST: Has your own life influenced all that you've written a great deal? People say that they can see you in your plays.

WILLIAMS: I'm very personal as a writer, yes. I don't mean to be, I just am. Unavoidably.

FROST: Which is the most personal of your plays?

WILLIAMS: Perhaps *Camino Real*.

FROST: Why did you pick that one?

WILLIAMS: It was sort of a statement of my own philosophy, a credo.

FROST: What is your credo?

WILLIAMS: That romanticism is absolutely essential. That we can't really live bearably without a great deal of it. It's very painful, but we need it.

FROST: By romanticism do you mean fantasy?

WILLIAMS: A certain amount of that and the ability to feel tenderness toward another human being. The ability to love.

FROST: And what gives people that ability?

WILLIAMS: Not allowing themselves to become brutalized by the brutalizing experiences that we do encounter on the Camino Real.

Tennessee Williams and David Frost on "The David Frost Show" in *The Americans*, by David Frost, 1970.

1971 Williams changes his literary agent; Bill Barnes replaces Audrey Wood.

1972 Receives Doctor of Humanities degree from the University of Hartford, Connecticut.

Receives the National Theater Conference Annual Award.

Small Craft Warnings opens in New York.

It is the responsibility of the writer to put his experience as a being into work that refines it and that makes of it an essence that a wide audience can somehow manage to feel in themselves: "This is true."

In all human experience, there are parallels which permit common understanding in the telling and hearing, and it is the frightening responsibility of an artist to make what is directly or allusively close to his own being communicable and understandable, however disturbingly, to the hearts and minds of all whom he addresses.

Tennessee Williams

"Too Personal," a Preface to *Small Craft Warnings*, 1972.

1973 "Outcry" opens in New York.

I think "Outcry" is my most beautiful play since Streetcar, and I've never stopped working on it.

Tennessee Williams

Interviewed by Robert Jennings *Playboy*, April, 1973

1974 Receives Entertainment Hall of Fame Award and Medal of Honor for Literature from the National Arts Club.

Eight Mortal Ladies Possessed: A Book of Stories is published.

1975 A novel, *Moise and the World of Reason*, and an autobiography, *Memoirs*, are published.

What is my profession but living and putting it all down in stories and plays and now in this book?

Tennessee Williams *Memoirs*

Writes *The Red Devil Battery Sign*, a play in which Downtown Woman, a loud-talking Southerner, invites an unemployed musician to her Dallas penthouse just after the Kennedy assassination.

1976 *Androgyne, Mon Amour: Poems*, Williams' second collection of poetry, is published.

This is (An Entertainment) opens in San Francisco.

Williams is as irrepressible in his writing as his Countess is in her lechery. I asked him how his plays germinated, and he replied that they grew from the empty page that faced him every morning. ... Williams is the grand old dramatist of the American theater, so let us celebrate his plays that are more than entertainment.

Ruby Cohen

Educational Theatre Journal, October, 1976

Williams serves as President of the jury at Cannes Film Festival.

1977 *Vieux Carré* opens in New York.

Tennessee Williams Fine Arts Center is dedicated at Florida Keys Community College, Key West, Florida

1978 *Where I Live*, a collection of Williams' essays, is published.

1979 *A Lovely Sunday for Crève-Coeur* opens in New York.

This is a tale of four women, living in St. Louis in 1935. The central figure is Dorothea ... a transplanted Southerner, no longer young, who teaches civics in a local school. She is the quintessential Williams half-faded rose, still leaning toward the fast-dimming sunlight of romance. It's Sunday, and Dorothea is doing her exercises and waiting for a phone call from her beau, the dashing school principal, who she thinks is going to marry her. You, of course, know better, sniffing those faded roses in the Williams air.

Jack Kroll
Newsweek, February 5, 1979

1980 Tennessee Williams' mother, Mrs. Edwina Dakin Williams, dies.

Clothes for a Summer Hotel opens in Chicago and New York.

1981 *A House Not Meant to Stand* opens in New York.

I think the "German expressionist" treatment was right for my material. I hadn't realized how far I had departed from realism in my writing. I had long since exhausted the so-called "poetic realism." This, after all, isn't twenty years ago. I always write to satisfy myself; so I'm not conscious, perhaps, of the change in my work.

Tennessee Williams Interviewed by R. Christiansen *Chicago Tribune*, May 9, 1982

1982 *It Happened the Day the Sun Rose, and Other Stories*, and Williams' third novel, *The Bag People*, are published.

Receives an honorary degree from Harvard University.

1983 Tennessee Williams dies on February 24.

*And so it was I entered the broken world,
to trace the visionary company of love, its voice
an instant in the wind (I know not whither hurled)
but not for long to hold each desperate choice.*

Hart Crane
from "The Broken Tower"
A favorite poem of Tennessee Williams
Printed in published editions of *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Timeline of the Play

"This is the social background of the play." Tom

U.S. Events

World Events

1927	First transatlantic flight	
1929	"Talkies" end silent films The Great Depression begins	
1930		Planet Pluto is discovered
1931		Spanish Republic established
1933	Franklin D. Roosevelt elected president under the New Deal Campaign	Nazi Revolution in Germany
1934	21st Amendment added to Constitution repealing Prohibition Century of Progress International Exhibition in Chicago	Communists establish People's Republic of China
1935	Works Progress Administration set up to create jobs	
1936	Margaret Mitchell writes <i>Gone With the Wind</i>	Spanish Civil War
1937	Steel strike in Chicago	Guernica bombed, Spain Hindenberg airship disaster
1939		World War II begins
1941	Pearl Harbor is bombed and US enters into WWII	

The Flood of Remembrance

Editor's Note: Tennessee Williams mentions Anton Checkhov, D.H. Lawrence, and Hart Crane as influences on his work. Following are examples of the work of these three artist, echoes of which may be heard in Williams' work.

ANTON CHECKHOV

Every day and every night I am obsessed by one thought: I have to write, I have to write, I have to write, I have to write . . . I write without stopping and always at lightning speed. That's the only way I can write. What's so beautiful and bright about that?

Trigorin in *The Seagull*

Remember that the writers whom we call eternal or simply good and who intoxicate us have one very important characteristic in common: They move in a certain direction and they summon you there too, and you feel, not with your mind alone, but with your whole being, that they have a goal, like the ghost of Hamlet's father, who did not come and trouble the imagination for nothing. Some, depending on their caliber, have immediate objects: abolition of serfdom, liberation of their country, politics, beauty, . . . others have remote objectives: God, immortality, the happiness of mankind, and so forth. . . . One who desires nothing, hopes for nothing, and fears nothing cannot be an artist.

