



# SHOW GUIDE

Issue #1

## *The Glass Menagerie*

Courtesy of StageAgent

### Tennessee Williams

Pioneer of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Drama

Thomas Lanier "Tennessee" Williams III (March 26, 1911 – February 25, 1983) was a Pulitzer Prize-winning American playwright and author of many stage classics. He was born in Columbus, Mississippi in 1911 and had a troubled relationship with his father, an ambitious salesman (which would subsequently be reflected in Miller's *Death of a Salesman*). In 1929, he enrolled at the University of Missouri to study journalism but was dismayed when his father withdrew him from the college. Soon after, forced into a sales job he detested, Williams suffered a nervous breakdown. Upon his return to health, Williams began communicating with poets studying at Washington University and went on to graduate himself from the University of Iowa in 1938.

Williams moved to New Orleans at the age of 28 and took up writing more seriously. He soon landed an agent and in 1940 his first play, *Battle of Angels*, premiered in Boston. Although it flopped, Williams' spirit was not dampened and he revamped it into *Orpheus Descending* (later turned into the Marlon Brando movie, *The Fugitive Kind*).

In 1945, Williams hit the jackpot with his play, *The Glass Menagerie*, which closely reflected his own unhappy family background. This heralded a string of successes, including *A Streetcar Named Desire* which earned Williams his first Pulitzer Prize and a Drama Critics Award. *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Sweet Bird of Youth*, and *Camino Real* all followed, achieving critical success.

However, his later work attempted a new style that did not appeal to audiences, and alcohol and drug dependence further inhibited his creative output. In 1969 he was hospitalized and, following his release, he wrote his autobiography, *Memoirs*.



*The Glass Menagerie* is presented by arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc. on behalf of The University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee.

Directed by Darius Russelle  
Weekends  
March 25 – April 10, 2022



Williams in 1965 at the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of *The Glass Menagerie*.

Williams adapted much of his best work for the cinema, and also wrote short stories, poetry, essays, and several new plays. In 1979, four years before his death, he was inducted into the American Theater Hall of Fame. However, sadly, Williams could not escape his substance abuse and he died in 1983 in a New York hotel.

“Yes, I have tricks in my pocket, I have things up my sleeve. But I am the opposite of a stage magician. He gives you illusion that has the appearance of truth. I give you truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion.”

– Tom in *The Glass Menagerie*

Jennifer Franco

## Language and References in *The Glass Menagerie*

A guide to the vernacular, places, and jargon of The Great Depression

**Berchtesgaden** – A town in Bavaria in southeastern Germany. Near Berchtesgaden was Adolf Hitler's residence, the Berghof, which he bought in 1933 and expanded in 1935–1936.

**Bower** – A reference to the card game Euchre.

**Celotex interior** – The Celotex Corporation of America made construction materials. One of its subsidiary companies mined asbestos fiber, which could be woven into a fabric that was resistant to fire, heat and electricity and therefore prized and useful in manufacturing construction materials.

**Century of Progress** – A world's fair hosted by Chicago during the summers of 1933 and 1934 and visited by almost 40 million people. The exposition's theme was science and industrial development, in part to rebuild trust in science after the horror of chemical weapons used during World War I. The fair's unofficial motto came from the Hall of Science: "Science Finds, Industry Applies, Man Conforms."

**Chamberlain** – Neville Chamberlain (1869–1940), prime minister of the U.K., met with Hitler at the Berghof in 1938 as part of the "appeasement" negotiations that led to the Munich Agreement and would hand over the Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia, to Germany.

**Cotillion** – A formal ball in which young women, usually ages 16 to 18, appear in society or before the public for the first time. Originally a young woman made her debut to indicate she was of marriageable age.

**DAR** – Daughters of the American Revolution, a women's service organization founded in Washington, D.C., in 1890. Membership eligibility extends to any woman age 18 or older who can prove a direct line of descent from a patriot of the American Revolution.

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**Dissolving economy** – The Great Depression affected economies worldwide beginning in 1929. President Roosevelt's New Deal programs that began in 1933 helped alleviate some unemployment and instituted banking and labor reforms. Yet by 1940, 15% of the U.S. was still unemployed.

**Guernica** – A city in northern Spain near Bilbao that was heavily bombed by German planes in April 1937 during the Spanish Civil War.

**Greene County** – A county in southeastern Mississippi along the Alabama border.

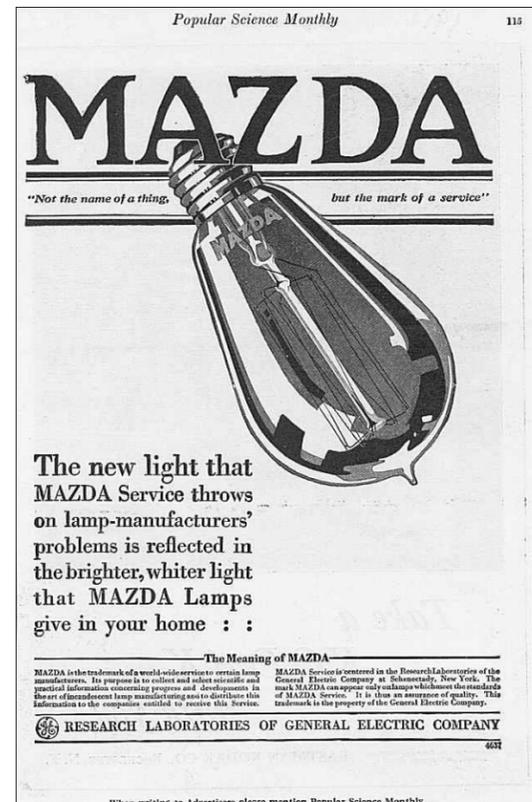
**Jackson** – The capital city of Mississippi, located in Hinds and Madison counties in the southeastern part of the state.

**Jonquils** – A species of daffodils (scientific name *Narcissus*) often characterized by clusters of several flowers, a strong scent and tube-like foliage.

**Mazda lamp** – A brand of electric light bulb manufactured by General Electric. (Ahura Mazda is the god of light in Persian mythology.)

**Milk-fund** – Charities that fundraise to provide clean milk to families and public schools had been around since 1889. St. Louis had a Pure Milk Fund by 1910.

**Mr. Lawrence** – D.H. Lawrence (1885–1930), an English author and influence on Williams. The likely "horrible novel" in Amanda's opinion is *Sons and Lovers*, published in 1913, which is regarded as a semi-autobiographical examination of a young man trying to detach himself from his mother.



A Mazda lamp ad from 1917.

**Moon Lake** – A crescent-shaped lake in Mississippi north of Clarksdale, not far from the Mississippi River and Arkansas border. It's an "oxbow lake," fairly common in the area, which was created when the Mississippi River changed course. Moon Lake and/or Moon Lake Casino appear in several of Williams' plays, including *Summer and Smoke*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

**Sunset Hill** – A Greek revival mansion in Aberdeen, Mississippi, built in 1847. It is also known as the Reuben Davis House, named after a prominent attorney who lived there.

**Service car** – Large cars for hire, like taxis, that followed specific routes on a specific schedule, like streetcars. According to the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 500 service cars were in operation before World War II and charged a nickel.

**Shredded Wheat Biscuit** – One of the first ready-to-eat cereals, invented in 1892 by Henry D. Perky.

**Spanish Revolution** – The Spanish revolution and subsequent civil war (1936–1939) resulted from a divided Spain and the rise of fascism in Europe.