

upstageGUIDE

The Rose Tattoo



**ROUNDA
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COMPANY**

A publication of
**EDUCATION AT
ROUNDA
ABOUT**

upstage SPOTLIGHT

The Rose Tattoo

By Tennessee Williams
Directed by Trip Cullman

Academy Award® winner Marisa Tomei unleashes a tour de force as Serafina, a widow who rekindles her desire for love, lust and life in the arms of a fiery suitor. Sharply directed by Trip Cullman (*Significant Other*), this Tennessee Williams gem sizzles with humor and heart.

a note from ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Todd Haimes

There are few writers as legendary as Tennessee Williams, and few characters as iconic as the women who lead his plays. *The Rose Tattoo's* Serafina Delle Rose stands as one of the greatest heroines from one of the world's greatest dramatists. *The Rose Tattoo* also marks Roundabout's ninth Williams production, squarely aligning with Roundabout's mission to bring to new light the traditionally underappreciated works of the canon's greatest writers.

Winner of the 1951 Tony Award® for Best Play, *The Rose Tattoo* brims with Williams's characteristic poetry and passion, mining the depths of Serafina's grief and healing in the wake of her husband's death. This play, like all of Williams's classics, contains multitudes. Heartbreaking, and yet unexpectedly comedic, *The Rose Tattoo* juxtaposes loss with desire, desire with faith, faith with loss. The result is a mesmerizing whirlwind of tragedy and comedy unlike anything else in Williams' oeuvre.



When:
THE EARLY 1950S

Where:

A VILLAGE POPULATED MOSTLY BY SICILIANS SOMEWHERE ALONG THE GULF COAST BETWEEN NEW ORLEANS AND MOBILE. THE HOME OF SERAFINA DELLE ROSE.

Repubblica Italiana
IN NOME DELLA LEGGE

SERAFINA DELLE ROSE

A RESTLESS WIDOW

ROSA DELLE ROSE

THE DAUGHTER OF THE HOUSE,
A YOUNG GIRL OF TWELVE AND THEN FIFTEEN

ALVARO MANGIACAVALLO

25 WITH A CLOWNISH MANNER AND
CHARMING AWKWARDNESS

THE STREGA

AN OLDER WOMAN IN THE COMMUNITY

BESSIE & FLORA

TWO WOMEN OF MIDDLE YEARS AND
JUVENILE TEMPERAMENT

ESTELLE HOHENGARTEN

THE MISTRESS OF SERAFINA'S HUSBAND

12

IL TATUAGGIO ROSA SI
APRE IL 15 OTTOBRE 2019



BILLY, SALVATORE, & VIVI

THE CHILDREN OF THE VILLAGE

ASSUNTA, GIUSEPPINA, PEPPINA, VIOLETTA, MARIELLA, & TERESA

THE WOMEN OF THE VILLAGE

MISS YORKE

A HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

JACK HUNTER

A SAILOR COURTING ROSA

SALESMAN

DOCTOR

THE ROSE TATTOO
OPENS 15 OCTOBER 2019

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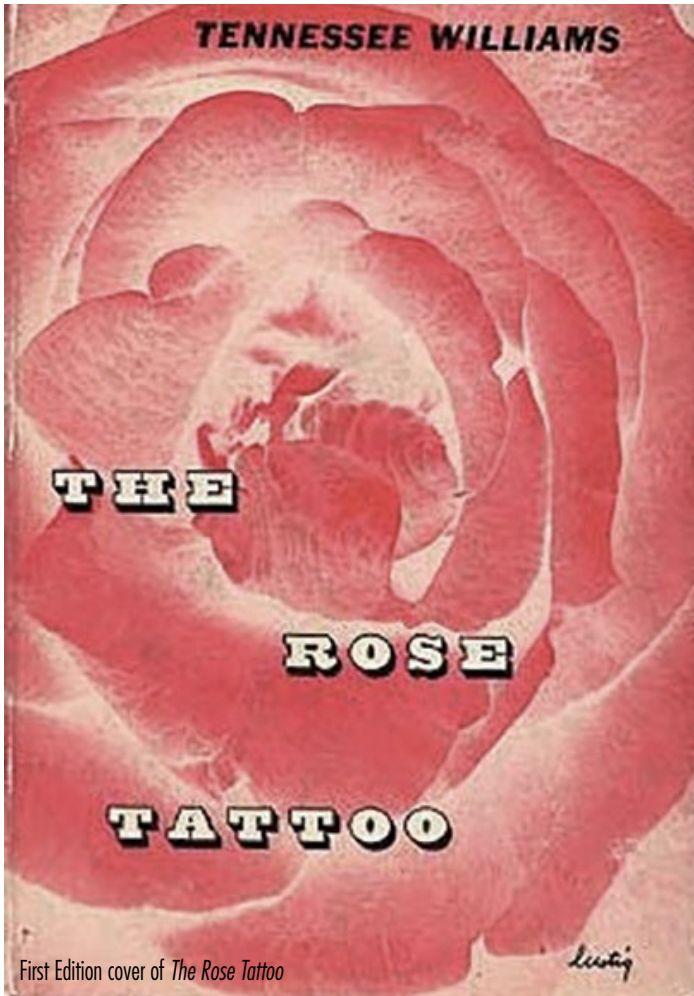
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THE ROSE TATTOO: TENNESSEE WILLIAMS'S LOVE-PLAY TO THE WORLD