Letter to A. S. Suvorin, November 25, 1892

D.H. LAWRENCE

A young man is afraid of his demon, and puts his hand over the demon's mouth and speaks for him. And the things the young man says are very rarely poetry. So I have tried to let the demon say his say, and to remove the passages where the young man intruded.

Preface to *Collected Poems*

Softly, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me;
Taking me back down the vista of years, till I see
A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the tingling strings
And pressing the small, poised feet of a mother who smiles as she sings.

In spite of myself, the insidious mastery of song
Betrays me back, till the heart of me weeps to belong
To the old Sunday evenings at home, with winter outside
And hymns in the cosy parlor, the tinkling piano our guide.

So now it is vain for the singer to burst iot claur
With the great black piano appassionato. The glamour
Of childish days is upon me, my manhood is cast
Down in the flood of remembrance, I weep like a child for the past.

Complete Poems of D.H. Lawrence © 1948 by Frieda Lawrence, New York: Viking Press

HART CRANE

My Grandmother's Love Letters

There are no stars to-night
But those of memory
Yet how much room for memory there is
In the loose girdle of soft rain.

There is even room enough
For the letters of my mother's mother,
Elizabeth,
That have been pressed so long
Into a corner of the roof
That they are brown and soft,
And liable to melt as snow.

Over the greatness of such space
Steps must be gentle.
It is all hung by an invisible white hair.
It trembles as the birch limbs webbing the air.

And I ask myself:

"Are your fingers long enough to play
Old keys that are but echoes:
Is the silence strong enough
To carry back the music to its source
And back to you again
As though to her?"

Yet I would lead my grandmother by the hand
Through much of what she would not understand;
And so I stumble. And the rain continues on the rood
With such a sound of gently pitying laughter.

The Collected Poems © 1933 by Liveright Publishers

The 1930s, A Montage by Frederick Lewis Allen

Editor's Note: In Tom Wingfield's speeches in Scenes 1 and 6, Williams provides the historical context for The Glass Menagerie. He tells us:

I take you back to an alley in St. Louis. The time that quaint period when the huge middle class of America was matriculating from a school for the blind. Their eyes had failed them, or they had failed their eyes, and so they were having their fingers pressed forcibly down on the fiery Braille

alphabet of a dissolving economy. — In Spain there was revolution. — Here there was only shouting and confusion and labor disturbances, sometimes violent, in otherwise peaceful cities such as Cleveland — Chicago — Detroit. ... That is the social background of this play ...

Changes and adventure, however, were imminent this year. They were waiting around the corner for all these dancing kids. Suspended in the mist over Berchtesgaden, caught in the folds of Chamberlain's umbrella — In Spain there was Guernica! Here there was only hot swing music and liquor, dance halls, bars, and movies, and sex that hung in the gloom like a chandelier and flooded the world with brief, deceptive rainbows. ... While these unsuspecting kids danced to "Dear One, The World is Waiting for the Sunrise." All the world was really waiting for bombardments.

The historian Frederick Lewis Allen also writes about the 1930's in his book Since Yesterday. The following excerpts from that book provide another perspective on that era.

Dance orchestras were blaring forth "The Music Goes 'Round and 'Round" and one could hardly turn a radio dial without hearing the ubiquitous refrain. . . . At the movie houses Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers were dancing nimbly in "Follow the Fleet." . . . Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*, . . . would, . . . in its first six months, sell over a million copies — a prodigious record — and would set ladies' luncheon tables from coast to coast buzzing with the question whether Scarlett O'Hara really got Rhett Butler back — and who out to play Scarlett on the screen. . . .

Although people still talked of "the emergency" or "the crisis," . . . this "emergency" had become semi-permanent. The economic system had pulled out of its sinking spell of 1929-33 only to become a chronic invalid, whose temperature was lower now in the mornings but showed no signs of returning quickly to normal. Americans were getting used to the fact that nine or ten million of their fellow countrymen were out of work. . . .

The pattern of international relations which was being established in Europe was a pattern neither of general war nor of true peace. It was a pattern of continuous half-war; of nations remaining partially mobilized, partially on a war footing; making quick sallies to grab this territory or that, knowing that the dread of another 1914 would prevent anybody from stopping them until it was too late; of nations gaining new spheres of influence by subsidizing revolts in other countries. . . . In short, it was a pattern of shifting, localized, undeclared, unceasing conflict. War? Peace? It was something in between.

A feeling of insecurity and apprehension, a feeling that the world was going to pieces, that supposedly solid principles, whether of economics or of politics or of international ethics, were giving way under foot, had never left thoughtful Americans since the collapse of Coolidge-Hoover prosperity in 1929 and 1930. It had been intense during the worst of the Depression, had been alleviated somewhat as business conditions improved, and had become more acute again as the international aggressors went on the rampage. . . .

On the morning of Sunday, April 30, 1939, the gates of the New York World's Fair were thrown open. The theme of the Fair was "The World of Tomorrow;" the opening ceremonies were held in a vast enclosure called "Court of Peace." Could anybody in that throng of tens of thousands, gathered under a blue sky in which hung mountainous clouds, fail to reflect upon the question ironically posed by those two phrases?

Here, all about one, was the embodiment of the American dream, 1939 model. Bold modern architecture . . . offering the first chance most of the visitors ever had to see what modern architects might do if the economic condition of this country let them go in for large-scale construction. Gardens, fountains, waterfalls leaping off buildings; music resounding everywhere; at night, the splendor of superb lighting. Miracles of invention and of industrial efficiency to goggle at. A sense of festival. Here every man could briefly feel himself, if not a king, at least the citizen of a gay and friendly country, the beneficiary of spotless industrial engineering. . . .

In that world of tomorrow the show which they liked best of all and stood in hour-long queues to enjoy was the General Motors Futurama, a picture of the possible delights of 1960. They still liked to build the damn in all creation and toy with the idea of the happy farmsteads it would water, the enormous engines it would drive, the new and better business it would stimulate. They still liked to stand with elbows on the fence at the edge of the farm and say, "Sooner or later I am to buy those forty acres over there and go into this thing on a bigger scale." They still scrimped to give their sons and daughters "a better education than we ever had," feeling obscurely that a better education would be valued in the years to come.

