

**THE MILK TRAIN
DOESN'T STOP HERE
ANYMORE**



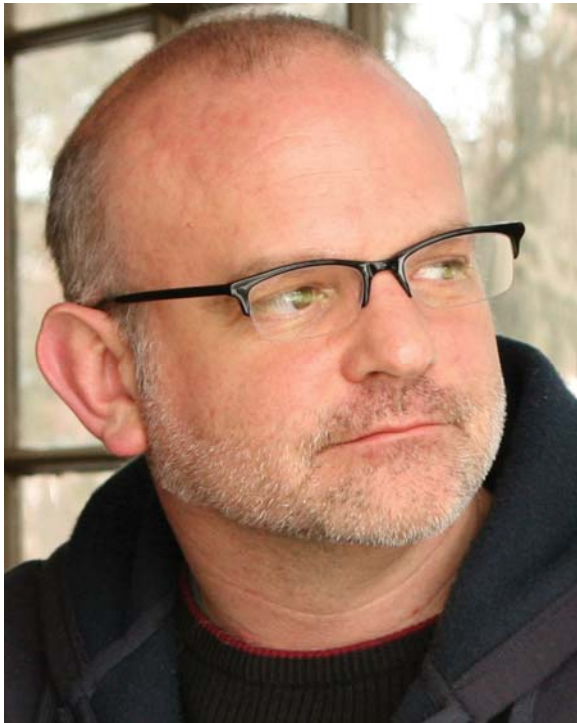
UPSTAGE

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*This production was inspired by a production at **Hartford Stage**, directed by Michael Wilson in 2008.

Interview with the Director: **Michael Wilson**



TED SOD: Why did you want to direct *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore*?

MICHAEL WILSON: Tennessee Williams is the reason I am in the theatre today. Growing up in North Carolina, I always loved plays from the time I was introduced to them in pre-school. It quickly became my preferred way of hearing a story. Many people say they simply can't read plays; they find them incomplete, or much less satisfying than prose. But I have always loved reading dialogue, and imagining settings as described by playwrights in their stage directions. For me, plays allow even more room for the imagination. They demand for their reader to dream the behavior of their characters -- their dress, their movement, and the

inflections in their speech – and conjure the action of the story.

I can still remember reading *A Streetcar Named Desire* late one night in my bedroom. The play shattered me. Not only because of what unfolds when Blanche Dubois descends from Laurel, MI into the netherworld abyss of New Orleans, but how Tennessee expressed his vision of that descent: his use of rich, poetic language, his overtly theatrical use of light, shadow and sound. I was so terrified by the time I got to the end of the play that I couldn't fall asleep. Who was this writer who, through the power of his words and the gift of his human insights, invoked such a harrowing experience inside me?

In high school, I set about to read everything that Tennessee ever wrote. I learned that Tennessee was America's most celebrated playwright (along with Arthur Miller) in the post World War II years, but that in the early 1960's, he and his plays began to be dismissed and would continue to be shunned by critics and audiences alike until he died an ignominious death in an Upper East Side hotel room at the age of 72 in 1983, the year I graduated from high school. I wondered if a great playwright's powers could really dim so significantly as to really no longer have the ability to write a compelling play, or if in fact like Picasso, Tennessee had actually begun to create in a style very different from the one which had brought him fame and fortune, and because of that, these later works were not being properly read or heard.

When I first started directing plays in college, I selected Tennessee's last Broadway work, his "ghost" play about F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald titled *Clothes for a Summer Hotel*. I found immense riches in a play that had been much maligned by critics. I decided then that I wanted to explore Tennessee's late, neglected plays as much as I did his confirmed masterworks.

After I graduated from Chapel Hill in 1987, I moved north to Cambridge, from where I would frequently take the train into New York to see plays. That fall, I saw the first Off-Broadway revival of *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore* starring Elizabeth Ashley, Stephen MacHattie, Amanda Plummer and Marian Seldes at the WPA Theatre in Chelsea. I didn't know what the hell was happening on stage when I first discovered *Summer Hotel* in college, but I knew that I was transported in the same way I had been when I first read *Street Car* in high school. 10 years later, in 1997, I would make my Off-Broadway debut at the same WPA Theatre directing the New York premiere of Tennessee's little known play about the Kennedy Assassination entitled *The Red Devil Battered Sign* starring Elizabeth Ashley.

