



The Glass Menagerie: Acting Edition

Tennessee Williams

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The Glass Menagerie[1] is a four-character memory play by Tennessee Williams. Williams worked on various drafts of the play prior to writing a version of it as a screenplay for MGM, to whom Williams was contracted. Initial ideas stemmed from one of his short stories, and the screenplay originally went under the name of 'The Gentleman Caller' (Williams envisioned Ethel Barrymore and Judy Garland for the roles that eventually became Amanda and Laura Wingfield although Louis B. Mayer insisted on casting Greer Garson as Laura). The play premiered in Chicago in 1944. It was championed by Chicago critics Ashton Stevens and Claudia Cassidy whose enthusiasm helped build audiences so the producers could move the play to Broadway where it won the New York Drama Critics Circle Award in 1945. Laurette Taylor originated the role of the all-too-loving mother, Amanda Wingfield. In the 2004 documentary *Broadway: The Golden Age*, by the Legends Who Were There, Broadway veterans nearly unanimously rank Taylor's performance as the most memorable of their entire lives. The Glass Menagerie was Williams's first successful play; he went on to become one of America's most highly regarded playwrights. The play was reworked from one of Williams's short stories "Portrait of a Girl in Glass" (1943; published 1948).[2] The story is also written from the point of view of narrator Tom Wingfield, and many of his soliloquies from The Glass Menagerie seem lifted straight from this original. Certain elements have clearly been omitted from the play, including the reasoning for Laura's fascination with Jim's freckles (linked to a book that she loved and often reread, *Freckles* by Gene Stratton-Porter). Generally the story contains the same plot as the play, with certain sections given more emphasis, and character details edited (for example, in the story, Jim nicknames Tom "Slim", instead of "Shakespeare"[2]).

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