A nation tried in a long ordeal had not yet lost heart.

So one meditated as the summer of 1939 slipped by. But . . . now the meditation was interrupted by the recurring question: What will happen in Europe, and what will it mean to us here? . . .

One thing was almost certain. If war broke out in Europe, we should look back upon the day of declaration as the day when a line was drawn across our national life. Whatever strange form the war might take, whatever might be America's reaction to it, it would bring America new problems, new alignments, new hopes and fears.

But surely there wouldn't be war. Things were really rather quiet in Europe, on the surface, in July and early August. And if Hitler should make a new crisis over Danzig and the Polish corridor, surely somebody would back down before it was too late. Somebody always had.

From: *Since Yesterday*, by Frederick Lewis Allen. New York: © 1939, 1940 Harper & Brothers.

A Special Kind of History by Charles Nolte

I spent Christmas 1944 in Ward 29-B of the Great Lakes Naval Hospital on the shore north of Chicago. I'd been a patient there for many months, and now was what they called an "ambulatory" waiting for my medical discharge from the U.S. Navy. One Saturday afternoon the corpsman came through the ward throwing down theater tickets on our beds, asking us if we wanted to see a "play." Of course I was interested in the theater, and I dearly wanted to see *Winged Victory*, which was running at the big Chicago Opera House. But these tickets weren't for anything as successful as *Winged Victory*. We were being asked if we wanted to see something called *The Glass Menagerie* which had opened just a couple of days after Christmas, and it looked as if it was going to close within a week or two, despite some wonderful reviews, particularly by Claudia Cassidy of the *Tribune*, who had written about it as being one of these rare evenings in the theater that make "stage-struck an honorable word." None of the other patients wanted to see *The Glass Menagerie*. It was by somebody who called himself "Tennessee" Williams, and the leading role was taken by an actress named Laurette Taylor. As a young theater buff, I had at least heard of Laurette Taylor, but she was somebody who belonged to the twenties and even earlier, and people knew she was an alcoholic who hadn't held a stage job in years. So much for the "star."

Nobody in that audience, least of all myself, knew in advance that we were seeing a special kind of history being made. Submerging my disappointment at not getting in to see *Winged Victory*, I settled into a seat as the lights darkened in the Civic Theatre, not knowing what to expect. I

remember many things about that evening, but in particular that moment early in the first act when I found myself suddenly, inexplicably in the grip of emotion and empathy. What was that woman doing to me? Why was I weeping? She reminded me of scenes I had had with my mother. I suppose it was every son to every mother, every mother to every son. "Rise and shine!" "Don't bolt your food!" "Don't push with your fingers." "And chew. Chew!" And then a scrim came down, and you could see them behind the scrim, still talking, but there was no sound. And Tom the narrator was speaking in front of the scrim, but it was difficult to see clearly because my eyes were flooded with tears. Well, everybody knows the history of the play's first run, and then how it went on to triumph, and Laurette with it. And Tennessee. After that, people didn't regard "Tennessee" as such an unusual name after all. It somehow suited him.

* * *

Time passed, and I was now working as an actor in New York. It was 1951, the Biltmore Theatre, and the play *Billy Budd*. By now, Tennessee was, well, Tennessee. Everyone had been bowled over by *Streetcar*, and this was the year of *The Rose Tattoo*, which had just opened at the Martin Beck Theater. And on this particular night, the word went around backstage that Tennessee was in the house. For a young actor, such as I was then, playing the title role in a Broadway production, Tennessee's presence in the house meant a lot of things. Opportunity, mostly. By that time I had already met him, in a social way, and I'd formed an opinion.

He struck me as gentle and shy, and nervous around others. Perhaps he wanted to be loved, and didn't know how to filter the true from the false, in the avalanche inundating him. I think he might have hated the hectic silly chatter, though God knows he could be hectic and silly too. But he seemed to have a genuine horror of insincerity. You couldn't get much sincerity from the edgy, preening actors, young men, all jockeying for position around the man who created Stanley Kowalski and Chance Wayne and Tom Wingfield. He was already a kind of legend, looking for a little honesty in that ego circus, the New York theater. Like a delicate sunfish in a tank of sharks.

Years passed, many years. Now our paths crossed once again, right here in Minneapolis. By now I had left the New York theater, spent years abroad, had returned to the University for advanced degrees, and was on the staff of the Department of Theater Arts. We were proposing to do a production of *Streetcar* at the University in Old Scott Hall on the right bank. And just on a fluke, because one of our graduate students, Ron Perrier, was doing his Ph.D. dissertation on some of the later plays of Tennessee, we decided to invite Tennessee to come to Minneapolis and see our production. He'd been here before, paraded out for the press and "important people," when *Summer and Smoke* was done as an opera. He hadn't liked that experience, I knew that. And I hadn't seen Tennessee in, what? Almost a quarter of a century? Could it really have been that long? Would he remember me? What was he like now? Would he recall the old New York days when we occasionally ran into each other? Imagine our surprise when Tennessee Williams said yes, he would like to come to Minneapolis and see our *Streetcar*.

We went out to the airport to wait for him, Ron and Gary Dostal, another graduate student, and I, half expecting him not to come. You can well imagine our state of mind. The plane's arrival was announced. We stood at the window as it taxied up. Then, shortly after, passengers trooped up the ramp, one by one. But no Tennessee. Our hearts sank. But I was prepared for that, and hadn't even told the cast that the author might just possibly be there to see our production. Then, just as we prepared to go, there he was, a rather forlorn figure slowly sauntering up the ramp. And his face broke into a warm smile. And after our initial greetings, that reedy plaintive voice with its curious accent was wondering if there "wasn't some pleasant oasis where we might find liquid refreshment after the rigours of my flight." And so into the airport lounge to moisten ourselves. More reminiscences were exchanged about the past, and where it had all gone, and what in God's name did people DO in a place like Minneapolis.