So now, over 30 years after I first encountered Tennessee on the page, and 24 years after the last New York revival of *Milk Train*, I have the opportunity to direct this mysterious, beautiful and deeply human play. Only now, I have directed 18 other plays by Tennessee, and am seeking to bring the experience of telling his stories to bear

on this 1963 play that comes in the canon after his last commercial success, *The Night of the Iguana* in 1961. *Milk Train* marks the beginning of what is commonly referred to as the "late (euphemism for inferior) plays," the onset of Tennessee's "Stoned Age," when his writing was fueled by an almost lethal combination of drugs and alcohol. And yet, I believe that audiences will discover a very coherent, extremely moving play when they come see *Milk Train*.

TED SOD: What do you think the play is about?

MICHAEL WILSON: As with most of Tennessee's plays, *Milk Train* is about an intense desire to live life to its fullest, and most sensual, an immense longing to have more life, more love, to crush the loneliness both with-in and with-out, all the while trying to stave off mortality.

"Milk Train is about an intense desire to live life to its fullest, and most sensual, an immense longing to have more life, more love, to crush the loneliness both with-in and with-out, all the while trying to stave off mortality."

Tennessee gives us one of his classic quartets: Flora Goforth, a rich former beauty of a certain age who is writing her memoirs in the summer while avoiding a serious illness that threatens to take her life; Christopher Flanders, a down and out poet/con-man who battles the loss of his youth by endearing himself to ever older, ever more

terminal wealthy ladies; Frances Black (Blackie), Ms. Goforth's secretary, who has not yet recovered from the loss of her late young husband, turns to Chris for salvation; and the Witch of Capri, who wages a war with his old friend Flora for Chris's affection.

Just as he does in *Night of the Iguana*, Tennessee explores the limitations of a life lived solely for the pleasures of flesh, contrasting it with the deeper, more elusive fulfillment of the spirit and one's soul.

TED SOD: How did you research the world of the play? What kind of research did you have to do in order to direct it?

MICHAEL WILSON: Tennessee began writing many of his plays as short stories. *Milk Train* began as a short story called "Man Bring This Up Road" written in 1953. The title refers to the book of poetry Chris Flanders brings to Flora Goforth both in the short story and play. *Milk Train* is unique in that it had two Broadway productions – one in 1963, and another in 1964. There are many versions of the play, pre-Broadway, an English version from 1965, and the 1968 screenplay which Williams wrote that became the movie *Boom* starring Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor. When working on a play such as *Milk Train*, which had a very tortured evolution with more than one director helping to shape the play, I think it's very important to read all of the versions available, so that you can better understand the playwright's original intent. Because of my collaboration and friendship with Elizabeth Ashley, I was also able to review the textual choices made by director Kevin Conway and his cast made during the last New York revival of 1987. Tennessee wrote many versions of all his plays, and for many of the late

"I wanted actors who possess an ability to make Tennessee's poetry their own. Actors who were not afraid to be ugly, to be reviled, yet are also very handsome, sexy and beautiful."

plays like *Milk Train*, one definitive version of the play does not exist.

In addition to reading as many different versions of the story that Tennessee himself wrote (short story, play, screenplay), it's important to research the time and place in which the play is set – the culture, the music, the art, and current events. All of these can provide textures towards making a fully dimensioned stage world for the production.

TED SOD: What were you looking for in casting the play? What traits were you looking for from the actors?

MICHAEL WILSON: I was looking for a kind of fierceness, a fearlessness; actors who can go from 0 to 60, who can seem to be not acting at all (my very kind of acting), then all of the sudden leap to a piercing outcry of desperation and loneliness, but all the while keeping it, making it real. I wanted actors who possess an ability to make Tennessee's poetry their own. Actors who were not afraid to be monsters, to be ugly, to be reviled, yet are also very handsome, sexy and beautiful.

TED SOD: Can you describe your process in collaborating with your design team on this play?

