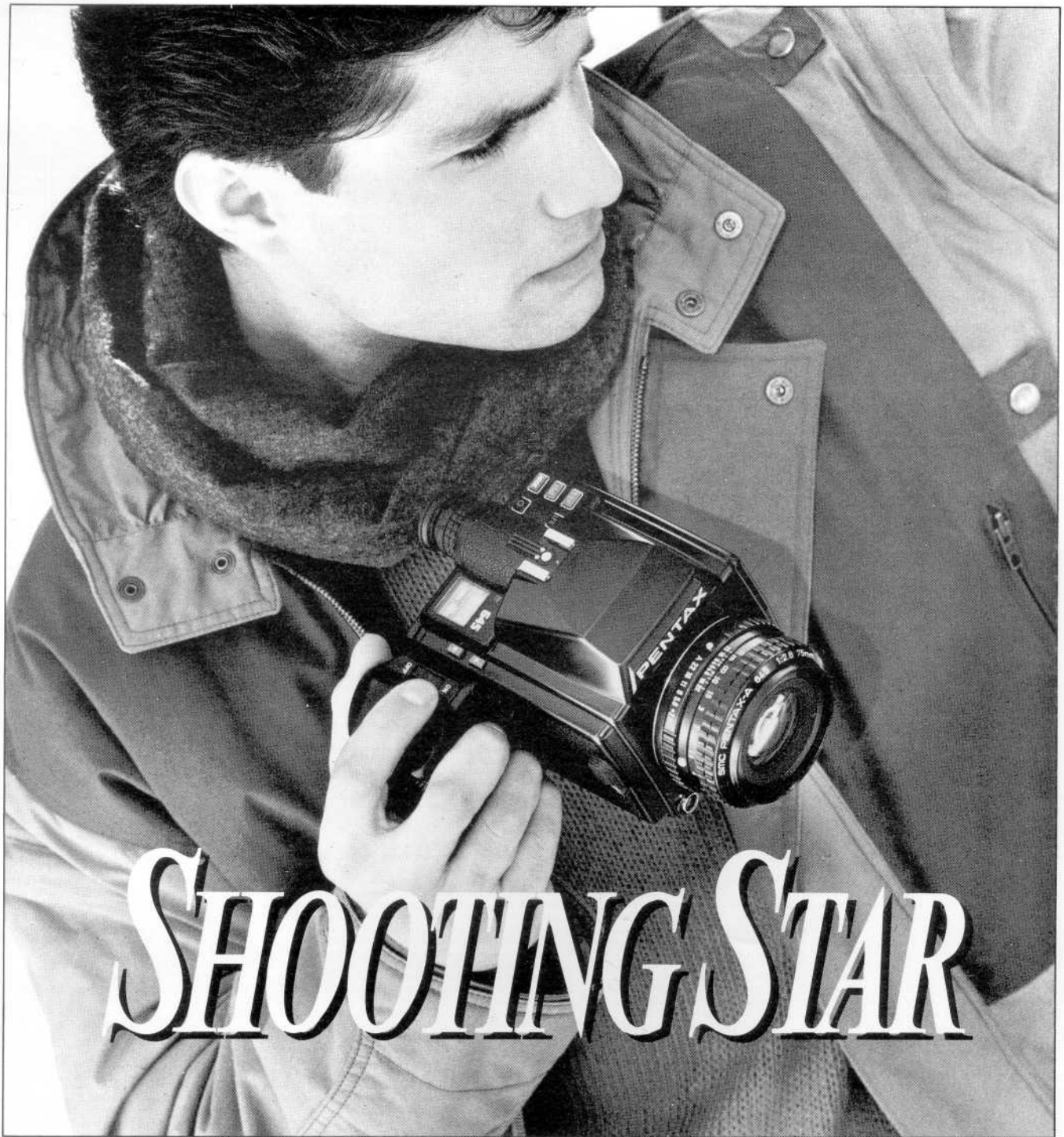


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Menagerie**



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The Glass Menagerie

By
Tennessee Williams

Directed by
Stanley Weese

September 18-28
1985

University of British Columbia
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1985/86 Season

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Directed by Stanley Weese
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Photo of Tennessee Williams by Yosuf Karsh, 1956