Tennessee Williams in Scott Hall! The mind boggles. You don't keep a thing like that quiet, no matter how hard you try. The word got out somehow earlier in the day that he might show up. How else do you explain the sudden flurry of phone calls from the august Guthrie Theater, inquiring if Mr. Michael Langham [then the Guthrie Artistic Director] could have a pair of seats for the University's *Streetcar* on this particular night? That was unusual, indeed unique. I couldn't recall any previous interest on the part of the Guthrie in a University production. No matter. Michael Langham appeared, just as Ron and Gary were escorting Tennessee down the opposite aisle and into his seat in Row C. I stood at the back of the house, pacing up and down. The performance began. Debra Mooney was Blanche. She still did not know whether or not the

author was in the audience. But almost from the first, in the middle of that long tirade about Belle Rive and "the loss, the loss," and Blanche's description of those old women, dying all around her, something Debra did, turning Blanche's self-pity suddenly to playfulness, caught Mr. Williams completely off guard. And he laughed. And what a laugh. Nobody could ever mistake Tennessee Williams' laugh. Debra heard that laugh. We all did. She knew he was there. And he turned to Ron and whispered, "That's it. That's the way I wrote it."

So the performance proceeded, gained momentum, raced along to the intermission. And by then, of course, people had recognized the author, and the whispers were going around the house, and people standing up to get a better look. We managed to get Tennessee up the aisle and out of the building. I was backstage, where the cast was in a state of wonderful agitation. Act Two, and Tennessee, back in his seat, lapping it up. Was he just pretending to see his work for the very first time?

Now it was over, and the house was filled with excited babble as Ron forged a path up the aisle. I was waiting there, and Tennessee came almost running up to me, and in full view of Merle Loppnow and a number of curious onlookers, he grabbed me and kissed me and then whispered something in my ear, a little private comment I keep to myself and think about now and then when faced with the banality and stupidity of life. After that, I walked on air down the steps of Scott Hall and out into a night suddenly filled with riches.

We all went over to my house for a cast party. Just the cast and a few friends. Mr. Langham showed up too, bounding up the stairs to announce with excitement that *Streetcar* is a great and wonderful play.

I can still see Tennessee sitting squat-legged on the living-room floor, talking to the young actors, treating them with gracious, almost genteel politeness and respect, almost like Amanda talking to a cluster of those famous gentlemen callers. He seemed to regard them as peers! Can you imagine that? Tennessee Williams regarding student actors of his great play as peers. "But it's magic, when it happens," he whispered to me. "Magic!"

And he sat there for some hours, talking with Debra, his eyes sparkling. Then suddenly, it must have been around two A.M., he went to my phone in the kitchen and dialed his agent in New York. Not Audrey [Wood], this was after Audrey, in the Billy Barnes period. Tennessee was already in the habit of changing members of his retinue the way you'd change the oil in your car. "Listen, Billy," I heard him exclaim into the phone, "I know it's late but I've just discovered the real Blanche DuBois, way out here in Minneapolis, among the eskimos."

Now who could believe that? A youthful actress in a student production? But how generous of him to say it. She was standing next to me, and who knows, perhaps it was the most magical moment of her life. Well, it got to be nearly three A.M., time for Tennessee to get back to his hotel. Our farewells extended into the street, everyone waving goodbye, and surely waking up the neighbors. After the last guest had departed and I was cleaning the ashtrays and carting away debris, I thought to myself: "Perhaps this will turn out to be the most magical night in my life as well."

* * *

A year passed. Then, one weekend, there it was in *The New York Times*, in the entertainment section, boldly in print, under his own hand, for all the world to read. "And except for Arletty in Paris, the best Blanche I ever saw was Debra Mooney in a student production at the University of Minnesota. Because she got the humor in the part, as well as all the rest."

I saw Tennessee once again, back in New York. Lunch at the Essex House, Tennessee as warm and loving as always, but surrounded by strangers who clouded his special beauty, hangers-on, shabby people on the make, panderers, and such like. It wasn't the same. Tennessee struck me toward the end of his life as a man who was drowning, drowning in disappointment, in his own "fame," in a rising tide of frustration and sadness. I don't think anybody could have helped him then. He was beyond help. No, I prefer to remember that magical night in Minneapolis, sitting on my living-room floor, surrounded by eager, unspoiled young people: Tennessee Williams. That's the Tennessee I prefer to remember.

A Glossary of Words and Phrases Found in the Play

Ash pits: large mounds of ash left over from coal furnaces. "*You could see them kissing behind ash pits and telephone poles.*" Tom Scene 5.

Berchtesgaden: an area of southeastern Germany, now a national park, known for breathtaking views of the German Alps. "*Suspended in the mist over Berchtesgaden...*" Tom Scene 5.

Blue Mountain: the small town in northern Mississippi where Amanda grew up. "*One Sunday afternoon in Blue Mountain when your mother was a girl she received —seventeen — gentlemen callers!*" Amanda Scene 1.

Cakewalk: a dance with a strutting step based on a promenade. "*I won the cakewalk twice at Sunset Hill...*" Amanda Scene 7.

Celotex: a type of fiber board used for building insulation. "*You think I want to spend fifty-five years of my life down there in that — celotex interior!*" Tom Scene 3.

Century of Progress: an international fair held in Chicago from 1933 to 1934, the theme of which was science and industry. "*...I saw it summer before last at the Century of Progress.*" Jim Scene 8.

Cotillion: a formal ball where debutantes are presented. "*I led the cotillion in this dress years ago.*" Amanda Scene 7.

D.A.R.: Daughters of the American Revolution; national women's organization of descendents of patriots of the American Revolution. "*Didn't you go to the D.A.R. meeting, Mother.*" Laura Scene 2.

Dandelion Wine: A fermented alcoholic beverage made from the petals of dandelion blossoms, citrus peel and sugar. Typically a light wine lacking body. "*I'd like Laura to have a little dandelion wine.*" Amanda Scene 8.

Daumier: French painter, sculptor and caricaturist, known in his lifetime chiefly as a social and political satirist. "*The light on her face with its aged but childish features is cruelly sharp, satirical as a Daumier print.*" SD Scene 5.

Doughboy: a nickname for WWI infantrymen. "*It is the face of a very handsome young man in a doughboy's First World War cap.*" SD Scene 1.

Guernica: a town in the Basque region of Spain that was the site of a massive and brutal attack during the Spanish Civil War. "*In Spain there was Guernica.*" Tom Scene 6.

Hogan Gang: an infamous crime family from St. Louis. "*I've joined the Hogan Gang, I'm a hired assassin...*" Tom Scene 3.

Jonquils: a species of narcissus having a small yellow flower. "*She carries a bunch of jonquils.*" SD Scene 7.

Lawrence, D.H.: (1885-1930) English novelist and poet best known at that time for *Sons and Lovers*. "*That awful book by that insane Mr. Lawrence.*" Amanda Scene 3.