MICHAEL WILSON: I love the design process, and I have worked with the designers for this production for almost 20 years. We have a very intimate vocabulary. They know that I am always searching to capture

Tennessee's vivid theatricality in three dimensions, but to do that in a way that does not overwhelm the story, or make the characters seem phony or false. The design elements must both elevate the performance to theatrical art, but also state simply to the audience where we are, who we are with, and when we are with them. I don't like designs with capital I-Ideas – I want a fresh, imaginative visual look for the production that supports and reveals Tennessee's story and characters, but does not upstage them.

TED SOD: Has your understanding of the play changed since you directed it as part of the Tennessee Williams retrospective you produced at Hartford Stage? If so, how? What changes will there be in the NYC production?

MICHAEL WILSON: My understanding of *Milk Train* changes every day in rehearsal. Tennessee wrote such infinitely rich characters in such complex circumstances that new layers of meaning are revealed on good days, and on bad days, you keep chasing them. But it's the chase, the search, that's thrilling for all of us in the room.

Also, when I first directed *Milk Train* almost 3 years ago, I was that many years younger. As we age, our experiences of plays shift. Great plays often seem to change as we ourselves change. Sometimes you are more secure as an artist than others. I understand more potently Goforth's fear of not finishing her memoirs before she dies; her need to

create something, a tangible legacy before she passes. I feel Chris's pain more as he questions the worthiness of his metal sculptures.

And the cast— three of the actors, Olympia, Maggie and Curtis, were in the 2008 production and we begin where we ended, and go now in search of more meaning, that which was somehow hidden from us before. The new actors bring freshness and an essential objectivity.

Finally, we know now that Tennessee's play works and that Tennessee's play is a deeply affecting evening of theatre that holds audiences in a virtual trance. The play's unvarnished depiction of characters clinging to life while confronting their own mortality is very vital to audiences today, who for the last decade have faced – with a mordant, resilient humor if lucky— an increasingly darker awareness of the chaos, the lostness, the seeming unreality of the world around us. Having a sense that *Milk Train* may have finally found its time to be shared, to give people solace that they are not alone in these fears, gives you the courage to leap into even more shadowy aspects of the play.

We have a more intimate theatre at the Laura Pels than we had at Hartford Stage, 100 fewer seats, and a more smaller playing space, so that changes things immensely.

TED SOD: What can you tell us about Tennessee Williams at the time he wrote this play? His partner, Frank Merlo, had just passed away –correct?

“The play's unvarnished depiction of characters clinging to life while confronting their own mortality is very vital to audiences today...”

MICHAEL WILSON: Frank Merlo, Tennessee's partner of 14 years, died in between the two Broadway productions of *Milk Train* in 1963 and 1964. His ghost hangs heavily over Flora's terror of her illness, Blackie's grief over her dead husband, and Tennessee's dream that Frank might have the gift of someone as handsome and sensitive as Chris to take Frank to the other side. Tennessee could never be that for Frank; he was not a good nurse, and not the best partner in terms of providing comfort to one's loved one who is dying and in pain. Tennessee had the courage and strength to write about it, but not to face it with Frank in real life.

TED SOD: What inspires you as a director? Do you see other directors' work? Go to movies? Museums? Travel? What advice do you have for young people who want to direct for the theatre?

MICHAEL WILSON: Go, see, do everything that inspires – yes, theatre, movies, TV, museums all do that for me, as does taking a long walk in the early morning when I can see and hear things that I would otherwise be closed to because I am in the middle of my busy day, or buried in my smart phone. It's important to put our highly advanced technological devices away once and while and just be quiet. Very important.

But mostly, if you want to be a director, you must love telling stories. And if you want to direct for the theatre, you must love stories the way our playwrights tell them – through dialogue, some prose stage directions, and a lot of imagination.

Shadows of Life and Art

Tennessee Williams' *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore*

By Christopher Baker, Senior Dramaturg at **Hartford Stage**

"Sometimes you work on a play," says Clare in Tennessee Williams' *The Two Character Play*, "by inventing situations in life that correspond to those in the play." Though it is often misleading to rely on biography to understand a work of art, Williams was not shy in acknowledging how his life and art were intertwined: "I draw every character out of my very multiple split personality."

