Provincetown Tennessee Williams Theater Festival
Expands Reach of Tennessee Williams Across the Country

Advices St. Louis, MO on new Williams Festival

When casting director Carrie Houk thought of producing a Tennessee Williams play in St. Louis, MO, she looked to David Kaplan, the curator and Jef Hall-Flavin the executive director of the Provincetown Tennessee Williams Theater Festival for advice.

She had been ‘wowed’ by The Hotel Plays at the Tennessee Williams New Orleans Literary Festival. These four Williams one-act plays were directed by Kaplan and Hall-Flavin and had originally been presented at the Provincetown festival in prior years.

As a result, Houk will be opening Williams’ Stairs to the Roof this November, in association with the Provincetown Tennessee Williams Theater Festival, which will be providing artistic and administrative guidance to Houk. Stairs fits the profile of Provincetown’s specialty – rarely produced Williams plays – in this case, an early play that takes place in St. Louis where Williams lived for many years.

Breaking New Ground:

Stairs will open in a long dormant theater once run by the St. Louis Artists Guild and now restored as the Boo Cat Club. At curator David Kaplan’s urging, it will be directed by the award-winning South African team that has been featured in Provincetown for three years, Abrahamse Meyer Productions. Fred Abrahamse will direct, and Marcel Meyer will design the production, which has never been seen in St. Louis.

Kaplan says, “For nine years, theater artists from around the world have been gathering at our festival in Provincetown to expand ideas about Tennessee Williams – how to stage his plays, what to think of his life’s work. Abrahamse Meyer is an ingenious artistic team that has incredible passion for – and expertise with Williams. Sharing knowledge and passion about Williams between Provincetown, South Africa and St. Louis is a recipe for success.”
In July, 2014, St. Louis arts and community development leaders met with Jef Hall-Flavin for advice about starting a Williams Festival in their city. Provincetown has been called the ‘godfather’ of the burgeoning St. Louis Festival, with its successful 9-year history of a performing arts format that has premiered ten Williams plays in the seaside resort of Provincetown.

“This could be the start of something big,” says Jef Hall-Flavin. “I am heartened by the ever-growing interest in celebrating Williams in places that were central influences on his life and work.” Several cities now host Williams-centered Festivals: Provincetown, MA; Columbus and Clarksdale, MS; and New Orleans, LA. Williams moved to St. Louis when he was eight and lived there through his college years, setting many plays there, including his indelible classic, The Glass Menagerie.

Kaplan added, "We have a vision of Tennessee Williams that includes his well-known masterpieces in a continuum with his experimental work, early and late. The form of "Glass Menagerie" was questioned in its day – barely a play, critics said in 1945. Stairs to the Roof is also genre-defying and deserves to be better known."

Ken Kranzberg, chairman of the Grand Center arts organization and founder of the Kranzberg Arts Center, said St. Louis is a natural fit for a Williams festival. Plans are underway for a group of St. Louis arts patrons to visit Provincetown’s Festival and begin planning a St. Louis Festival with the collaboration of Kaplan and Hall-Flavin.

“What pleases me the most, continues Hall-Flavin, is that the organizers of the St. Louis festival share our vision that live performance is the best way to experience our great American playwright.”

Far-reaching Influence:

Curator David Kaplan says, "It is our mission to see Williams fully understood for the creative force that he was, and that goes well beyond his classic masterpieces. Williams was always writing and experimenting and much of his work was dismissed in his time. Our performances offer exciting and pioneering approaches to his work that turn plays thought impossible to stage or to understand into theatrical excitement that audiences embrace."

Hall-Flavin continued, "Provincetown sits on a spiral of sand, so I like to think of a spiral as a metaphor for our work over the last decade, constantly expanding outward from this incredible artist haven. Over 450 artists have performed here, and we are proud of the many productions we’ve originated that have traveled the world."