Malaria: an infectious disease transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito. It is characterized by fever and severe chills. "*I had malaria fever, too.*" Amanda Scene 7.

Mazda lamp: first lighted lamp invented by Thomas Edison. "*...before Mr. Edison found that Mazda lamp.*" Amanda Scene 8.

Metropolitan star: a star in New York's Metropolitan Opera, one of the foremost opera companies in the world. "*Temperament like a Metropolitan star!*" Amanda Scene 1.

Merchant Marine: the fleet of US ships that carried imports and exports during peacetime and became a naval auxiliary during wartime to deliver troops and war materials. "*I saw that letter you got from the Merchant Marines.*" Amanda Scene 5.

Milk Fund: "Milk funds" were set up all over the country by philanthropic groups (usually religious groups) and local governments to provide milk for undernourished children in public schools. A private Jewish women's council began St. Louis' first milk fund in 1917; the public school system took over responsibility in the mid-1930s. Federal funding for milk in schools began in 1940. "*And there was an organ solo and a collection for the milk-fund.*" Tom Scene 4.

The Pirates of Penzance: 19th century operetta by Gilbert and Sullivan. "*Here he is in the Pirates of Penzance.*" Laura Scene 2.

Pleurosis: an inflammation of the lungs, characterized by chills, fever, painful breathing and coughing. "*I said pleurosis — he thought that I said Blue Roses!*" Laura Scene 2.

Purina: a hot multi-grain breakfast cereal made from oats, wheat, and millet. "*Eat a bowl of Purina!*" Amanda Scene 5.

Quinine: a bitter extract from cinchona bark used as a tonic to treat malaria. "*I took quinine and kept on going and going!*" Amanda Scene 7.

Service Car: The term 'service car' in 1937 could apply to a bus, trolley or streetcar, but not to a taxi. "*I gave your brother a little extra money so he and Mr. O'Connor could take the service car home.*" Amanda Scene 7.

Shipping Clerk: Shipping clerks keep records of all outgoing shipments. They prepare shipping documents and mailing labels and make sure that orders have been filled correctly. Also, they record items taken from inventory and note when orders were filled. Sometimes they fill the order themselves, obtaining merchandise from the stockroom, noting when inventories run low and wrapping or packing the goods in shipping containers. "*He's a shipping clerk.*" Tom Scene 6.

Notes from director Joe Dowling

It's a great excitement for me to start work on the third of our subscription productions in the McGuire Proscenium, *The Glass Menagerie* with this wonderful cast and wonderful, wonderful design team. But we're all right in the middle of the holiday season, which is just exactly the right time to start this particular play, the week before Christmas and during Chanukah. We're just ideally set up for disappointment and sadness and loneliness.

One of the reasons that I wanted to add *The Glass Menagerie* to our first season in the McGuire Proscenium was that it's a personal favorite play of mine. It's been one that I've wanted to do for many years and have never had the chance to do. Now we have the opportunity to say to our audience, we've done this play three times before at the Guthrie but this is the first time that it's being done on a proscenium stage, which is the way in which it was originally written. The use of a proscenium stage will obviously give the play a different impact. But it also seemed to me important as we develop a program for the three different stages here at the Guthrie, that the American repertoire, particularly the American repertoire of the 20th century be represented — Arthur Miller, Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, and moving towards more contemporary writers, as we will as time goes on. When I started to think about which of the Tennessee Williams' plays we ought to do, *The Glass Menagerie* kept coming to the surface, largely because it was Tennessee Williams' first great success and it is a play that I think defines its own time. *The Glass Menagerie* was written during the Second World War, a time when American writers were increasingly experimenting with form, when the idea of the naturalistic theater that had been so dominant in the first part of the 20th century was starting to break up. The idea of expressionism which had been perhaps more popular in Europe was starting to seep into American writing, and Tennessee Williams in a very profound way created that kind of synthesis between the naturalism of American writing, and expressionism and the idea of the poetic, and brought it all together in a single play.

The Glass Menagerie opened in Chicago in a snowstorm on December 26 1944, right at the heart of WWII, and four years after Tennessee Williams' first play had the most spectacular flop in Boston, so there was a real nervousness and not a huge expectation that this was going to be the groundbreaking play it became, changing the face of American theater. It subsequently went on to Broadway and led to a career that had tremendous heights with plays like *The Glass Menagerie*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Night of the Iguana*, that John did so beautifully a couple of years ago, *Summer and Smoke* and so many other plays. His career also had incredible lows — times when Tennessee Williams' career seemed to be over, when the critics turned against him, when he was not popular among audiences. That kind of seesaw was so much his life and career and is fascinating.

Tennessee Williams poured so much of himself into all of the plays that he wrote, but particularly into *The Glass Menagerie*. The story tells really very simply of the life that Tennessee Williams' mother and sister lived in St. Louis. The one deviation from the autobiographical is that the Wingfield father is absent where in fact Tennessee Williams' father did not leave and the family lived together, if somewhat unhappily. Williams hated St. Louis, and called it St. Pollution. The awful irony is that he was buried there. So he's probably still revolving in his grave even as we speak. Williams had grown up in the south with his grandparents. His grandfather was an Episcopal minister, and he had a somewhat idyllic life in his grandparents home until his father got a permanent job in St. Louis and the family moved there which started both his hatred of the St. Louis, and his need to constantly escape

through his imagination with his writing.

Williams first wrote *The Glass Menagerie* as a short story called "Portrait of a Girl in Glass" and then went on to write it in play form as *The Glass Menagerie*. In many ways he wrote it almost as an expiation of guilt, because his sister Rose who was very close to him was mentally ill and an experimental lobotomy was performed upon her which left her for the rest of her life in the care of different mental institutions. Williams always felt that if he had been there, he could have prevented it from happening. So he had an enormous guilt about it and in some ways he wrote this play out of that guilt. In a way the portrait of Laura in the play, and the idea of the poet and his sister and the eventual leaving his sister behind are all a part of that guilt. However, issues that Laura has, the excessive shyness and so on, are not the issues that Rose had.