Miller Services

Tennessee Williams

A Chronology

- 1911 Thomas Lanier Williams born March 26, Columbus, Mississippi.
- 1919 Family moved to St. Louis.
- 1927 Essay, "Can a Good Wife be a Good Sport?" *Smart Set* (April).
- 1928 Story, "The Vengeance of Nitrocis," *Weird Tales* (August).
- 1929 University of Missouri, where he won small literary prizes.
- 1931 Monotonous stretch with shoe company relieved by all-night writing; nervous breakdown and recuperation in Memphis.
- 1935 July 12: *Cairo, Shanghai, Bombay!*, a farce produced in Memphis.
- 1936 Washington University, St. Louis; Willard Holland, director of Mummers, a little theater group, produced a one act and two long plays: *Candles in the Sun* and *Fugitive Kind*.
- 1937 State University of Iowa; awarded Bachelor of Arts degree.
- 1940 Audrey Wood secured Rockefeller fellowship, \$1000; Williams entered advanced playwriting seminar, New School, New York; *Battle of Angels* opened in Boston, a fiasco; Williams given \$200 to rewrite play.
- 1943 Audrey Wood secured Metro Goldwyn Mayer (MGM) contract for six months at \$250 a week; scripts rejected; Williams wrote *The Glass Menagerie*, a manuscript submitted to and refused by Metro Goldwyn Mayer.
- 1945 March 31: *The Glass Menagerie* opened in New York for 561 performances; won New York Drama Critics Circle Award on the first ballot;
- 1947 December 3: *A Streetcar Named Desire* opened in New York for 855 performances; won for Williams a second New York Drama Critics Circle Award; won Pulitzer Prize; film version, 1951;
- 1951 February 3: *The Rose Tattoo* opened in New York for 300 performances.
- 1955 March 24: *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* opened in New York for 79 performances; won third New York Drama Critics Circle Award, second Pulitzer Prize;
- 1961 December 28: *The Night of the Iguana* opened in New York for 316 performances; film version, 1964.
- 1969 January: Williams converted to Roman Catholicism. May 11: *In the Bar of a Tokyo Bar* opened off-Broadway for 29 performances; awards from National Institute of Arts and Letters and from Academy of Arts and Letters.
- 1972 April 2: *Small Craft Warnings* opened off-Broadway for 200 performances.
- 1975 June 18: *The Red Devil Battery Sign* opened in Boston;
- 1977 May 11: *Vieux Carre* opened in New York for five performances.
- 1983 February 25: Death in New York



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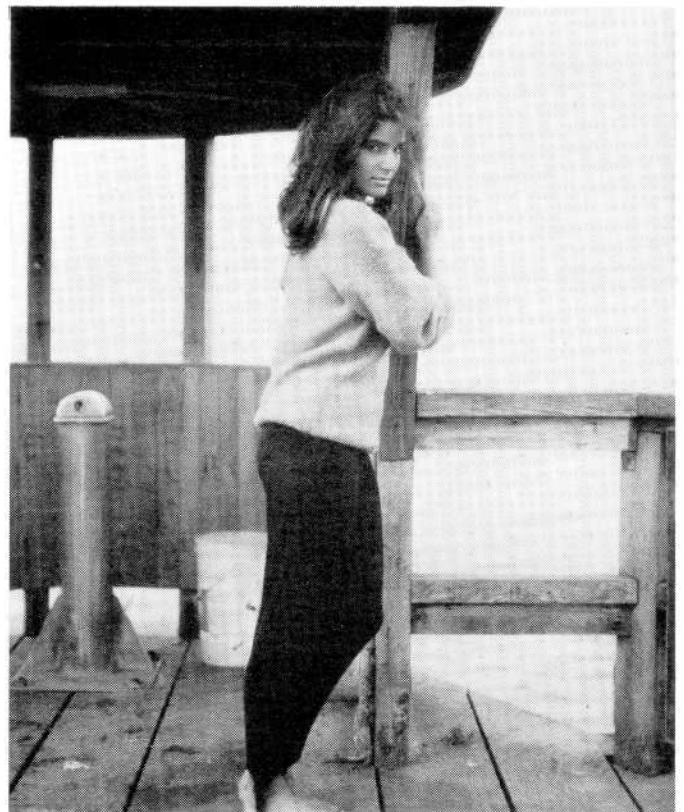


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A Note On The Play

By William Inge

The Glass Menagerie was a great surprise to me when I saw it, during the first week of its try-out in Chicago, a few nights before the new year (1945) was celebrated, for I had met the play's author a few weeks previously in St. Louis and not suspected him of genius. Here, obviously, was a greater man than the one I had taken to be accompanying me to concerts and movies and bars while he visited his family in St. Louis. When I left the theatre, I felt uncertain how to talk to the new image I had of him. I felt very stupid for having taken him for no more than his shyness would permit him to express of himself in social situations.