"The Rose Tattoo was my love-play to the world. It was permeated with the happy young love for Frankie and I dedicated the book to him, saying: 'To Frankie in Return for Sicily.'" —Tennessee Williams



First Edition cover of *The Rose Tattoo*

Tennessee Williams was facing a creative slump in 1948. Following a meteoric rise with two Broadway hits—*The Glass Menagerie* in '45 and *A Streetcar Named Desire* in '47—the critics dismissed his next play, *Summer and Smoke*, and the failure hit hard.

"Talent died in me from over-exposure. I'm not going to hit another jack-pot any time soon. Until the heart finds a new song and the power to sing it."

The heart awakened one night in 1948 when Williams ran into Frank Merlo in a deli on Lexington Avenue. The men had met casually in Provincetown the previous year, but now, a deeper connection took root. A few months later, Williams took Merlo to

Europe, and they traveled to Sicily, where Williams met Merlo's extended family. Hearing stories of passionate Sicilians sparked his imagination. Williams wrote an 8-page outline for a play called *Stornello* (which translates to a short Italian street song), about a widowed Sicilian seamstress who makes her home into a shrine to her dead husband, shutting herself and her daughter away from love or sex. Williams showed the outline to his agent, Audrey Wood, and director Elia Kazan—who had directed *Streetcar* and was one of the most influential directors in America. Kazan was not enthusiastic, and for a time, Williams abandoned the idea.

"During the past two years I have been, for the first time in my life, happy and at home with someone and I think of [The Rose Tattoo] as a monument to that happiness, a house built of images and words for that happiness to live in."

Williams settled into a stable relationship with Merlo in Key West, Florida. In 1949, he returned to his idea and wrote the first draft of *The Rose Tattoo*, which focused on the Sicilian seamstress, her husband, and her daughter. He set the play on the Gulf Coast with its Italian immigrant communities and Creole culture, a change from the Southern milieu and characters of his previous plays. Williams saw this as "a giant step forward," but he worried how the play would be received.

"The play is probably too subjective, an attempt to externalize an experience that was too much of my own." —Williams on the first draft of *The Rose Tattoo*

Kazan liked the new draft, calling it "a kind of comic-grotesque Mass said in praise of the Male Force." He provided detailed suggestions, most significantly to focus the action on widow Serafina and visitor Alvaro Mangiacavallo, which Williams followed closely in his next rewrite. His happiness with Merlo contributed to the play's celebratory ending.

"I have just now completed what I think is the best scene in any of my long plays, the first scene between Pepina [ed. note: the original name for Serafina] and Alvaro. It suddenly came out of the bushes!"

Producer Cheryl Crawford took on the play for the 1950-51 Broadway season, but Kazan passed, citing schedule conflicts, so Williams hired a young director, Danny Mann. Although Serafina was written for Italian actress Anna Magnani, she turned down the production. (She would later star in the 1955 film version.) Williams chose Maureen Stapleton, 25, Irish, and at the time an unknown, for Serafina, while Eli Wallach, also a non-Italian, played Mangiacavallo. After a month-long tryout in Chicago, the play opened on Broadway in February 1951.

"It seems like the whole future hangs on it. I mustn't ever again permit myself to care this much about any public success. It makes you little, and altogether too vulnerable."

To Williams's relief, the play was well-received. *New York Times* critic Brooks Atkinson wrote, "It is the loveliest idyll written for the stage in some time...Mr. Williams [is] at the top of his form." In a follow-up piece, he remarked, "Behind the fury and uproar of the characters are the eyes, ears, and mind of a lyric dramatist who has brought into the theatre a new freedom of style." The production won Tony® Awards for best play, set design (Boris Aronson), and featured performances by Stapleton and Wallach, who became stars with this show. Although Williams continued to send acting notes to Stapleton through the run, he appreciated the creative experience and its impact on his career.

"If it had been a smash hit like *Streetcar* or a dismal failure like *Summer and Smoke* it would have been, either way, bad for me. As it is, I think it provides what is most essential, a bridge to the future."