Tennessee Williams' mother was a fascinating character and indeed wrote her own book about Tennessee Williams growing up, which is delightful to read actually, but which one has to believe is 90% fiction, because she never really accepted that she was the prototype for Amanda. She absolutely refused to believe it. On the opening night in Chicago, Edwina Williams went around to the dressing room and was congratulating Laurette Taylor, who was playing Amanda, and Laurette said to her, "So how did you like yourself on stage, Mrs. Williams?" Apparently, at this, Edwina's southern manners came into play and she just quietly said "Me? That's not me dear." and left. But when it suited her she would actually call herself Mrs. Wingfield as opposed to Mrs. Williams, so she played both sides of that particular street when it was of benefit. But she was clearly the prototype for Amanda — an extraordinary woman who did come from the south, who did have all those southern manners and who found herself in a very difficult situation in St. Louis with a husband who clearly, while not physically violent, was certainly abusive in many different ways.

There's so much about this play that we will discover and work on as we go through it. But the reason why I am so thrilled that Bill McCallum is part of our cast is that I've broken up the character of Tom between Randy Harris and Bill, because *The Glass Menagerie* is a memory play. It's a play where someone at an older age is looking back on a time that was painful and troubled. I thought it would be an interesting opportunity to explore the play in a different way, to actually have the Tom of the narration be different from the Tom in the scenes, and that's why it's great to have Randy and Bill both to explore both sides of this particular character.

The Glass Menagerie is a play that I am personally very attached to. It's a play, I believe, which says a lot both about the theater of the time in which it was written and also still speaks to those areas of sensitivity and shyness and awkwardness that come with growing up and finding one's place in the world. Those feelings are entirely universal. They're not necessarily tied either to country or to time. So it's a tremendously exciting opportunity for me personally to direct this play in the McGuire Proscenium, and I hope we're all going to have a pretty good time on it.

Notes from set designer Richard Hoover

In the description in the beginning of the script there are several paragraphs which Tennessee Williams wrote about the period of the war and coming out of the depression, and St. Louis seemed to be an iconic place for what had landed on people. So we had originally thought maybe we would use a naturalistic design for the set. After we looked at that, we leapt to more of an abstraction in design, given both that the play has a character who can wander in and out of scenes and that Williams's himself called it a memory play.

At the beginning of the play, the stage will be empty and the older Tom will come out and speak the opening speech and then the set will start to arrive as well as all the characters. There will be a big cue at the beginning where the set will literally come out of the void and gather. We have it sort of figured out, how that is going to happen, but we'll do that in tech. However, because of the great machine of the proscenium, because it has an advanced flying system and it's a very clean space, and well designed, and because the sight lines of the theater are very good, we can achieve the sort of epic arrival of scenery along with an intimacy which is needed for most of the scenes. The set is very simply this little back room of a tenement in an alley. What we have is a small room and a dining room. For the area that surrounds it, we've taken metal and a photographic reference of the tenements and fire escapes, and tried to keep it hard edged. We've painted it blue and kept it very abstract so that the lighting can really play in and hopefully the city will literally land on the set. And then the father is going to be in an oversized frame and will arrive probably at the last moment in the set.

Notes from costume designer Ann Hould-Ward

I'm staggered at the image that Richard and Joe came up with of the fragmented scenery, and after I had seen the model initially I kept thinking back to the speech of Old Tom where he talks about Guernica. To me what Richard and Joe have done is spectacularly tap into the mind of a playwright who is conjecturing into the next world of fragmentation, much like Picasso's imagining of Guernica. It's almost like Williams could telepathically know what's coming.

In relationship to that, Joe and I have tried to ground the clothes in a very deep realism. The clothing is exactly how Tom might have remembered from very little distance — how the seams might have been frayed. Hopefully for the actors the costumes will create between them an instantaneous recognition of how edges are threadbare. Within the world of the play that will allow the audience to see each and every character from the heart of the times, which were times of very little money in general. The play is set at time when America was coming out of the depression, and we're with a family who has to figure out how to keep re-using things, as many people did in this country at the time. So much of what I've done is based on the idea that Amanda is holding things together. For example, she keeps taking a dress from seven years ago and figuring out how to move the waistline up compared to what is in the ladies home magazines she's trying to sell on the phone. How does she do those things that are constantly trying to keep the society of her family together in the manner with which she grew up, and how much can she actually accomplish? This will hopefully give particularly the actors a moment of memory and relationship to each other and show how they do try to do for each other. Basically what I've done is set the costumes in 1935-1936 but with the real thought of how much of the clothing is really from generally 5 to 7 years earlier because people just wouldn't have had that much. And the color world relates to really just sitting on top of the amazing space that Richard's given us.

For Amanda's cotillion dress, I looked at a ton of real cotillion dresses and one of the most fascinating things about that was how the cotillion dresses were normally the dress a girl got married in. The inspiration for Amanda's dress is all those dramatically beautiful old lace dresses of the period, knowing how she would have kept it in a box, treasured exactly like it was. The dress must also evoke that astounded reaction from her son when she arrives in the room.

Notes from lighting designer Jane Cox

Tennessee Williams is sort of a lighting designer's dream. To have the chance to put this play in this theater is really thrilling to me. I just did Williams' *Suddenly Last Summer*, and there's a line in that play where the mother character is remembering something and she says "The shadows were as luminous as the light," which I thought was such a gorgeous line.

The beauty of the set that we have is the expressionism of the pieces around the edges which can function in all kinds of different ways — they can be really romantic, but they can also be silhouettes of the structure which is a little more threatening, a little harsher. Then we have this very protected little world in the middle of it. In so many of all Tennessee Williams' plays all the scenes are set on the edges of the day, the edges of the morning and the edges of the night, and there's a kind of romance to that. I think it's going to be thrilling to marry the realistic world of these people with this expressionistic concept.

Building the Production: Backstage Information about *The Glass Menagerie*

Editor's Note: The following notes on the Guthrie production of *The Glass Menagerie* were prepared by Jacque Frazzini, Community Relationships Special Projects, for tour guides, volunteers and staff.

Adriane Heflin, Assistant Technical Director

As seen in the following photograph, set designer Richard Hoover has created an abstract set which compliments the concept of *The Glass Menagerie* as a memory play in which a mature Tom Wingfield serves as a narrator looking back on an earlier period in his life. The play opens with a bare stage, but as Tom sets the scene for us with his first monologue, set pieces move into place around him creating an acting area that is very tight, small and intimate. There are three large wagons on automated tracks (one center and two diagonal tracks) that move downstage and fit together in what appears to be a



Set for *The Glass Menagerie*

seamless fashion. Built of steel frames covered with lauan (a type of hardwood) planks, the wagons form the realistic living and dining room of the Wingfield apartment. Translucent walls on the upstage wagon are made from steel frames covered with gauze.

