PCPA Pacific Conservatory Theatre  
Student Matinee Program  
Presents  

A Study Guide for Educators  

Generously sponsored by  
Ron and Mary Nanning  
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Welcome to the Pacific Conservatory Theatre

A NOTE TO THE TEACHER
Thank you for bringing your students to PCPA at Allan Hancock College. Here are some helpful hints for your visit to the Severson Theatre. The top priority of our staff is to provide an enjoyable day of live theatre for you and your students. We offer you this study guide as a tool to prepare your students prior to the performance.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDENT ETIQUETTE
Notable behavior is a vital part of theater for youth. Going to the theater is not a casual event. It is a special occasion. If students are prepared properly, it will be a memorable, educational experience they will remember for years.

1. Have students enter the theater in a single file. Chaperones should be one adult for every ten students. Our ushers will assist you with locating your seats. Please wait until the usher has seated your party before any rearranging of seats to avoid injury and confusion. While seated, teachers should space themselves so they are visible, between every group of ten students. Teachers and adults must remain with their group during the entire performance.

2. As the Severson Theatre is an intimate theatre space, and often all exits and entrances are used in the small space, it is suggested that students use the bathroom facilities before being seated. Due to the intimacy of the production, anyone leaving the theatre may not be able to return to their seats until intermission.

3. Please remind your students that we do not permit:
   - food, gum, drinks, smoking, hats, backpacks or large purses
   - disruptive talking.
   - disorderly and inappropriate behavior (stepping on/over seats, throwing objects, etc.)
   - cameras, iPods, cell phones, beepers, tape recorders, hand held video games. (Adults are asked to put any beepers or cell phones on silent or vibrate.) In cases of disorderly behavior, groups may be asked to leave the theater without ticket refunds.

4. Teachers should take time to remind students before attending the show of the following about a live performance: Sometimes we forget when we come into a theatre that we are one of the most important parts of the production. Without an audience there would be no performance. Your contribution of laughter, quiet attention and applause is part of the play.

When we watch movies or television we are watching images on a screen, and what we say or do, cannot affect them. In the theatre the actors are real people who are present and creating an experience with us at that very moment. They see and hear us and are sensitive to our response. They know how we feel about the play by how we watch and listen. An invisible bond is formed between actors and a good audience, and it enables the actors to do their best for you. A good audience helps make a good performance. PCPA welcomes you as a partner in the live theatre experience from the moment you take your seats. We hope that your visit will be a highlight of your school year.
HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

The Study Guide is a companion piece designed to explore ideas and themes depicted in the stage production of *The Glass Menagerie*. Although the guide's intent is to enhance the student's theatrical experience, it can also be used as an introduction to the elements of a play, and the production elements involved in the play's presentation. This specific stage adaptation presents a wealth of new questions for this generation to answer.

The guide has been organized into three major sections:

- **Elements of the story**
- **Elements of production**
- **Activities**

Teachers and group leaders will want to select portions of the guide for their specific usage. Discussion questions are meant to provoke a line of thought about a particular topic. The answers to the discussion questions in many instances will initiate the process of exploration and discovery of varied interpretations by everyone involved. This can be as rewarding as the wonderful experience of sight and sound that *The Glass Menagerie* creates on-stage.
CREATIVE TEAM AND CAST

The Glass Menagerie
By Tennessee Williams

Creative Team

Director
Roger DeLaurier
Scenic Designer
Dave Nofsinger
Costume Designer
Judith A. Ryerson
Lighting Designer
Tim Thistleton
Sound Designer
Chuck Hatcher
Stage Manager
Ellen Beltramo

Cast

Amanda Wingfield  Kitty Balay*
Tom Wingfield  Matt Koenig
Laura Wingfield  Sierra Wells
Jim O’Connor  Jordan Stidham
ELEMENTS OF THE PLAY

THE PLOT OF THE PLAY

“I give you truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion.”

A faded remnant of Southern gentility, Amanda Wingfield lives in poverty in a dingy St. Louis apartment. Abandoned by her husband, Amanda comforts herself with recollections of her earlier, more gracious life in Blue Mountain when she was pursued by “gentleman callers.” Her son Tom, a poet with a job in a warehouse, longs for adventure and escape from his mother's suffocating embrace, while Laura, her shy ‘crippled’ daughter, has her glass menagerie and her memories. Amanda is desperate to find her daughter a husband, but when the long-awaited gentleman caller does arrive, Laura's romantic illusions are crushed. A drama of great tenderness and beauty, The Glass Menagerie rightfully holds a place as a classic of modern American dramas.
ABOUT THE PLAY

The Glass Menagerie began as an adaptation from Tennessee Williams' own short story, "Portrait of a Girl in Glass" which was published in 1943. It was then developed into a one-act play before being fully realized as the play we know today. Departing somewhat from the "kitchen-sink" realism of the domestic dramas of the period, Williams' birthed his own brand of poetic-realism, influenced by the avant-garde styles of Brecht and European theatre techniques at that time, and using the character of Tom, to build a sense of memory play in which he serves both as character and as narrator, separating him poetically from the story he both tells and inhabits.