Though it is difficult to say which is the most autobiographical of his works, *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore* contains some of Williams' most frank and personal expressions of fear, mortality and the loneliness of the artist. Written in the early sixties, when Williams was alternately praised (featured on the cover of *Time* as America's greatest living playwright) and skewered (for *Orpheus Descending* and

Period of Adjustment), Williams created *Milk Train's* heroine, Flora Goforth, as an outrageous and celebrated outcast who insulates herself from society's censure. Increasingly plagued by hypochondria, depression and drug use, he made Goforth's existence similarly painful, hazy and pharmaceutical. And, during a time when Williams had to face the death of his great love, he wrote a play that unashamedly dealt with fundamental questions.

Bold and exceedingly funny, *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore* is a battle of love and death, in which the artist is the advance guard, the covert operations spy, bringing back important information from the other side about letting go and the redeeming power of love.

Distinctive Creation

En Avant! – Go Forth! – was Williams' battle cry, lent as a name to his most distinctive creation, Flora Goforth, who leads her life with the adventurousness and survivor's instincts Williams admired. On top of a mountain on the Italian coast, the wealthy and celebrated Goforth has secluded herself to write her event-filled life story. Her deadline approaches – both for her book and herself, for she is ill, despite constant protests to the contrary. "Mr. Williams' main character is so scrupulously and

humorously observed, so painted to the life with all her vitality and crotchets and pain that one feels this portrait could be hung with the old masters," wrote Howard Tubman in the *New York Times*. "Flora Goforth...is coarse and coy, wise and foolish, vulnerable and tyrannical. She is full of pretense, yet has reached the point of no more pretense."

Altered by prescription pills and alcohol, Goforth dictates her stream-of

consciousness biography, day and night, to her beleaguered secretary Blackie, over an intercom system she has installed in the villa. Memories of four husbands – three of them rich, one of them beautiful – rush back. Without warning, a handsome stranger, Christopher Flanders, makes his way up the mountain, sending a book of poems as his calling card. Longing for companionship, Goforth has the poet

installed in one of her small villas. Eager to find out the scoop on the mysterious poet, Goforth invites the sharp-tongued the “Witch of Capri,” who delights in revealing that Chris Flanders’ nickname is “The Angel of Death,” after his reputation of accompanying wealthy, dying women. But Goforth suspects that Chris is not merely a gigolo or con-man, but rather is earnestly searching for love and offering hope. And, possibly, God.

Desire and Cemeteries

In *Milk Train*, Williams treads familiar thematic and psychological ground, revisiting oppositions found in other works: the soul and the flesh in *Summer and Smoke*, death’s decay and the procreative life force in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, and the search for a compassionate God in a cruel world in *The Night of the Iguana*. It is because of Goforth’s intelligence and bravado that *Milk Train* is one of Williams’ funniest plays, no small feat for a play that deals so directly with death.

While in *Sweet Bird of Youth*, Chance Wayne tell us that our real enemy is Time, *Milk Train* is much less subtle – Flora Goforth is in an all out battle against death, refusing to live up to her name and “go forth.” It is the shifting tides and strategies of this battle that give *Milk Train* its texture: the calm

journey of passing offered by the young poet, the secretary Blackie’s stoic grief over her late husband, the Witch of Capri’s complete avoidance of death and Goforth’s tooth and nail fight.

As Gore Vidal points out in his introduction to Williams’ Collected Short Stories, “There used to be two streetcars in New Orleans. One named Desire, the other was called Cemeteries. To get to where you were going, you changed from the first to the second....Tennessee validates with his genius our common ticket of transfer.” Chris Flanders reminds Goforth of Alex, the beautiful and poor husband she loved. He brings up the mountain more than just his book of poems. He brings with him the promise of love and compassion.

Bring This Up Road

The Milk Train Doesn’t Stop Here Anymore began in 1953 as the short story “Man Bring This Up Road.” Shortly after its publication in 1959, Williams

began drafting a play based on the story. In 1962, it was staged at the Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto, Italy, directed by Herbert Machiz. Oscar-

nominated British actress Hermione Baddeley, fresh from her tour of *A Taste of Honey*, starred as Goforth. The Witch of Capri was played by Mildred Dunnock, who had originated the role of Big Mama in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. After Italy and some revisions, the production opened on Broadway in January 1963.