Lead Scenic Artist Michael Hoover, Assistant Lead Scenic Artist Denise Dooley and Staff Scenic Artist Kathleen Carlson painted the gauze with stencils to make it look like flowered wall paper. Surrounding the set are four towers, two upstage and two down, made from various sizes of steel tubing and 1 x 8 pine, layered on top of each other and welded together. To add visual texture to the sculptural towers and flats, pieces of erosion cloth (a theatrical fabric purchased from the Rosebrand Company) are attached to the steel framing and sprayed with a two-part foam from a froth pack. Large pieces of translucent muslin, painted in blue and purple tones are attached to the backs of each tower. In collaboration with the lighting department, lights are hung from each of the towers. Steel gratings on the fire escape are made from sections of the grid work from the old Guthrie Theater on Vineland.

Sections of brick wall that are seen are made of a product called Homosote purchased at Home Depot and are often used for sound deadening. Carpenters built the door frame leading to the fire escape and fit it with a workable lock set. Though the Props and Scenic Arts Departments were responsible for the Venetian blinds, the carpenters built the window and its frame. Lastly, three neon signs with the words "Dance," "Liquor" and "Bar" are flown in the upstage area adding to the overall urban look of the set.

Sarah Gullickson, Associate Props Manager

As mentioned in the section above, to create the look that Set Designer Richard Hoover wanted, many of the props have been "toned down" through the use of techniques such as distressing or painting in hues of purple and blue. As an example, through the creative work of Master Soft Props Artisan Rozi Graham, the sofa cushion upholstery has been "carved out" to make it look worn and sagging and the edges have been frayed. All the pillows, blankets and furniture have been pulled from stock, but have been modified to look old and worn. Items such as the hat tree, typewriter, mantel clock, rugs, chandelier, sconces and the Victrola table are from stock. Though the phonograph arm of the Victrola rotates, the actual sound is coming through a



Randy Harrison (Tom Wingfield), Tracey Maloney (Laura Wingfield) and Harriet Harris (Amanda Wingfield)

speaker operated by the Sound Department. Using another item from stock, the *Lost in Yonkers* coffee table was adapted for the Wingfield apartment by cutting the legs down. Graham and Staff Props Craftsperson Linus Vlatkovich re-built a daybed from stock with new sides and upholstery. Because the play calls for the use of a dial phone, one was purchased from Phoneco, a company in Wisconsin that specializes in vintage phones. Some of the furniture, the phone, pillows and other small props items are shown in the following above.

Staff Props Craftspersons Kellie Larson and Stacey Schwebach worked their magic in creating clutter for the room which characterizes the set in Act I. Using images from Internet research, they made magazine covers and authentic-looking newspapers from the 1930's. In Act II, to prepare for the visit of Jim, the gentleman caller, the daybed, sofa and chair are all slip-covered, and a more polished silver set is placed in the dining room. All the clutter is removed.

Shown in the photo to the right, most of the animals on the menagerie table are acrylic, not glass, and for security's sake, they have been super-glued to the tabletop. Thirty-two horses and thirty-four horns were obtained from the Berkeley Repertory Theater in California for the unicorns. The script calls for the unicorn to be knocked from the coffee table surface during the dance that Laura and the Jim have near the end of the play. In order for the unicorn to "break," but not shatter when it hits the floor, the piece has been dipped in a clear product called Plasti Dip. Since the horn is attached with a non-permanent tacky adhesive, if it doesn't break off, it can be easily snapped apart by Laura when she takes it from Jim.



Creating the portrait of Mr. Wingfield, seen on the following page, was truly a collaborative process. Staff Props Craftsperson Nick Golfis used Photo Shop to scan a picture of Props Manager Patricia Olive's grandfather. The actual face is that of actor Bill McCallum who plays mature Tom with his hair styled and special make-up applied to suit the time period.



Stage food is always an inventive accomplishment by the Props Department. For the opening meal, the actors are eating mashed potatoes, red grape halves and bread. Later in the production, the dandelion wine is actually watered down decaffeinated iced tea while lemonade is really water in frosted glasses.

To ensure the safety of using lit candles on stage, all of the costumes, upholstery, tablecloth, stage floor and the newspapers that Jim places under the candelabra have all been fireproofed. The Venetian blinds for the window unit were ordered, then painted in blue and purple tones by Michael Hoover and Kathleen Carlson.

Jane Cox, Lighting Designer

Ray Steveson, Lighting Design Assistant

Cox was "excited to do this play" as so much about light is written in the script. Citing Tennessee Williams as a visionary, Cox explains that there are two pages of lighting descriptions in the stage directions specifying a lighting design that was not physically possible at the time the play was written. Williams was frustrated with the over-done theatrical realism of his time, and believed in creating magic with lighting. Lines from the play support Williams' strong emphasis on the importance of light such as, "the delicate rainbow light from the Paradise Dance Hall" and the closing reference to "blowing out the candles."

Designing lighting to accommodate the contrast between text and performances that are honest and real surrounded by a set that appears soft and romantic, Cox started from the inside and then worked out, so that the lighting is less and less realistic — romantic without becoming sentimental.

Working with Set Designer Richard Hoover's memory play design, Cox has made the clarity of the moments important while softening the edges of the outer part of the set. The audience is drawn into the personal interaction of the characters.

To create the warmth of memories Cox used a honey-colored palate, adjusting the lighting to create drab look when it was needed. Cox usually works from a palate that has no color within the lighting, but for this production, color gels are used in almost every light to achieve the desired look. The warm colors are evident in the picture on the first page of this article.

For the physical implementation of the lighting a total of 583 instruments are used with one follow spotlight necessary in the middle of the play. Steveson explains that there are lighting ladders that fly in and out during specific scenes in order to back light the set.

Scott W. Edwards, Sound Designer

According to Edwards, music plays a significant part in the sound design for this production. In creating the specific musical content for the production, composer Robert Waldman recorded his score from a previous production of *The Glass Menagerie* that he had done, then adapted it for the Guthrie. Recorded on site in the Guthrie sound studio, the music group included piano, two violins, viola, cello, English horn and alto saxophone. Analogous to the lighting stage directions, there are definite indications in the script as to where music should be used such as the dance hall music, a recording of a British group called the Pasadena Roof Orchestra. Specializing in American dance music of the 1920's and 1930's, this period sound created the desired effect for the

production. The Victrola music, heard twice during the production, is a Paul Whiteman Orchestra recording pulled from the Guthrie sound library. Though the arm on the Victrola rotates, the actual sound of the music is produced through the use of a wireless speaker, battery and receiver built into the prop and operated on cue via the sound system.