Amanda Wingfield is a faded, tragic remnant of Southern gentility who lives in poverty in a dingy St. Louis apartment with her son, Tom, and her daughter, Laura. Amanda strives to give meaning and direction to her life and the lives of her children. She frequently reminds them of her idyllic youth and the scores of suitors who once pursued her. Tom is driven nearly to distraction by his mother's nagging and seeks escape in alcohol and the world of the movies. Laura also lives in her illusions surrounded by her glass menagerie and old phonograph records. She is physically 'crippled' and this defect has left her excruciatingly shy, which is intensified even more by her mother's anxiety to see her married. Tom is eventually convinced by Amanda to help find a suitor for his sister and he invites a young man of his
acquaintance to take dinner with the family. Jim, the caller, is a nice ordinary fellow who is at once pounced upon by Amanda as a possible husband for Laura, whose shyness deepens when she recalls Jim as the high school hero who was the focus of her schoolgirl crush. In spite of Amanda's crude and obvious efforts to entrap the young man, Jim and Laura manage to get along very nicely, and momentarily Laura is lifted out of herself into a new world. But this world of illusion in the Wingfield family is as fragile as the horn on a glass unicorn and is about to come shattering down around them.

The Glass Menagerie opened in Chicago in 1944 and went to Broadway in 1955. It was an immediate success and won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award. Two critics Williams credited for giving him his start wrote that the play had "the stamina of success..." and it had "the courage of true poetry..."

Director Roger DeLaurier concurs, "The Glass Menagerie is a great American classic, and anytime we get to do Tennessee Williams - who is one of the most important playwrights in the American theatre, it's a gift and a privilege just to get to work on his material. And I think about our opportunity to introduce new generations to Tennessee Williams and keep him alive for our audience is really important. He's a very unique voice. There's no other playwright whom you'd say 'he's like a Tennessee Williams,' he's absolutely unique."

The play has had seven New York revivals from 1965 to present, including the latest, beginning in September of 2013, which received seven Tony
nominations and three Drama Desk nominations. *The Glass Menagerie* has seen its share of cinematic adaptations, though, arguably with less success than its stage productions. The first motion picture, made in 1950, featuring Gertrude Lawrence as Amanda, Jane Wyman as Laura, Arthur Kennedy as Tom, and Kirk Douglas as Jim, was called by Williams the worst adaptation of his work, notably because the film created a happy ending, typical of the Hollywood movies of the day. A second movie in 1987 directed by Paul Newman featured Joanne Woodward as Amanda, John Malkovich as Tom, Karen Allen as Laura, and James Naughton as Jim, was even less well received. The New York Times summed it up, "...the end seems thoroughly at odds with anything Williams ever intended."
About The Production

During the time of his writing *The Glass Menagerie*, Williams wrote essays about the relationships between plays and expressionism, so director Roger DeLaurier wanted to give a nod to that concept in the exterior treatment of the set, while still preserving the realism and naturalistic space inside for the characters' interactions.

In early versions of the script, Williams' stage directions called for slide projections to reinforce poignant moments within various scenes. "That's a very Brechtian technique, to put a placard up, almost like a vaudeville act. He saw it as a way to keep the audience intellectually engaged and aware that they were watching a play. "DeLaurier explained. Over the years, Williams started cutting down on the projections, eventually he eliminated references to the technique all together. "By the final version, which is the version we're using, those placards are gone out of the stage directions."

In Williams' autobiography, he described the dark, cramped, living conditions in St. Louis where he grew up. "So we wanted to see that in the scenery," DeLaurier said, "... and create a feeling of an encroaching city and those dead-end alley-ways compressing the space." To achieve that, Scenic Designer Dave Nofsinger is taking inspiration from American expressionist painter, Lyonel Feininger, for the architectural details that surround the apartment. Though the main playing space is very naturalistic, outside there's a heightened theatricality in the set.
"I think we're working toward a realistic room, placed in a setting of something less realistic. It's a little island, with what I expect to feel like an oppressive and expansive world around it, and the family is clinging to this little island - and if they fall from there, they're going to be in real trouble."

A memory play, for DeLaurier, requires paying attention to the particular mood and tone of each moment. Music will be key to enhancing those moments. DeLaurier explains, "Tennessee, in the script, writes in many music cues because it's a way to take us out of naturalistic reality and help us understand something else that's going on. We might be in a scene with Amanda and we start hearing music from her girlhood while she's talking about something in the present tense. So we understand how that past and the fantasy of the past is coloring the present. Similarly, when Tom is narrating from the future about his past, music will help localize the time from which he's addressing us."