Maureen Stapleton and Don Murray in the original production of *The Rose Tattoo*
Photo George Karger, Pix, Inc

Frank Merlo: *The Little Horse*

Tennessee Williams and Frank Merlo in an undated photograph
Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Columbia University



Nicknamed "The Little Horse" by Williams, Frank Merlo was "extremely positive," like "a stick of dynamite" with a strong sense of humor. The script's description of Alvaro Mangiacavallo suggests Merlo's influence: "twenty-five years old, dark and very good-looking. He is one of those Mediterranean types that resemble glossy young bulls." Williams not only dedicated the play to Merlo—he also gave him a share of the profits.

The son of Sicilian immigrants, Merlo was born in 1921 and grew up in the Italian section of Elizabeth, New Jersey. He joined the Navy and fought in the Pacific during World War II. After the war, he acted in some small movie roles, then found his way to Manhattan's bohemian (and gay) scene. As he became part of Williams's life, friends saw Merlo as a positive and stabilizing influence. Williams said Merlo was his personal secretary so they could travel together, but Merlo made little effort to closet the relationship. When asked by the president of Warner Brothers what he did, Merlo replied, "I sleep with Mr. Williams." Their 14-year relationship was not always smooth, but even after the couple separated, they remained close. Williams was taking care of Merlo as Frank died of lung cancer in 1963.

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR TRIP CULLMAN

Education Dramaturg Ted Sod spoke with Director Trip Cullman about his work on *The Rose Tattoo*.

Ted Sod: Why did you want to direct Tennessee Williams's 1951 play *The Rose Tattoo*? What would you say the play is about? How do you expect contemporary audiences will relate to it?

Trip Cullman: Tennessee Williams is one of my favorite playwrights. In grad school, I directed *A Streetcar Named Desire* for my thesis production. I have always admired the poetry of his language, but for *The Rose Tattoo*, Williams wished to subsume the poetry of his dialogue so that the expressivity of his artistic sensibility was borne primarily by the visual. The play's dialogue is quite earthbound and quotidian for Williams, yet the play is filled to the brim with visual symbolism—the goat expressing the Dionysian or water imagery expressing feminine mysticism, for example. Williams wrote, "This was a play built of movement and color, almost as much as an abstract painting is made of them." The original production of the play—as well as the film version—were presented quite naturalistically. Williams said, "*The Rose Tattoo* should have been a riotous and radiant thing, but the spatial limitations of the stage and the limits of time, etc., put it into a straitjacket and only about two-thirds of its potential appeal came through." Perhaps somewhat sentimentally, I am striving with this production to give Williams the highly symbolic, visually poetic production of his work he always dreamed of but was never able to see realized in his lifetime.

For me, *The Rose Tattoo* is about the struggle between renunciation and connection, between living in the past versus living in the present, between adherence to tradition and liberation into self-fulfillment unbound by social conventions. Serafina is a new arrival to the United States and brings with her the strictures and mores of her traditional Sicilian heritage. As such, in mourning the husband she idolized, she calcifies her life force—defining her existence wholly by eschewing desire, burying her sexuality in an apotheosis of grief. Her asceticism is so extreme, it becomes eroticized. She eroticizes the memory of her husband to such an extreme that she cannot allow for any carnality in the here and now. "To me the big bed was beautiful like a religion," Serafina says. "Now I lie on it with dreams, with memories only!" When she meets Alvaro and learns the truth about her husband, she finally is able to unlock her heart and embrace life again. What he accomplishes, Williams wrote about Alvaro's love for Serafina, "is her escape from the urn of ashes and her reconciliation with life!" *The Rose Tattoo* illuminates the tremendous power of female sexuality—especially when liberated from patriarchal mores.

Ultimately, the play is about the transformative and liberating power of love. Williams called it "my love-play to the world." The great majority of Williams's plays end tragically. This play has a joyous ending. It is a hard-won happiness, but given the deeply troubled times we currently live in, my hope is that audiences will leave the theatre buoyed by the play's affirmation of the essential life force and capacity for love in us all.



TS: What research was necessary for you to do in order to direct *The Rose Tattoo*? Will you share some of what you learned from the preparation you did?

TC: Williams dedicated *The Rose Tattoo* to his lover Frank Merlo "in return for Sicily." Following the enormous success of *Streetcar*, Williams had suffered a critical disappointment with *Summer and Smoke*. He and Merlo escaped to Italy and lived there for a year, a period Williams recalled in later years as the happiest time of his life. His nickname for Merlo was "Little Horse," which became Alvaro's last name in *The Rose Tattoo*—Mangiacavallo, meaning "eat a horse." The unhappiness of Williams's childhood and young adult life—filled with the mental instability of his sister and mother, his absent father, and the repression and shame around his sexuality—was washed away in the bliss of his love affair with Merlo. And this liberation became the underlying inspiration for Serafina's liberation by Alvaro in *The Rose Tattoo*. Elia Kazan wrote to Williams that *The Rose Tattoo* "might be read as a massive autobiography...as naked as the best confessions."

