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'Tennessee Williams Festival St. Louis: En Avant!' to Air on Classic 107.3 Through November 15, 2020

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ST. LOUIS - Brenda Currin, Bradley James Tejeda, Elizabeth Teeter and Chaunery Kingsford to headline in *The Glass Menagerie*. Broadway legend Ken Page will serve as the Host of the festival in addition to opening the Fest with a reading of "Something Wild," depicting Williams early years as a playwright in St. Louis.

The Tennessee Williams Festival St. Louis (TWStL) moves to the airwaves this November 5th through the 15th. It centers on Williams' most famous and personal play, "The Glass Menagerie," featuring works that illuminate the artistry of his St. Louis-based masterpiece.

“The theme of this Festival - En Avant! – was Williams’ signature phrase. Always moving onward, he found strength through fragility. Says Executive Artistic Director Carrie Houk. “We see this same forward-looking mindset all around us as we look beyond today’s challenges towards the chance to benefit from the lessons. “En Avant!” captures the essence of our programming and also what we have experienced since the world changed in March. We have brought Williams’ sparkling one-act plays to an ever larger audience in our “Something Spoken: Tennessee Williams on the Air” program on Classic 107.3. And now we are going big on Classic 107.3 with our November Festival.”

“While we miss performing live, we have found that Williams’ beautiful, poetic language translates well to radio,” said Houk. “These are fully produced plays brought to life by an impressive company of directors, actors and sound designers. We are finding great joy in being able to provide employment to artists during a period of time when options are limited. In a time of fragility, I do believe we have found our strength. En Avant!!!”

The key elements of this eleven-day Festival will air multiple times on Classic 107.3, and all will be streamed for two weeks on both TWStL.org and Classic1073.org. Each performance will be followed by expert commentary from noted Williams scholars.

The Festival’s three main performances will be:

- **The Glass Menagerie** - Williams’ greatest, most famous, and most personal play. The narrator recalls late in life how his youthful devotion to his sister Rose (Laura in the play) conflicted with his creative passions as he was about to escape from St. Louis for good. Directed by Brian Hohlfeld. Starring Brenda Currin, Bradley James Tejada, Elizabeth Teeter and Chaunery Kingsford.
- **You Lied to Me about Centralia**, by John Guare - Picks up the story of Jim, the Gentleman Caller, immediately after he leaves the Wingfield home to meet Betty, his fiancée. It further illuminates the themes of “The Glass Menagerie,” leaving us to ponder how a step or two in another direction might have changed everyone’s lives. Directed by Rayme Cornell. Starring Chauncy Thomas and Julia Crump.
- **Glass** by Michael Aman - Takes us forward in time to when “The Glass Menagerie” is about to open in Chicago, on the way to Broadway. In this multi-layered one-act play, the budding playwright meets the lead actress before she goes on. Williams, having spurned his mother, wants to be famous. She, broken by addiction, is about to portray his own mother’s character and wants to be famous again. Can this premiere possibly succeed? Directed by Gary Wayne Barker. Starring Bradley James Tejada and Kari Ely.

Other programming includes two different one-man performances by acclaimed Williams actor Jeremy Lawrence: **Tom and Rose** and **The Man in the Overstuffed Chair**. They are drawn from the words and works of Williams and dramatize Williams’ relationships with both his sister and his father during his years in St. Louis.

There will also be a **Scholars Conference** curated by Tom Mitchell (TWStL Scholar-In-Residence), featuring conversations with Houk, Annette Saddick (Professor of Theatre at CUNY), Henry Schvey (Professor of Drama at Washington University), Thomas Keith (Williams editor for New Directions Publishing), with others TBA.

Lead sponsorship of the festival is provided by **Emerson**. “The Glass Menagerie” is performed by special arrangement with Concord Publishing, Inc and “You Lied to Me About Centralia” is performed by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service.

The full Festival schedule and additional information can be found at <https://www.twstl.org>.

About the Festival

The Tennessee Williams Festival St. Louis was established in 2016 by Carrie Houk, the award-winning producer, casting director, actor, and educator. The Festival, which aims to enrich the cultural life of St. Louis by producing an annual theater festival and other artistic events that celebrate the artistry and life of Tennessee Williams, was named the 2019 Arts Startup of the Year by the Arts & Entertainment Council.

In 2014, Houk produced Williams' *Stairs to the Roof* with such success that the ongoing annual Festival was established. The inaugural Festival was themed "Tennessee Williams: The St. Louis Years," followed by "The Magic of the Other" in 2017 and "The French Quarter Years" in 2018. The 2019 festival featured *Night of the Iguana* and *A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur*. As the years have passed, the awards have mounted. In the last two years, the St. Louis Theater Circle has given them twelve awards. The Festival has attracted thousands to its readings, panel discussions, concerts, exhibitions, and productions.

About Tennessee Williams

Born Thomas Lanier Williams III in 1911 in Mississippi, Williams moved to St. Louis at age seven, when his father was made an executive with the International Shoe Company (where the City Museum and the Last Hotel are now located). He lived here for more than two decades, attending Washington University, working at the International Shoe Company, and producing his first plays at local theaters. He credited his sometimes difficult experiences in St. Louis for the deeply felt poetic essence that permeates his artistry. When asked later in life when he left St. Louis, he replied, "I never really left." Most people are familiar with the famous works that have garnered multiple Pulitzer Prizes, Tony Awards and Academy Awards, such as *The Glass Menagerie*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and *Suddenly Last Summer*. He also wrote hundreds of additional plays, stories, essays, and poems, many of which are only now seeing the light of day as his estate permits greater access. He is today considered by many leading authorities to be America's greatest playwright.

About Classic 107.3

Classic 107.3, "The Voice for the Arts in St. Louis", broadcasts at 107.3 FM and on KNOU 96.3 HD2 with a mission to support the cultural landscape in the St. Louis region through programming and outreach efforts. Classic 107.3 plays a variety of music from classical to jazz, opera to blues, Broadway and more, and features local programming including the "Slatkin Shuffle", hosted by conductor Leonard Slatkin, and Musical Ancestries™, designed to educate school-aged children about world music. In addition, the station airs interviews with artists, musicians, creators and performers, bringing their stories and events to the attention of the St. Louis community. Classic 107.3 is a non-profit station, receiving support from listeners as well as organizations like PNC, the William T. Kemper Foundation and others. More information, as well as live streaming, archived interviews, and podcasts can be found at www.classic1073.org.

The following productions are currently available to stream (available for 2 weeks from their 1st air date):

[The Glass Menagerie Act 1](#) (until 11/22)

[The Glass Menagerie Act 2](#) (until 11/22)

[Glass](#) (until 11/21)

[You Lied to Me About Centralia](#) (until 11/22)

[Something Wild](#) (until 11/19)

[Tom and Rose](#) (until 11/19)

[The Man in the Overstuffed Chair](#) (until 11/20)

In addition to the plays, a series of [video panels](#) related to the productions, as well as an [audio tour of Williams St. Louis sites](#), are posted on their website.

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