Productions Presented First in Provincetown That Traveled To Other Cities:

TO NEW ORLEANS, LA – Tennessee Williams New Orleans Literary Festival:

- Auto-da-Fé (2013), a Williams mother-son drama performed on a porch in Provincetown in 2012, then restaged on the back steps of an historic New Orleans home in the French Quarter with a Dixieland band
- The Tennessee Williams Songbook (2013) a concert of songs from TW plays created for the 2012 Festival by David Kaplan, starring Broadway’s Alison Fraser
- Gift of An Orange (2014) by Charlene Donaghy, a play inspired by a Williams short story that was an audience favorite of the 2012 Festival
- The Hotel Plays (2014), a quartet of one-acts originated in Provincetown that were performed in rooms and hallways of the historic Hermann-Grima House to an awestruck audience
TO COLUMBUS, MS – The Tennessee Williams Tribute:

- *The Dog Enchanted by the Divine View* (2009), Williams’ short play that became *The Rose Tattoo*, which had its 2008 premiere in Provincetown
- *The Case of the Crushed Petunias* (2010), an early one-act play about a shopkeeper who receives a casual visit by a handsome man called death
- *The Strangest Kind of Romance* (2011), a one-act play about a man with a cat, seen in the 2010 version of *The Hotel Plays*
- *Autumn Song* (2013), a collaboration with composer George Maurer of Minnesota and Jef Hall-Flavin, a musical dialogue in song and jazz of the poetry of Rilke and Williams created for the Festival.

TO MISSISSIPPI:

- *Orpheus Descending* (2012). The stunning, site-specific 2010 production was presented in churches in three cities across Mississippi: Columbus, Oxford and Jackson.

TO NEW YORK, NY:

- *The Mutilated* (2013), a late work by Williams that was panned by critics when it was originally produced in 1966, went on to New York, starring Mink Stole and Penny Arcade and was nominated for a Drama League Award under the direction of Cosmin Chivu.
- *The Two-Character Play* (2012), the 2011 Provincetown production from London inspired New York producers to mount an off-Broadway version of our production with the same director, starring Amanda Plummer, to great reviews.
- *Orpheus Descending* (2012), the runaway hit of the 2010 Festival from The Infinite Theatre was revived for a sold-out one-night benefit performance in a West Village church.
- *Now the Cats with Jewelled Claws* (2011), an avant-garde work featuring Everett Quinton and Mink Stole that was presented at LaMaMa Etc.

TO CHICAGO, IL:

- *The Escapes* (2011) dance adaptations based on *Escape* and *Summer at the Lake* which were created for the Festival in 2010 opened at the American Theater Company

TO SEWANEE, TN:

- *The Traveling Companion* and *The Chalky White Substance* (2009), and *The Hotel Plays* (2011) which played under the title “Hotel Williams” at the Tennessee Williams Center

TO ALBUQUERQUE, NM:

- *Once in a Lifetime* (2011) After premiering at the Provincetown Festival, this play was presented by Fusion Theatre in Albuquerque.
TO LOS ANGELES, CA:

- *Green Eyes* (2011), this kinky one-act premiered in Provincetown in 2008 directed by Jef Hall-Flavin, and was presented at the Ruskin Theatre Group in Los Angeles.

TO MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL, MN:

- *Green Eyes* (2011) was also seen at the nation’s largest Fringe Festival in Minnesota.

TO CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA:

- *Kingdom of Earth* (2012), unpopular in 1968, it was presented at the Festival by Abrahamse Meyer Productions, was loved by the critics and audiences and went on to win major nominations and awards in South Africa. The Provincetown production also inspired the Columbus Tennessee Williams Tribute and the South Camden Theatre Company in New Jersey to put on their own productions of *Kingdom of Earth*.
- *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore* (2013). Abrahamse Meyer Productions went on to be highly acclaimed as one of the best plays of 2013.

TO DUBLIN, IRELAND:

- *The Traveling Companion* and *The Chalky White Substance* (2010), a double-bill of one-acts directed by David Kaplan was presented as “Tennessee Suite” at the Dublin Gay Theatre Festival.

TO BERLIN, GERMANY:

- *Autumn Song* (2014), this original jazz-inspired song cycle of Williams and Rilke poems first seen in Provincetown in 2012 was invited to Berlin in April 2014 for two private concerts.

Attached is image of Jef Hall-Flavin and Carrie Houk in front of Boo Cat Club under renovation.

About Provincetown Tennessee Williams Theater Festival:

The Provincetown Tennessee Williams Theater Festival was founded in 2006 in the birthplace of American Modern Theater where Williams worked on many of his major plays during the 1940s. The TW Festival is the nation’s largest performing arts festival dedicated to celebrating and expanding the understanding of America’s great playwright. Theater artists from around the globe perform classic and innovative productions to celebrate Williams’ enduring influence in the 21st Century. The 9th annual Festival will take place in various venues in the seaside village of Provincetown from Thursday, September 25 through Sunday, September 28, 2014. For more visit [www.twptown.org](http://www.twptown.org) and [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com).

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