There are 12 basic sound cues in the show, and practical sound effects include the turn bell for the door (a pre-recorded cue), sounds of thunder, chimes in a bell tower, cars driving by and a distant police siren. In Act II, the dance hall music has been modified to achieve a distant, romantic sound.

Amelia Cheever, Costume Design Assistant

Costume Designer Ann Hould-Ward worked to make certain that for the most part, the color family didn't "blend" into the set design. To reflect the financial situation of the family, the costumes — especially for the women — look as if they were fashionable in the 20's, but have been altered by Amanda to try to make them appear more like the 30's. For the Wingfields, the only dress that would have been purchased recently would be Laura's fashionable dress for Jim's visit. For that scene, Amanda's cotillion dress is all silk and Laura's is rayon with silk trim. Some of the costumes appear in the following photographs.



Harriet Harris (Amanda Wingfield)
and Tracey Maloney (Laura Wingfield)



Bill McCallum (Tom Wingfield)



Tracey Maloney (Laura Wingfield)

Pulled from stock, Laura's and "mature" Tom's sweaters, and all the men's shirts were the only clothing items not built by the Costume Department. All the fabrics for the women's costumes were purchased in New York except for Amanda's peach-colored dress and Laura's quilted dress for the shopping trip. Dyer/Painter Doreen Johnson did a masterful job of working with the overall color palate for the show by the use of several washings and color techniques for the clothes, and distressing shoes, hats and purses for a worn look.

Costume Crafts Staffperson John Becker built the hats for the women; all the women's shoes were specially built at the Pompeii Company in Italy, the same company used for the recent Guthrie production of *The Great Gatsby*.

Ivy Loughborough, Wigmaster

Loughborough described the show as being "straight-forward" 1930's hairstyles. Laura and Amanda each have two wigs. For Amanda the styles are the same, but a double wig is required as she wears hats occasionally during the production. Laura's second wig is worn in Act II and is more elaborate for the visit of the gentleman caller. None of the men in the play wear wigs or use any facial hair.

Photos by T. Charles Erickson.

Suggested Questions

1. *The Glass Menagerie* is a "memory play." This is made apparent by the use of a narrator who remembers, but in what other ways is it a memory play? What role does our memory play in the perception of a work of art like *The Glass Menagerie*?
2. A playwright often draws on personal experiences in developing plot and characters. What are some of the differences between an artist's experience and the work he produces?
3. In what ways might *The Glass Menagerie* be a different play if Williams had chosen one of the other characters to tell the same story? What story might Laura tell? Amanda? The gentleman caller? How would their stories differ? What, would you say, is the "truth" of memory?
4. What disappointments had each of the characters in *The Glass Menagerie* experienced? How does each cope? How does each escape from the pain in his or her life? Describe how you think the Wingfield family deals with their problems.
5. Many of the details in *The Glass Menagerie* are autobiographical. Do you find that knowing this about a play enhances your understanding, or do you prefer to judge a play on its own merits? Do you want to know before you see a play, or read a book, or see other artwork, how much of the work — if any — is about the artist and how much is fabrication?
6. Amanda is hoping Laura has the same success with "gentleman callers" that she enjoyed as a girl, but Laura seems not to be able to pull it off. Do you think Amanda's expectations for her daughter are realistic? If so, what do you think Amanda could do to help her beyond what she is doing? If not, why do you think Amanda holds on to this hope? Is she confused about how times have changed? Unwilling to accept the family's situation? Unwilling to accept Laura's temperament? Or something else?
7. What do you think are the strengths or weaknesses of each character in *The Glass Menagerie*? Describe.
8. How has Williams used humor in *The Glass Menagerie*? What does this suggest about the Wingfield family?
9. What do you project is in the future for the characters of *The Glass Menagerie*? In what way is this an optimistic play? In what ways is it pessimistic?
10. What are the most significant features of the 1930s in the United States? Discuss the playwright's choice of setting his play in this time period.
11. In what ways does Jim O'Connor reflect the reality of the 1930s? What are his ambitions and values? How is Jim different from the other characters in the play?

12. In the Guthrie production of *The Glass Menagerie* the themes of the play become alive through the elements of set, costumes, lights and sound. How do these elements mark and enhance these themes.

Classroom Activities

1. Pick one theme in the play *The Glass Menagerie* and write your own story using the same idea.
2. Read another play by Tennessee Williams and compare the two plays. Include plot, characters and themes.
3. a. Using pictures and words from magazines, construct a collage for each character in the play that describes the essence of his or her personality. Remember that it is not just the individual items or words, but the total feeling of the picture that will provide insight into the personality being described. For example, Laura's collage may have a faint, gauzy, pastel look to it, and might include images of fragile objects such as glass, flowers or lace.
b. Do the same activity to construct a collage for and about yourself. You could include images of who you are as well as images that reflect your dreams, hopes and aspirations.
4. Select or compose music that gives an impression of one of the characters in the play. Title it for the character you have chosen (e.g., "Laura's Theme" or "The Gentleman Caller") Share your selection with the class, and explain why that particular music and title were chosen.
5. Study American/European art of the 1930s, and search for paintings that evoke the same mood as in *The Glass Menagerie*.
6. Picasso, like Tennessee Williams, created art which was autobiographical. Study the work that Picasso produced during the 1930s, the same period of time in which *The Glass Menagerie* takes place. How was the painting "Guernica" part of Picasso's life? Why did Tennessee Williams mention it in *The Glass Menagerie*?
7. Construct a timeline of history that includes the world events mentioned by the playwright in *The Glass Menagerie*.
8. *The Glass Menagerie* takes place during Great Depression. Many areas of the world are currently experiencing economic recession or depressions. Find news articles or research on the web that describes conditions in those places. What effect do those global conditions have on your life?
9. Consider the fulfillment of the American Dream from the perspective of each character in *The Glass Menagerie*. Define each character's interpretation of their dream, citing examples from the text to support your definition. Where does each character succeed or fail in their pursuit of this dream?
Write, journal, paint, sculpt, etc. your response to one of the following....
How has the American Dream evolved since the 1930s?
Who embodies the spirit of the American Dream?
What is your dream?
10. Imagine Amanda, Tom, Laura or Jim ten years into the future. Select one character and write a letter as if you are that character, discussing and reflecting on the events of your life.