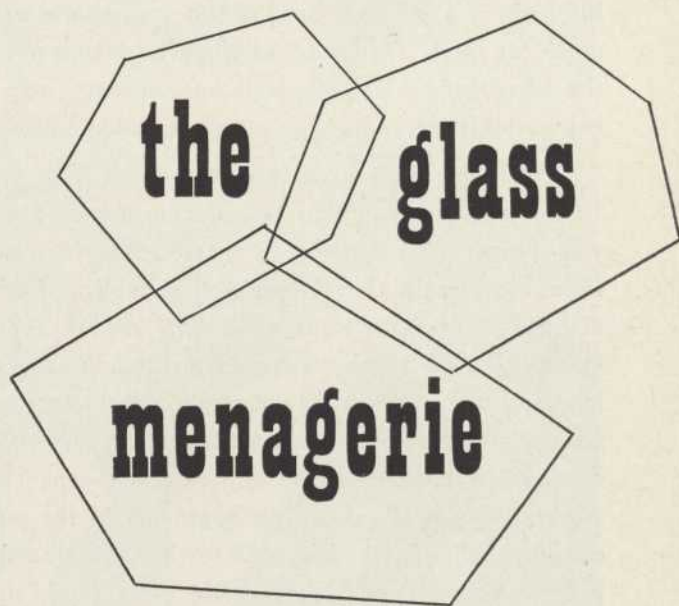


THÉÂTRE DU NOUVEAU MONDE • SIXTH SEASON 1956-1957

artistic director: JEAN GASCON



**the glass
menagerie**

by Tennessee Williams

First produced March 31, 1945

at the Booth Theatre, New York.

Notes on the play and the author (*)

Among the younger American playwrights of importance Tennessee Williams was the first to emerge and has retained an edge in leadership. He represents a new spirit in local color tragedy: the concern with a fragile character who is beset with an obsession born of frustration and who is engulfed by a callous or cruel world, usually localized in the lower Mississippi region. It is natural for Williams to write of the locale which flowed in upon his youthful mind, and in so doing he achieves an authentic tone in his plays; but his forte is a sensitive insight into frail characters who find life too much for them. Williams' language is responsive to the demands of the situation; he employs striking contrasts; and he uses a partially expressionistic technique to enforce emotional effects.

Williams first drew attention with *The Glass Menagerie* in 1944. It is worth noting that during a period when serious drama was preoccupied with war themes, this delicate, irrelative story should captivate the theatre-going public. The indication is that distinctive drama with universality always appeals. The account in this play of the shy, crippled girl, who is crossed in her youthful love and who turns to her menagerie for solace, strikes a responsive note in all who have been wounded by the world and who try to carry their pain in silence; add to this the psychic nostalgia of the mother who dwells upon her happiness in the past, and the wistful quality of the play is deepened further. Produced unsuccessfully the following year, *You Touched Me* (1945) told again the story of a fragile girl, having the "almost transparent quality of glass," who daydreams amid delicate ornaments and shrinks from an intimidating environment.

Williams' most successful play, *A Street Car Named Desire* (1947), is a tragic drama of the same major design as *The Glass*

(Cont'd on page 4)

(*) From an introduction by Allan G. Halline for *Six Modern American Plays*. (The Modern Library, New York.)



TENNESSEE WILLIAMS (1944)

