



# THE GLASS MENAGERIE

BY DOUG BARBOUR

The Neptune Theatre's production of THE GLASS MENAGERIE is one of their most interesting shows this season. One reason is that very obvious liberties have been taken with a play that is described in the program notes as "certainly the tenderest and most delicately exquisite" of all of Tennessee Williams' drama. Curt Reis' direction of the play has been called Brechtian; let us just admit that he has placed emphasis where it has never been placed before.

Critics have described the play as a "Memory" drama, playing at sentimental reminiscence, a study in nostalgia. Other productions have brought out these qualities — qualities that would leave an audience with a sense of exhausted gentleness, of lost delicacy. But Mr. Reis has gone deeper, and uncovered the rather frightening fact that the delicacy was not merely lost; it had never been found. His method is to have his actors slightly overplay their parts, thus illuminating aspects of character that had never been clearly seen before. The result is a harsh, perhaps dark, comedy that can make us laugh, but can also make us feel the excruciating pain of certain very ordinary situations; and if this was not, perhaps, Mr. Williams' idea when he wrote the play, his lines certainly allow for the possibility.

**FOUR IN A FISHBOWL**  
So nostalgia is no longer the dominant theme of the play; rather it becomes a stark investigation into the lives of three closely united people (the Wingfield family) and the effect upon them of an intrusion from the real world of 1939. There is plenty of laughter, but there is also a great deal of felt pain and embarrassment; one can easily relate to the situations presented on the stage, for they are the familiar moments of non-communication and frustration that strike all of us at one time or another.

We may say that this production of the GLASS MENAGERIE gives us a new insight into the personalities of four trapped people (and I think the epilogue is of great importance here, for it underlines the fact that Tom is still trapped). It should be obvious that I could not have said this much if the actors had not done a very good job of realizing

Mr. Reis' vision for him. Figured forth on the Neptune stage are four twisted lives, and despite the objectivity of our attention to them, we are drawn into a greater knowledge of them as personalities. This can be credited only to the superior acting of the four principals.

**PREDATORY MOTHER**  
Certainly the finest performance of the evening, and one of the finest performances she has given since coming to the Neptune, is Dawn Greenhalgh's portrait of the grasping mother, Amanda Wingfield. Amanda is one of those who do everything for others, but beneath this generous exterior, (one that she believes in completely), is the killing selfishness of a loneliness fed by memories of a lost aristocratic past. (One of the interesting things about this play is that everyone has a past through which to live — Tom's past is the play; the other characters go back much further, but all these strands of time mesh to form the fabric of the play itself.) Miss Greenhalgh is a strong actress, and a hardworking one. Technically she is at her best in this role; it demands and gets the sort of virtuoso performance she is suited for. Her accent, for example, does not slip once. But she does more; she gets into Amanda's mind and fleshes it out; we can feel the pressure she exerts on her children right at the back of the theatre. This is acting of a very high calibre.

George Spurdakos' Tom is another fine performance. It can stand with his Malvolio as a restrained, but effective, presentation of singular, and peculiar character. Mr. Spurdakos has a mannerism in his speech, a way of pausing at odd places, that can sometimes be bothersome, but here it proves very effective in

the narration, and is not so apparent when he plays Tom at home. He is especially good in scenes of restrained anger, such as the scene where he tells his mother of his hair-raising private life. What full-bodied laughter the production has come in these few scenes.

**RITUAL FRAGILITY**  
Diana LeBlanc played Laura almost too well. Withdrawn, fearful, living in a small glass world of her own where anything out of the ordinary might cause breakage, she might have seemed to overdo it a bit. I don't think so. It seems to me part of Mr. Reis' plan to make Laura's withdrawal almost a ritual; by doing so he could underline the misunderstanding that continually accrued between mother and daughter. Miss LeBlanc's donation to the characterization could be seen in the fact that no matter where attention was directed on the stage, she remained fully in her role.

Gavin Douglas was a brash, noisy Gentleman Caller. He too, deliberately overplayed his part; the effect was almost surrealistic. One knew that such gaucherie would never occur in real life, and yet one could see that such actions were forever occurring in the mind. His memories, his insecurity, matched hers in intensity, found different outlets, and finally collided disastrously with hers.

The final impression one carries away from this play is one of enjoyment of the production, tinged with an awkward amalgam of emotions which suggest that somehow the play has touched and impressed one, has discovered pain, and therefore passed on certain of its after-effects. To say this is to say that it is an extremely good production indeed.

## GOLDEN FLEECE

Once upon a time there was a flock of sheep. Every morning they used to file into the north gate of their folk, called the A&A Building, and out again. Every hour on the hour, some would go in and some would come out. While one was coming out, the ones going in would wait and then (these were pretty smart sheep) one would grab the gate before it swung shut, and hold it open for himself and maybe an ewe or two.

But then, one day a Goat came to the gate. And what this goat did, he went behind the gate! So he hooked the gate open. Worse than that — he turned around and opened the other gate. Then he went away.

All the sheep gaped aghast, except those that hadn't noticed anything. The idea of opening two gates where one had been before! But it was all right. The goat was gone, the second gate swung to again, and the sheep just waited their turns at the one gate, as usual.

## fromhans and luba

By CHRISTINE STEVENSON

The Dalhousie University Concerts began with a creditable performance by Hans Bauer and Luba Slazer, violinist and pianist, who call themselves the University of Waterloo Duo. Both showed themselves to be fine musicians and approached a difficult program with authority. On the other hand, their performance was somewhat handicapped by apparently indefinable drawbacks.