The reviews were mixed, with most praise heaped on Baddeley. Unfortunately, a newspaper strike kept all reviews and publicity unpublished until it was too late; the production ran for only sixty-nine performances. Williams pushed for another production, and, amazingly, he got it. A year later, in January 1964, it opened again on Broadway, directed by Tony Richardson and starring Tallulah Bankhead as Goforth and Tab Hunter as Chris Flanders. Williams would remark in his Memoirs that it was unfortunate

Bankhead had not played the role years earlier. “When it was ultimately given to her, it was simply too late. Tallulah no longer had the physical stamina to put it over.” He also claimed, perhaps hyperbolically, that the liquor and pills Bankhead used in the production were real. Marian Seldes, who played Blackie in the production, remembered in a *New York Times* interview that “it was hard for her to remember her lines. There were moments when she was absolutely breathtaking – but only in rehearsal. When we got into New York, many of her great fans came. They were so thrilled to see her that they shrieked with laughter, at the most inappropriate moments. She was seduced by that, she went toward it. It got in between her and the character. But Tallulah always thought that Sissy (Goforth) was based on her.” Bankhead’s fans weren’t enough to keep *Milk Train* running more than nine performances.

Love and Death

While rewriting *Milk Train* between its Broadway runs, Williams was in the middle of one of the most difficult periods of his life – the death of his longtime lover Frank Merlo. Together since 1947, they had begun to drift apart, but Merlo’s illness bound them again. Sick for some time, Merlo finally learned he had inoperable lung cancer while *Milk Train* was in rehearsals for its Broadway premiere. In September 1963, Merlo died. “*Milk Train*,” Williams wrote, “reflected so painfully the deepening shadows of my life as a man and artist.” Under the cloud of Merlo’s illness, the play became sparer, and

less sentimental. He pared away much of Blackie’s story and focused the play even more on the dance between Chris and Goforth, the transfer ticket from Desire to Cemeteries.

He also turned to eastern philosophy and drama, spurred by his recent trip to Japan, where he was introduced to Noh plays and Kabuki theatre. According to scholar Allean Hale, “The Noh formula of drama is built around a journey, a pilgrim-seeker pursued by a demon-ghost, and the intervening priest. This genre gave new meaning to a play like *Milk Train*, whose very stage directions

called for Japanese touches.” One of those touches – often cut in production – was the use of two “stage assistants” to move scenery and act as functionaries, as in the Kabuki Theatre.

Williams returned to the play in 1968 to create a film version. Directed by

Joseph Losey and re-titled *Boom!*, The film starred Elizabeth Taylor as Goforth and Richard Burton as Chris Flanders. Williams lamented that Taylor was too young and Burton too old for their roles, but was generally pleased with the film, the main attraction of which is Noel Coward as The Witch of Capri.

Major Work

If it fared badly in its first incarnations, *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore* has soared in revivals. Recent productions include a 1987 Off-Broadway production featuring Elizabeth Ashley as Goforth, Marian Seldes as the Witch of Capri and Amanda Plummer as Blackie; a 1996 Williamstown Theatre Festival production directed by David Schweizer, featuring Olympia Dukakis; and Rupert Everett as Goforth in a 1997 London version.

In the early 1960s, the play's “lack of a moralistic theme and Southern setting did not fit the schematic of the Williams play that the playwright was supposed to produce,” wrote Williams scholar Linda Dorff. And so critics were

disappointed and audiences puzzled. But now, forty-five years later, it has been reevaluated as an important work. To scholars, it is particularly interesting as a turning point in Williams' career – the first of his “late plays.”

“Tennessee didn't want to write as if it were 1947 anymore, the year *Streetcar* appeared on Broadway,” says director Michael Wilson. “The concerns in the play are real and feel contemporary. If Flora Goforth is outrageous, she is no more outrageous than a host of celebrities we can read about daily. This is a funny and heart-breaking play that should be placed alongside his major works.”