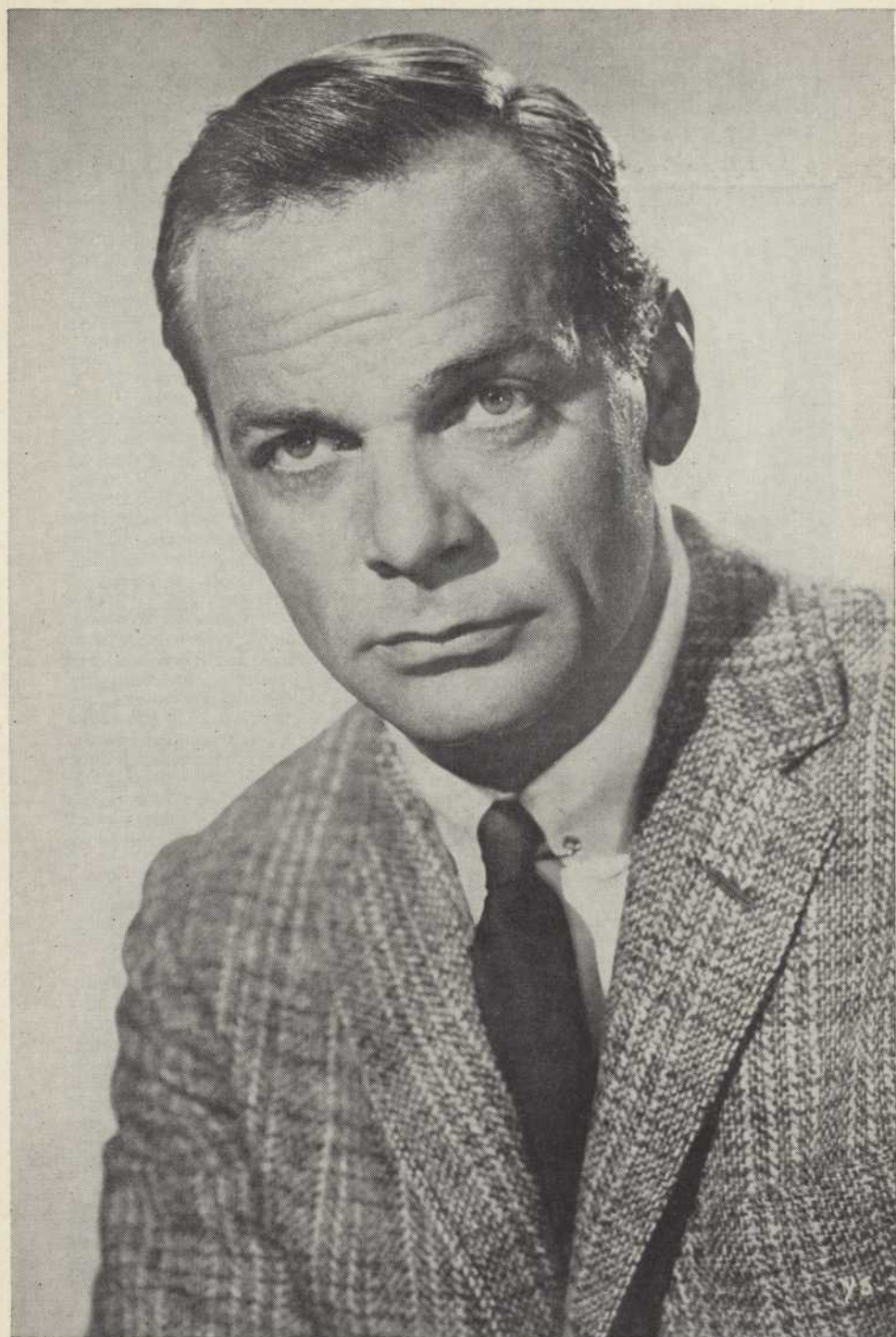
Notes on the play and the author (Cont'd from page 2)

Menagerie (a critic has said that it might be called *Another Part of the Glass Menagerie*), but it is more intense and violent. There is a delicate, cultured central character, driven to neurasthenia by frustration; she finds herself in a harsh world, here localized in New Orleans. Blanche du Bois of *A Street Car Named Desire* is, to be sure, a different person from Laura Wingfield in *The Glass Menagerie*; the former is excitable and frenzied whereas the latter is reserved, even ingrown; Blanche seeks compensation for her frustrated love by frantically pursuing lovers, whereas Laura finds a measure of consolation in her silent glass animals. But the outlines of their stories are similar: each has suffered disappointment and disillusionment in a broken love affair preceding the action of the play; each converts a bequilement into an obsession; each experiences a moment of retrieved or new-found elation before the final resolution, which for Laura is relapse and for Blanche is insanity. In both plays the environment of the heroine is callous, depressing, or harsh: for Laura the tawdry tenement, the droning mother, the evanescent rekindled love; for Blanche the decaying house, the violent brother-in-law, the cruel commitment. Both plays make expressionistic use of setting, lights, properties, and music.

Summer and Smoke (1948), which failed to gain public support, tells the story of a delicate girl whose sense of propriety is so strong that she is driven to frustration by a scientist lover. Williams' last play,* *The Rose Tattoo* (1951), represents a departure from the pattern that had dominated his previous plays. In an exuberant, partly comic mood he writes of a Sicilian woman on the Gulf Coast who passionately builds up an ideal of her departed husband, only to find that she has all along been deceived. The result is not unrelieved despair, however, but regeneration.

