

# Tennessee Williams and the Central West End 2021: “THE MOON AND BEYOND”

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ST. LOUIS - The [Tennessee Williams Festival](#) returns for its sixth year. The headliner is a production of one of the playwright's most important works, *The Glass Menagerie*, in the Central West End building where Williams lived and where the play was imagined.

“A year ago, we brought Tennessee Williams into your home ....this year we bring you into his!” said Carrie Houk, the festival's Executive Artistic Director. “In 2020 we were lucky enough to flourish on the radio during a year that was so challenging for live theatre. In 2021, we return with a vengeance with a site-specific production of *The Glass Menagerie* at the very building in the Central West End where the Williams family settled when they moved to St Louis.”

“If theatre is ritual, our production of *The Glass Menagerie* is the equivalent of going to Mass in St. Peter’s Square in Rome,” explains Brian Hohlfeld, who is directing this production. “There’s no other city in the world where you can see this play in this venue, amid the same red bricks, alleys, and fire-escapes that inspired Williams to write it almost 80 years ago. We’ve brought back most of our amazing cast from last fall’s radio version, and our entire team is thrilled and humbled by the opportunity to bring this site-specific production to life.”

The festival’s two main performances will be:

- ***The Glass Menagerie*... performed where it was first imagined**

This cornerstone of American theatre launched Williams’ career as a playwright, enjoying a lengthy Broadway run and winning the 1945 New York Drama Critics’ Circle Award for Best Play. TWStL’s *The Glass Menagerie* brings the story of Amanda, Tom, and Laura home to the very apartment building that inspired Williams’ quintessential family drama.

The cast includes: Brenda Currin\*, Bradley Tejeda\*, Elizabeth Teeter\* and Chauncy Thomas\*. Performances will take place at 8pm at The Tennessee (4633 Westminster Place, 63108) Thursday, August 19 through Sunday, August 22 and Thursday, August 26 through Sunday, August 29.

*\*denotes member of Actors Equity Association.*

- **“You Lied to Me about Centralia:” by John Guare and based on Tennessee Williams’ short story “Portrait of a Girl in Glass”**

Before Williams wrote *The Glass Menagerie*, he told the story of the dysfunctional St. Louis family in his short story, “Portrait of a Girl in Glass.” Picking up where both the short story and *The Glass Menagerie* end, John Guare’s adaptation of the story picks up where *The Glass Menagerie* ends, following the gentleman caller after he leaves the Wingfield home to meet his fiancée at the train station. With Williams’ voice reverberating throughout, “You Lied to Me about Centralia” shines new light on *The Glass Menagerie*. A conversation with Williams scholar Thomas Mitchell will follow the performance.

The cast includes: Chauncy Thomas\* and Julia Crump. Performances will take place at The Tennessee (4633 Westminster, 63108) Saturday, August 21 and Sunday August 22.

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Other festival programming includes: Scholars' Panels, Walking Tour of Williams' St. Louis, Tennessee Williams Tribute: "The Moon and Beyond" hosted by Ken Page, happy hour conversation with *Blue Song* author Dr. Henry Schvey, *Why Did Desdemona Love the Moor* reading, and more.

For fans who want to make an evening of it, a special Pre-Theater Garden Picnic will be available at Bowood by Niche (4605 Olive, 63108) from 6-8pm (or until sold out) on performance days. The menu includes a picnic basket for two, filled with a packaged assortment of Niche Food Group snacks and desserts. Three signature cocktails inspired by *The Glass Menagerie* and featuring local spirits and botanicals will be available for individual purchase. Food and drink can be enjoyed in Bowood's garden up until performance time.

Free, secure parking is available at Holliday (4600 Olive, 63108) for festival patrons and for pre-theatre dinner patrons at Bowood by Niche.

Lead sponsorship of the festival is provided by Emerson. Additional sponsors and the full festival itinerary can be found at [twstl.org](http://twstl.org). Tickets can be purchased via Metrotix beginning Sunday, July 18.

### ***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 Arts Startup of the Year Award by the Arts and Education Council at the 2019 St. Louis Arts Awards.*

*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.*



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