*Some of the information in this article comes from the unpublished *Disfigured Stages* by Linda Dorff, as well as the following sources, which are recommended for further reading: “Confronting the Late Plays of Tennessee Williams” by Allean Hale (in the *Tennessee Williams Annual Review*, Number 6, 2003), *The Kindness of Strangers: The Life of Tennessee Williams* by Donald Spoto, *Tennessee Williams' Notebooks* edited by Margaret Bradham Thornton, *Memoirs by Tennessee Williams*, and *Collected Stories by Tennessee Williams*.*

What's in a Name?

Major Characters

Edited by Jennifer Roberts, Director of Education at **Hartford Stage**

Flora Goforth

Williams combined his favored floral imagery with the term that served as his personal talisman: En avant! Go forth!

Frances Black

Frances literally means “from France,” and is the feminine form of Francis. Perhaps the most famous Francis was St. Francis of Assisi, a wealthy young man who gave up his wealth and even his clothes to live a life of service to God.

Simonetta

Means “the one who listens or hears.” Williams was acquainted with the daughter of the Duchess Clonna di Cesaro, named Simonetta; perhaps this character’s name, which was originally Angelina, was inspired by her.

Christopher Flanders

Christopher literally means “bearer of Christ.” According to legend, there was

a giant named Offero who carried people across a wide river. One day, he bore a small child across the river; the child grew heavier as he crossed. When he reached the other side, the child said that the giant had borne the weight of the world for he, the child, was Christ. The giant was called Christopher from that day forward. Flanders, suggests critic Mary McBride, may refer to Flanders Field, the area of Belgium that witnessed heavy losses during WWI, and where an American war cemetery is located.

Guilio

Cognate of Julius (Latin), meaning “youthful.”

The View is Meraviglia...

Set on the Divine Coast of Italy

Edited by Jennifer Roberts, Director of Education at **Hartford Stage**

Place:

The play is set on Goforth's mountain-top villa on Italy's Divina Costiera, the "divine coast," on the Gulf of Salerno, 24 miles southeast of Naples. Amalfi is the best known of the cities and the area around it is known as The Amalfi Coast. Renowned for its rugged terrain, scenic beauty, picturesque towns and diversity, the Amalfi Coast is listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.

Williams began the short story "Man Bring This Up Road" in Positano and the story and play are set in or near there. The town is built on the side of the hill, and all transport either up or down the hill is only possible on foot. In his notebook, he wrote of Positano: "A faint Autumnal sadness drifts in the air this evening, far away cries of children, fading sky, buses honking around the Amalfi drive far off. And now and then a distant splash of the sea—bird voices—fading light—running footsteps—a subjective sadness, to be sure—and not at all deep. In fact just a little affected, I suppose."

Williams visited Italy as a youth and would return there in 1948 and then throughout his life. He spent the first half of 1948 there, working on plays and stories, including *Summer and Smoke* and "Il Cane Incantato della Divina Costiera", the basis for *The Rose Tattoo*. According to his notebooks, Williams was enchanted by Italy that year. When he returned to Italy the



following year it was with his new partner, Frank Merlo. His time in Italy in 1949 was less joyful, as he was stung by some of the negative reactions to *Summer and Smoke*, as well as by friends who said Williams' career was "finished." Claiming his writing had no fire and blaming the Italian climate, he nonetheless wrote *Moon of Pause*, which he would later turn into the novel *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone*.

Williams and Merlo would spend summers in Italy—mostly Rome—from 1950 to 1958. When their relationship cooled, Tennessee continued his Italian trips without Merlo. In 1959, *The Night of the Iguana* had its world premiere at the festival in Spoleto, Italy, and three years later, *Milk Train* premiered there.

**Time:**

The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore takes place in August in the early 1960s.

World Events, 1960-1962:

An American U-2 spy plane, piloted by Francis Gary Powers, was shot down over Russia. John F. Kennedy defeated Richard Nixon. A first class stamp cost 4 cents. Cuba was invaded at the Bay of Pigs. The first U.S. spaceman, Alan B. Shepard, Jr., rocketed 116.5 miles up in a 302-mile trip. The Berlin Wall was erected. The Second Vatican Council began.

