

This Glass Menagerie

TRIAD STAGE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY VANDERVEEN PHOTOGRAPHERS



Preston Lane, DIRECTION: I had always been stumped by the character of Tom in *The Glass Menagerie*: How do you bring to life the idea that you're watching Tom turn his memories, his pain and guilt, into a work of art? Williams was struggling to create a non-realistic theatre, using the tools that existed in 1944; now we have more tools at our disposal, and I set out with Anya Klepikov, a designer who always inspires me, to find a new way to comply with Williams's intentions. Rather than a typewriter, our Tom's means of turning the stuff of his life into art is a video camera. It's always with him, even when he's disengaged from the action or sets the camera down momentarily. The other characters are seen from Tom's viewpoint, and the projections of what he sees (as in the photo above, which shows Laura crossing into the dining room) come to represent the layers of his memory. By removing the burden of realism, we're able to hear the play anew.

Anya Klepikov, SCENIC DESIGN: *Menagerie* was the first Williams play I designed and my first time working with Preston. I asked him, "To what degree do you want to follow Williams's copious stage directions about lights, clothes, projections and so on?" The moment I heard his response—that "walls and furniture don't seem to be that useful for actors"—my wingspan seemed to grow! I knew that the door was open to look for less literal ways of solving the world of the play—that we could aim for its essence. Preston sent me photos, from a Mexican art museum in Chicago, of a figure of a young girl made of pieces of clear broken glass, lit from within. The figure was beautiful and fragile, but the jagged shards of glass also made a painful impression.

That's the texture I was looking for. I felt the desire to strand these characters on some sort of island, in a glass sandbox, in a showcase of glass. The menagerie, hanging above them, comes to represent their dreams, their fantasies, the stars, so many things.

Norman Coates, LIGHTING DESIGN: The easy part of this production was the collaboration—we were all on the same page, and the design solutions arrived in a woven-together, joint fashion. There were plenty of challenges: a reflective glass floor; streaming live video gives you brightness issues; all those glass figurines exploding from the corner of the set. But the resolutions ultimately came easily—glass is in and of itself a reflective material that refracts and breaks up light. It's similar to memory in that way.



Lane



Klepikov

PHOTO CREDIT

Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie* ran Sept. 5–26 at Triad Stage in Greensboro, N.C., under Preston Lane's direction. The production featured scenic design by Anya Klepikov, costume design by Kelsey Hunt, lighting design by Norman Coates, sound design by David E. Smith and projection design by Nicholas Hussona. Drew Barker was dramaturg and Chris "Waffles" Wathen was stage manager. Above, from left in projection, Tyler Hollinger, Matthew Carlson, Kate Goehring; on stage, Cheryl Koski and Carlson. Opposite, from left, Hollinger, Koski, Carlson.