In the first place, the Kings Gymnasium provides far from ideal acoustics and atmosphere for chamber music. Secondly, the piano frequently obscured the violin; the piano lid might have been better closed. More important, it seemed as though the performers were not altogether agreed on tempo and direction, with the result that the two musical lines did not cohere, and the piano seemed to lead the violin. This was particularly noticeable in the Mozart sonata. Mr. Bauer and Miss Slazer treated Mozart delicately, with a sensitive balance of phrasing, but the total effect was unexciting.

The Brahms Sonata in A Major was in my opinion the brightest of the works offered, and the one with which the performers felt most at home. Mr. Bauer produced an exquisite tone and his phrasing was perfect — it is a pity that his effect was still marred by occasional faults of intonation, although this was less noticeable than in the Mozart. The last movement, Allegretto grazioso, was beautifully performed, especially by Miss Slazer.

After the intermission, the promise of the Brahms had led me to expect even better things from the Franck sonata, but here too Mr. Bauer's brilliant tone quality and his very effective contrasts were somewhat handicapped by the overpowering tone of the piano and intonation that still seemed less than perfect. Nonetheless, some portions of the Franck were remarkably good, and the performers well deserved the warm applause given them at the end of the concert. We were favored by a pretty little showpiece by Fiocco as an encore, in which Mr. Bauer again showed his potential. I should like to hear both Mr. Bauer and Miss Slazer again.

# Night the Martians came

By DAVID DAY  
Associate Editor

"Ladies and gentlemen," worriedly explained the commentator, "I have a grave announcement to make. Incredible as it may seem, both the observations of science and the evidence of our eyes lead to the inescapable assumption that those strange beings who landed in the Jersey farmlands tonight are the vanguard of an invading army from the planet Mars.

"The battle which took place (there) tonight . . . has ended in one of the most startling defeats ever suffered by an army in modern times, 7,000 men with rifles and machine guns pitted against a single fighting machine of the invaders from Mars. One hundred and twenty known survivors. The rest strewn over the battle area . . . crushed and trampled to death under the metal feet of the monster. . ."

So began the Halloween evening, radio melodrama, Oct. 31, 1938, that was to evoke terror in the hearts of millions of American people.

Originating in a New York studio of the Columbia Broadcasting System, the 30-minute broadcast was channelled to 151 stations from coast to coast and launched the weirdest display of mass hysteria ever to sweep the United States.

It purported to be a live-coverage news program from atop the Broadcasting Building in New York. The Secretary of the Interior and other government representatives commented on the progress of the assault. An appalling confusion was evident in the background. Then, another reporter interrupted:

"I'm speaking from atop of the Broadcasting Building, New York City . . . The bells you hear are ringing to warn the people to evacuate the city as the Martians approach . . . Streets are jammed . . . Noise in crowds like New Year's Eve — in city. Five great machines . . . First one is crossing a river . . . I can see it from here . . . wading in the Hudson like a man."

Of course the Martian conquest was a mere invention of Orson

Welles and his small band of actors that represented the Mercury Theatre on the Air, intended to contribute to the sinister atmosphere of the night of jack-o-lanterns and broomstick witches. But it sounded like a wholly credulous, civilization — ending episode in metropolitan New York.

The program was a "freely adapted" version of H.G. Wells' science fiction, War of the Worlds (1898), a narrative supposedly written by the few, scant survivors of a catastrophic invasion of Earth by meteor-like space-ships from Mars. The enemy was supposed to have landed at Trenton, New Jersey.

To place the fanciful episode in a realistic perspective, the program was disguised as a news summary. And it started unpretentiously enough with a weather forecast.

Then came the despatch from a worried newsmen in New York. In the next half hour, three announcements were made indicating the program was an invention. But few people apparently heard these cautions. Witness the reaction:

In New York, New Jersey, Pittsburgh and Boston, women and children ran into the streets screaming. In scores of neighborhoods, a single listener sounded the alert to 20 or 30 families. Thousands of inquiries flooded radio stations along the Atlantic seaboard. The Associated Press bureau in Kansas City answered calls from Los Angeles to Beaumont, Texas.

Undaunted by the reported attack, women members of the Princeton University geology faculty armed themselves with flashlights and hammers and headed for the scene of the battle while scores of fellow students were telephoned by worried parents and directed to come home.

The Princeton Press club received a call from a somewhat hysterical woman near the scene of the first reported attack, who said, "You can't imagine the horror of it! It's hell."

Into Hillside, New Jersey, police station hurried a white-haired granddaddy who demands a gas mask. Said he: "terrible people are spraying liquid gas all over Jersey Meadows."

Said the Philadelphia Inquirer next day:

"In the long run, calm was restored in the myriad American homes which had been momentarily threatened by inter-planetary invasion. Fear of the monsters from Mars eventually subsided.

"There was no reason for being afraid of them, anyway. Even the bulletins of the radio broadcast explained they all soon died. They couldn't stand the earth's atmosphere and perished of pneumonia."

In the following two years, the General Education Board allocated a grant for a study of the strange reaction to the program, and Hadley Cantril wrote a book-length examination of the episode (Princeton University Press, 1940).

But the fantasy that swept the United States did not end there. In Feb. 1949, radio station H.C.Q.R.X., Quito, Ecuador, presented its own version of a conquest from space, based on the C.B.S. script. And for a time, the Quitoans filled the city streets as had the American people a decade earlier.

However, when they learned the program was a fiction, they became angry, hurled gasoline and flaming paper torches into the radio station three story building which also housed a newspaper. Fifteen people perished in the flames.

And where were the police? Out wandering around the countryside in search of the Martian invaders.

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