Money:

In the US, \$1.00 worth of goods and services in the early 1960s would have been equivalent to \$7.05 - \$7.28 worth of goods and services in 2008. The exchange rate of dollars to lira in the early 1960s was 621 lire to a dollar. In 1960, one could stay at a pensione in a small Italian town for \$3.50 a day (1960 dollars); the cost of a stay at a larger

hotel started at \$5.00. A good meal at a local restaurant could cost \$2.55. A good meal at an expensive restaurant in Rome could cost two to three times that. In 1962, a seventeen-day trip to Italy, including airfare, hotels, meals and transportation was estimated in the *New York Times* to cost \$693.00/person.

Time of year:

Average temperatures in August on the Amalfi Coast range from upper 60s °F at night to upper 80s °F during the day. August 15 is Ferragosto – “holiday in August.” Many businesses close for the day, and many take the week of Ferragosto as a vacation. It is an old holiday, when the field workers and their animals got time off and were given some kind of recognition by the owners. It later was chosen by the Catholic Church as the Feast of the Assumption—when Mary ascends to heaven. Some towns seem deserted around this time, save for foreigners.

Glossary of Selected Terms and Phrases

Edited by Jennifer Roberts, Director of Education at **Hartford Stage**

Amalfi Drive

The Amalfi Drive runs along the stretch of the Amalfi Coast between the southern Italian towns of Sorrento and Amalfi. For the greater part of its route, the road is carved out of the sides of the coastal cliffs, giving spectacular views down to the Tyrrhenian Sea and on the other side up to the towering cliffs above. The road passes through the village of Positano.

Balenciaga

Cristóbal Balenciaga, a Spanish designer, was referred to as “the master of us all” by Christian Dior. He opened his first boutique in San Sebastián, Spain, in 1914, before moving to Paris. In the 1960s, Balenciaga’s trademarks included collars that stood away from the collarbone and shortened sleeves.

Bulgari lighter

Bulgari is a jeweler known for supplying unique jewelry to the rich and famous.

Capri

Capri is an Italian island off the Sorrentine Peninsula, on the south side of the Gulf of Naples. A resort since the time of the Roman Republic, by the end of the nineteenth century it had become a favorite spot of royals, aristocrats, politicians, industrialists, writers, painters and other artists and elite.

Corniche

The Grande Corniche, 31 kilometres long, is a cliff road constructed by Napoleon I. It rises as high as 450

meters above the Principality of Monaco.

Croesus

Renowned for his wealth, Croesus was the king of Lydia from 560 BC until his defeat by the Persians in about 547 BC.

Diaghilev

Sergei Diaghilev (1872-1929) was one of the world’s great cultural impresarios whose Ballet Russes began in Paris in 1909. Diaghilev engaged the greatest Russian and Western European dancers (Nijinsky, Karsavina, Lifar), composers (Stravinsky, Poulenc, Satie), choreographers (Fokine, Nijinsky, Lifar), and stage designers (Benois, Bakst, Goncharova, Roerich, Picasso, Cocteau) of his day.

Funicular

A cable railway that ascends a mountain, usually counterbalanced by a descending car.

Glamour stocks

A glamour stock or share is one that is fashionable at the time – either because the share itself is viewed as especially attractive or because it is in a sector of the market that is currently fashionable.

Jairpur

Indian city located 262 kilometers from New Delhi and popularly known as the Pink City after its red sandstone buildings.

Maharanee

A Hindu princess.

“The Milk Train Doesn’t Stop Here

Any more” Milk trains ran in the mornings, making stops at creameries and stations set up for small towns and farms, and transporting the milk to distributors in larger towns and cities. In the evenings, the trains made their way back with the empty cans and containers. Some trains also took passengers. The term “milk run” came to mean a routine or easy journey. Goforth’s phrase means that she is not a “soft touch;” she is not one who will easily give without getting something in return.

Monte Carlo

Monte Carlo is a wealthy town in the principality of Monaco. Known for its casinos, luxury hotels, and scenery, it is a prime tourist destination on the French Riviera.