Among the primary considerations for this production is that the play will first be performed in the intimate Severson Theatre in Santa Maria before transferring to the outdoor Solvang Festival Theater. The challenge of creating a production that can play in both venues is something PCPA has successfully undertaken several times, including production for Greater Tune, A Comedy of Errors, Great Expectations, and recently, Always... Patsy Cline.
About The Author

Tennessee Williams (1911 – 1983)

(Image from Wikipedia and listed in the public domain)
Tennessee Williams (1911 - 1983), with a playwriting career launched by *The Glass Menagerie* and followed by success with the now classic *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, is considered by many as one of the most prolific and important American playwrights of the 20th century.

Struck at a young age with a life threatening case of diphtheria, Williams' physical and mental health would be fragile for much of his life. His overbearing mother lavished all her attention on the frail boy, while his alcoholic, traveling salesman, father resented the boy's weakened condition. The state of his dysfunctional family served as reference for many, if not all, of his plays. While attending the University of Missouri he intended to earn extra money by submitting poetry, essays and plays to writing contests and as a freshman he received an honorable mention in one of the competitions. In his junior year, however, his father pulled him out of school and got him a job at the International Shoe Company factory which at 21 years of age, Williams detested. The predicament forced him to work even harder on his writing. After suffering a nervous breakdown and quitting the factory he returned to school and eventually received a BA in English from the University of Iowa. Studying at the "new" Dramatic Workshop in New York, he wrote a play that was produced by an amateur theatre in Memphis, and it was at that point where he turned his main focus on writing for the theatre.
After a number of unsuccessful plays and odd jobs, and even a short contract writing for Metro Goldwyn Mayer, he finished writing *The Glass Menagerie* which was initially produced in Chicago and received high praise from critics. The play moved to New York where it was an immediate success and won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for best play of the season. Securing his new reputation as a brilliant playwright of promise was his subsequent play, *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Other successful productions to follow included *Summer and Smoke, The Rose Tattoo, Camino Real, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, Orpheus Descending, Garden District, and Sweet Bird of Youth*. That body of work resulted in numerous awards: two Pulitzer Prizes, three New York Drama Critics' Circle Awards, three Donaldson Awards, and a Tony. He was also awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

During the 60s and 70s Williams approached a new style of playwriting and produced seven projects which did poorly at the box office and received negative reviews across the board. This fueled his growing alcohol and drug dependence and his downward spiral. In 1979, Williams was inducted in the American Theater Hall of Fame, and he would die four years later in his New York apartment, surrounded by bottles of wine and pills.

Many of Williams' plays were made into movies in addition to *The Glass Menagerie*. *Orpheus Descending* became *The Fugitive Kind* starring Marlon Brando, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Vivien Leigh, Marlon Brando,
Kim Hunter), *The Rose Tattoo* (Anna Magnani, Burt Lancaster), *Baby Doll* (Karl Malden, Carroll Baker, Eli Wallach), *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (Elizabeth Taylor, Paul Newman, Burl Ives), *Suddenly, Last Summer* (Elizabeth Taylor, Katharine Hepburn, Montgomery Clift), and *Summer and Smoke* (Laurence Harvey, Geraldine Page, Rita Moreno), among others.
ELEMENTS OF PRODUCTION

Scenic Design

Our play takes place in St. Louis, Missouri, in the home of young Tennessee Williams (Tom in our play). His description of his home goes into great detail as his stage directions exhibit.

Below are images of the William’s apartment building at it stands today. The apartments have been remodeled to accommodate the needs of modern living conditions.

The front of the Williams’ apartment building as it looks today.

(image courtesy of the St. Louis Office of Tourism)
The rear of the apartment building that has the fire escape and overlooks the Dance Hall.

Scenic Designer, Dave Nofsinger, faces three important challenges in creating the William’s home for our production. First, our audience must be aware that *The Glass Menagerie* is a “memory play”, in which the main character (Tom Wingfield) narrates his story to the audience. Second, the story skips between the 1910’s and the 1940’s, and places our characters in the confinement of an apartment building in St. Louis. Third, our audience must always be included in when we go from past to present as the story unfolds.

(image courtesy of the St. Louis Office of Tourism)
His solutions, include a scenic design that has an immersive effect of bringing the audience into the Wingfield home, as well as an outer shell that allows our Narrator to be on the “outside” of the story, always looking in.

Included here are two images of Mr. Nofsinger’s original concept drawings for the set design.
We also include here, two images of the final design as approved by Director, Roger DeLaurier.

A left side view from the audience perspective.