Tennessee Williams' major talent revealed so far is a dual ability to portray sensitive characters with lyric vitality and to depict elemental beings with naked power. He blends these and intermediate characters with structural skill and restrained expressionism. Unless he continues to develop new thematic patterns, as in his last play, he will be limited in range; but he works adroitly within his chosen area. Though his tragic dramas do not embody the concept of ennoblement as Anderson defined it, they are faithful to the modern spirit of unrelieved failure or disaster.

* This introduction was written in 1951 (note of T.N.M.).



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JAMES DALY

About the Play...

THE GLASS MENAGERIE



RUPERT CAPLAN

Being a "memory play," *The Glass Menagerie* can be presented with unusual freedom of 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 frigidité 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. Life, or reality is an organic thing which the poetic

imagination can represent or suggest, in essence, only through transformation, through 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 theatre which must take the place of the exhausted theatre of realistic conventions if the theatre is to resume vitality as a part of our culture.

* * *

Another extra-literary accent in this play is provided by the use of music. A single recurring tune, *The Glass Menagerie*, is used to give emotional emphasis to suitable passages. When you look at a piece of delicately spun glass you think of two things: how beautiful it is and how easily it can be broken. Both of these ideas should be woven into the recurring tune, which dips in and out of the play as if it were carried on a wind that changes. It serves as a thread of connection and allusion between the narrator with his separate point in time and space and the subject of his story. Between each episode it returns as reference to the emotion, nostalgia, which is the first condition of the play. It is primarily Laura's music and therefore comes out most clearly when the play focuses upon her and the lovely fragility of glass which is her image.

Tennessee Williams wrote *The Glass Menagerie* when he was 29 years of age. In my opinion, Tennessee Williams is probably the most important and significant American dramatist since the late Eugene O'Neill. Many plays have come from the pen of Tennessee Williams but in my opinion, *The Glass Menagerie* remains his greatest, containing as it does, a quality of poetic beauty only occasionally evidenced in his later plays.

THE GLASS MENAGERIE

a play in two parts by

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

Directed by **Rupert CAPLAN**

Sets and costumes designed by **Jean-Claude RINFRET**

C A S T

Amanda Wingfield (the mother)	Eileen CLIFFORD
Laura Wingfield (her daughter)	Joan WATTS
Tom Wingfield (her son)	James DALY
Jim O'Connor (the gentleman caller)	Ed McGIBBON

Only one intermission of 15 minutes between Part I and II

S C E N E

AN ALLEY IN ST. LOUIS

Part I. — Preparation for a gentleman Caller

Part II. — The Gentleman calls

Time : Now and the Past

The Wingfield apartment is in the rear of the building, 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.

The apartment faces an alley and is entered by a fire-escape, a structure whose name is a touch of accidental poetic truth, for all of these huge buildings are always burning with the slow and implacable fires of human desperation.

The scene is memory and is therefore nonrealistic. Memory takes a lot of poetic license. It omits some details; others are exaggerated, according to the emotional value of the articles it touches, for memory is seated predominantly in the heart.

Cover design by Gilles ROBERT

Produced by special arrangement with
Dramatist Play Service Inc., New York City, N.Y.

Original musical score by **Paul BOWLES**

Photographs by Studio JAC-GUY

Photo of Tennessee Williams courtesy of Montreal Star

<i>Stage Manager</i>	Neil MADDEN
<i>Stage assistants</i>	Gabriel GASCON Bernard CHENTRIER
<i>Publicity</i>	Paul M. DAVIS
<i>Chief-electrician</i>	Louis HARRISON
<i>Chief set builder</i>	Lucien GAGNON
<i>Chief-painter</i>	Jean-Marc HÉBERT
<i>Tickets</i>	Antoinette VERVILLE
<i>Program sales</i>	Nicole KERJEAN

JEAN GASCON
artistic director



EILEEN CLIFFORD

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THÉÂTRE DU NOUVEAU MONDE

QUÉBEC : Saturday, March 9

MONTRÉAL : from Tuesday, March 12

UN CHAPEAU DE PAILLE D'ITALIE

by Eugène LABICHE

Directed by Jean GASCON

Sets and Costumes designed by Robert PRÉVOST

Music by Pierre PHILIPPE

JOAN WATTS



ED MCGIBBON

A PREVIOUS PRODUCTION OF THE ENGLISH SECTION OF LE THÉÂTRE DU NOUVEAU MONDE



Alfred GALLAGHER and Griffith BREWER in KAFKA'S *THE TRIAL*, adapted by FINE and GREENE

Photo Studio Lausanne

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