Mr. Warburg

Fredric John Warburg (1898 - 1981) was an English publisher who began his career at Routledge before starting Secker and Warburg. Warburg published Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), and works by other leading figures such as Thomas Mann and Franz Kafka. Other notable publications include Pierre Boulle's classic *The Bridge over the River Kwai*, Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, and William Shirer's *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*. He also published Williams’ plays, including *Milk Train*.

Naples

Noted for its history, art, culture and food, Naples is a historic city in southern Italy on the coast of the Gulf of Naples. It is the capital of the Campania region and the province of Naples.

Nazionali

Italian cigarettes.

Neuralgia

Neuralgia is an intense burning or stabbing pain caused by irritation of or damage to a nerve. The pain is usually brief but may be severe. It often feels as if it is shooting along the course of the affected nerve.

Nice

Located in southern France on the Mediterranean coast between Marseille, France, and Genoa, Italy, Nice is a major tourist center and resort city.

Piccola Marina

The “little marina” on the island of Capri.

Pipistrella

Small, reddish-brown European bats. The name comes from *vespertilio*, which derives from the Latin *vesper*, meaning “evening.”

Portofino

A small Italian fishing village and tourist resort located in the province of Genoa on the Italian Riviera, Portofino is considered to be among the most beautiful Mediterranean ports.

Promenade deck

The top deck of a passenger ship, enclosed by a railing, which allows for a continuous walkway around the ship.

Proust's Remembrance of Things Past

A novel in seven parts, written between 1913-1927, in which the narrator is in search of "lost time" and finds the true meaning of past experience in involuntary memories stimulated by objects and circumstances.

Ravello

Ravello is a town situated above the Amalfi Coast in the province of Salerno, Campania. The town has historically served as a destination for artists, musicians, and writers, including Richard Wagner, M. C. Escher, Giovanni Boccaccio, Virginia Woolf, Gore Vidal, and Sara Teasdale.

Romanov crest

The last Russian Royal House. The Romanov dynasty began its rule with the election of Tsar Mikhail in 1613 and ended in July 1918 when Nicholas II, his wife and his children were killed by revolutionaries.

The Social Register

Established in New York in 1886, the Social Register is a directory of names and addresses of prominent American families who form the social elite. Until recently it included primarily families with "old money." According to their website: "Since its inception, the Social Register has been the only reliable, and the most trusted, arbiter of Society in America."

Trojan Horse

When the Greeks had laid siege to Troy for ten years without results, they pretended to retreat. They left behind a huge wooden horse, in which a number of Greek heroes, including Odysseus, had hidden themselves. A spy convinced the Trojans to move the horse inside the city as a war trophy, and the following night, the Greeks attacked the unsuspecting and celebrating Trojans, finally conquering Troy.

Questions for Discussion

Edited by Jennifer Roberts, Director of Education at **Hartford Stage**

1. An epigraph is a quotation – often taken from another work of literature – that an author or playwright places at the beginning of a literary work to suggest its theme. Tennessee Williams chose the following epigraph for *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore*:

Consume my heart away; sick with desire
And fasten to a dying animal
It knows not what it is; and gather me
Into the artifice of eternity
--William Butler Yeats, from *Sailing to Byzantium*

Why do you think he chose this poem as his epigraph? What themes does it suggest? Does it have any effect on your understanding of the characters in the play?

2. *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore* began as a short story, "Man Bring This Up Road." The title of that short story is repeated several times in the dialogue of the play. At one point, Goforth says, "Man bring wrong thing up road to Sissy Goforth." What is it that Chris Flanders brings to Goforth, both literally and metaphorically?
3. Tennessee Williams is known for his use of symbols and metaphors in his plays. Many of his characters are even given symbolic or metaphorical names, as discussed above. What is the figurative meaning of the mountain on which Goforth lives? The mobiles that Chris constructs? The milk train of the title?
4. The setting of *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore* is very specific. The geography and culture of Italy are ever-present throughout the play. Why do you think Williams set this play in Italy? How do the references to Italian society help us to understand the characters? How would the story change if it were set anywhere else, or if the setting were less specific?
5. Trace the theme of hunger throughout the play. For what does Chris hunger? For what does Goforth hunger? How does each keep the other from satisfying their hunger?
6. Williams' plays are filled with very complex characters. Which character do you find most sympathetic? Why?