A right side view from the audience perspective.
COSTUME DESIGN

Costume designer Judith A. Ryerson merges the periods between the 1920’s and the 1940’s with a scrutinizing view of details. This includes, the period silhouette of each character, the choice of fabrics to be used, and the comfort of how each character would wear their clothing as “everyday” outfits.

She also must bring in a feeling of the “memory play” as we shift from past to present. Ms. Ryerson’s must also collaborate with the Director and the other production designers to make her costume designs help tell the story, but not over power the stage.

Included here are four costume renderings as designed for the character of Amanda Wingfield (played by actress Kitty Balay). Notice the attention to detail for each scene, in layers, color and texture. Also, the choice for the period of the dress Amanda wears when the Gentlemen Caller comes to dinner.
Act I - Our first view of Amanda Winfield
Evening bed clothing.
Outfit worn for outdoors.
The dress for dinner in honor of the “Gentleman Caller”.
WORDS TO KNOW

*The Glass Menagerie* contains words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to contemporary audiences. You may want to take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with these terms in order to best follow and understand our performance.

**Guernica** – Artist Pablo Picasso was inspired to create a massive painting that evoked the horrors of war. He named it after the town in which thousands of innocent people were killed in a bombing on April 26, 1937 during the Spanish Civil War.

**Mastication** – Chewing

**Gentleman Caller** – Young man interested in dating a young woman. In the Old South a young man would be expected to visit a girl at her home where she might entertain a group of young people.

**Business College** – School for students to train for secretarial work. In the 1930s many women were joining the work force and gained valuable skills at such schools.

**Victrola** – An early type of record player that was wound with a crank to operate the turntable.

**Menagerie** – A display of animals, mostly wild or exotic.

**Spinster** – An unmarried woman. Another term often used is “old maid.”

**Pirates of Penzance** – One of many comic, light operas written by Gilbert and Sullivan.

**Pleurosis** – An inflammation of the lungs.

**Cathouse** – House of ill-repute.

**Garbo picture** – Movie starring famed actress, Greta Garbo. She was considered one of the great beauties of the 1930s.
Fire escape – Tenement style houses and apartment buildings in cities have metal fire escapes that allow inhabitants to get out of the house quickly in the event of fire. Often people use these as a place to get outside without having to go all the way downstairs. For some, it is as close to a porch as they can get and they use it as such even though the landing is usually quite small.

Merchant Marine – “The Merchant Marine is the fleet of ships which carries imports and exports during peacetime and becomes a naval auxiliary during wartime to deliver troops and war materiel.

Chamberlain – Neville Chamberlain was British Prime Minister from 1937 to 1940.

Cretonne – A printed cotton fabric usually used for upholstery, drapery, etc.

Irish – fish on Friday – In the play Amanda makes an assumption that an Irish person is Catholic and therefore eats fish on Friday.

Jonquils – A yellow flower similar to a daffodil.

Cake-walk – A light-hearted dance competition or musical chairs type game played in the late 1800s or early 1900s.

Cotillion – A formal dance occasion.

Malaria fever – A mosquito-borne disease that causes fever, weakness and sometimes death.

Dizzy Dean – Popular baseball player of the 1930s known for bragging about his abilities although one of his most famous quotes was, “It ain’t braggin’ if you can do it.”

Sons of planters – In the south, a “planter” was someone who owned a significant amount of property and wealth. Sons of planters inherited that wealth.

Mr. Edison’s Mazda lamp – Early light bulb standard (around 1909) for bulbs with a tungsten filament – an improvement over other bulbs of the era.
CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Try some of the following activities before or after attending the production of The Glass Menagerie.

- Read Tennessee Williams’ opening description for *The Glass Menagerie*. Think about and remember something that happened years ago in your family. Write an opening paragraph about the incident briefly describing the only the characters and the setting.

- Select one person who you think you will remember vividly as you grow older. Create a semi-realistic scene using real and imagined circumstances and events. Try using the time period or current events for symbolic effect in your dramatization of the scene. How far from your real memory of the person did your imagination take you?

- Improvise a scene in which a parent and adult child argue over the child’s eating habits. Have other students rewrite the scene as a script using some of the real conversation and anything they choose to add to make the scene more theatrical, more logical, more humorous, or more serious.

- Select one of the following sets of circumstances from *The Glass Menagerie* to be used as a basis for an improvisation:
  - An extremely shy young woman prefers to stay at home and her mother wants her to go out and meet people.
  - A young man lies to his mother about where he has been going at night.
  - A young man talks back to his mother in a highly confrontational and sarcastic way.
  - A woman and a man meet for what they think is the first time and realize they knew each other years ago.
  - A young man realizes that a sweet and sensitive girl is interested in him but he has to tell her that he is dating someone else.
  - A man tries to convince his co-worker to take his job more seriously so he won’t get fired.