The play still remains in my memory as the most moving American play I have ever seen. The newness of its production when I saw it, and of all its fine performances, still shone on the play like the gloss on a new piece of silver. The acting of the late Laurette Taylor was of a calibre I had never seen before; the quality of the writing was a bright illumination in the dim course of American drama. I was conscious, upon leaving the theatre, of having seen a landmark made.

But at the same time there was little evidence in Chicago that anyone else felt similarly. The play had received excellent notices but the audiences were not attracted to it. The night I saw it, the theatre was about half-filled. The producers, I was told, were giving up their plans to bring the show into New York.

I was very bitter to think that such a beautiful play might have so short a life. But the happy ending finally came about, as surely as in a melodrama, the hero being such an unlikely group as the critics, all of whom began to work overtime writing articles urging people into the theatre. Business improved and the play's destiny was assured. It may be discouraging to think that the recognition of greatness can depend upon such precarious perception, but maybe Euripides had to take the same chances.



Julie Haydon, Laurette Taylor, New York, 1945

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A Memory By Kenneth Tynan

In Spain, where I saw him last, he looked profoundly Spanish. He might have passed for one of those confidential street dealers who earn their living selling spurious Parker pens in the cafes of Malaga or Valencia. Like them, he wore a faded chalk-striped shirt, a coat slung over his shoulders, a trim, dark moustache, and a sleazy, fat-cat smile. His walk, like theirs, was a raffish saunter, and everything about him seemed slept in, especially his hair, a nest of small, wet serpents. Had we been in Seville and his clothes had been more formal, he could have been mistaken for a pampered elder son idling away a legacy in dubs and on drabs, the sort you see sitting in windows along the Sierpes, apparently stuffed. In Italy he looks Italian; in Greece, Greek; wherever he travels on the Mediterranean coast, Tennessee Williams takes on a protective colouring which melts him into his background, like a lizard on a rock.

It is unmistakably the face of a nomad. Wherever Williams goes he is a stranger, one who lives out of suitcases and has a trick of making any home he acquires resemble, within ten minutes, a hotel apartment. Like most hypochondriacs, he is an uneasy guest on earth. When he sold the film rights of his play *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* for a half a million dollars, he asked that the payment should be spread over ten years, partly out of prudence but mostly out of a manic suspicion, buzzing in his ears, that in ten years' time he might be dead. He says justly of himself that he is 'a driven person'. The condemned tend always to be lonely, and one of Williams' favourite quotations is a line from a play which runs: 'We're all of us sentenced to solitary confinement inside our own skins.' He says such things quite blandly, with a thick chuckle which is as far from cynicism as it is from self-pity.

To be alone at forty is to be really alone, and Williams has passed forty. In a sense, of course, solitude is a condition of his trade. All writing is an anti-social act, since the writer is a man who can speak freely only when alone; to be himself he must lock himself up, to communicate he must cut himself off from all



communication; and in this there is something always a little mad. Many writers loathe above all sounds the closing of the door which seals them up in their privacy. Williams, by contrast, welcomes it: it dispels the haze of uncertainty through which he normally converses, and releases for his pleasure the creatures who people his imaginings — desperate women, men nursing troublesome secrets, untouchables whom he touches with frankness and mercy, society's derelict rag dolls.

He longs for intimacy, but shrinks from its responsibilities. Somewhere in the past, before he became famous, lies the one perfect passion; its object parted from him and afterwards died of cancer. Since then, too cautious to spoil perfection by trying to repeat it, he has kept all emotional relationships deliberately casual. He will incur no more emotional debts, nor extend any more emotional credit. His friendships are many and generous, ranging from Mediterranean remittance men to Carson McCullers; but love is a sickness which he will do anything to avoid. If his deeper instincts crave release, you may find him at a bullfight — or even writing a play.

Discussing the incidence of genius, Somerset Maugham once remarked: 'The lesson of anatomy applies: there is nothing so rare as the normal.' Williams's view of life is always abnormal, heightened and spotlighted, and slashed with bogey shadows. The marvel is that he makes it touch ours, thereby achieving the miracle of communication between human beings which he has always held to be impossible.

Yet he looks anonymous. One ends, as one began, with the enigma. Arthur Miller, after all, looks Lincolnesque, and Anouilh looks hypersensitive, and Sartre looks crazy. Williams, alone of the big playwrights, seems miscast. From that round, rubbery face, those dazed eyes which nothing, no excess or enormity, can surprise — from there the message comes, the latest bulletin from the civil war between purity and squalor. It will always, however long or well I know him, seem wonderfully strange.

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