I like to think of *The Rose Tattoo* as perhaps Williams's most personal work, and the character of Serafina as his most personal creative reflection of himself. It was through his fulfillment in his relationship with Merlo that this poetic self-mirroring was made possible. Williams

wrote, “During the past two years I have been, for the first time in my life, happy and at home with someone and I think of this play as a monument to that happiness, a house built of images and words for that happiness to live in. But in that happiness, there is the long, inescapable heritage of the painful and perplexed like the dark corners of a big room.”

An enormous amount of research has gone into the preparation for this production. I studied the historical records of Sicilian immigrant communities in the Gulf states in the 1950s. I researched Sicilian folk music and the worship of the Black Madonna. I familiarized myself with the cultural and racial diversity of the Gulf regions. I learned Sicilian spells to ward off the evil eye. If reading a Williams biography is of interest to audience members, I would most highly recommend John Lahr’s *Tennessee Williams: Mad Pilgrimage of the Flesh*. It was an invaluable resource in preparing to direct the play.

TS: This play requires a huge cast. Are you employing doubling or even tripling in your production?

TC: We have a company of 21 actors—and that is after I cut some characters out of the original text! I love this play for so many reasons, but one among them is that it is peopled primarily by women. So often, plays are written with mainly male characters. Shakespeare, for example, only has an average of three women characters in each of his plays. Here, that ratio is reversed. There are only a handful of male characters, and the vast majority of characters are female.

I decided against doubling or tripling in this production. The reason for that choice is that it felt important to get a sense of the community surrounding Serafina. The play’s construction is quite odd—the second half consists mainly of two huge scenes between Serafina and Alvaro. The first half is a series of confrontations between Serafina and various denizens of her community. Several characters make a single appearance in the play and are not seen again. Were I to have doubled or tripled the casting of the actors, audiences wouldn’t get a true sense of the multiplicity of the world surrounding Serafina, nor of the unusual way the play is constructed. •



Emun Elliot and Marisa Tomei in *The Rose Tattoo*

SICILIAN CULTURE: LIFE IN THE OLD COUNTRY

LIFE IN THE OLD COUNTRY

An island just off the coast of the Italian peninsula, Sicily stands apart not just geographically but culturally from the mainland. Its position in the Mediterranean Sea makes it a convenient port and vulnerable to invasion, leaving it susceptible to military conquests and an ideal location for resettlement. Early Greek, Albanian, and North African Arab settlers brought cultures with them that have had a lasting influence. The island resisted integration into the Kingdom of Italy until 1861, existing until then under Byzantine, Norman, and Spanish rule, alternating with periods of independent governance. Sicily's avoidance of Italian rule resulted in a unique cultural and national identity. It is not uncommon for inhabitants to identify as Sicilian and to reject Italian nationality and heritage.



Sicilians' heritage can be traced back to immigrants from Albania, Greece, and North Africa.

A WORLD APART

These distinctions from the rest of Italy manifest in specifically Sicilian style, language, and ways of living. A dominant force in Italian culture is the concept of the *bella figura*, which refers to the importance of appearance and first impressions as a reasonable measure for judgment of one's character. That is, the way you dress affects how people think about you and treat you. Sicilian dress is distinguished from other regions in Italy by its embellished simplicity. While silhouettes and fabrics may be rooted in folk traditions, they are often enhanced with lace, jewelry, and ribbons to connote class. Sicilians speak their own language, considered by some to be a dialect of Italian, called Siciliano, marked by its Greek, Arabic, and French influences. (Hear the differences for yourself [HERE!](#)) Cuisine on the island includes notably more seafood and less dairy and meat than traditional dishes in Northern Italy. Additionally, cultural norms and structures are more conservative than those of their fellow Italian citizens in the north.

Some of this conservatism can be attributed to Sicily's unique relationship to Catholicism. Approximately 98% of Italy identifies as Christian either culturally or spiritually, but Sicily is home to the only two Greek Orthodox dioceses in the entire country. The Italo-Albanian Rite in Sicily distinguishes itself from the Roman Catholic Rite, which the majority of the country abides by, in being more conservative and rooting its practices in Greek rather than Latin.



A shrine to the Virgin Mary

HEIGHT OF POWER

Many of the social structures of Sicily can be traced to its deeply-rooted religious beliefs. Sicily's pious culture and proximity to the Holy See, the headquarters of the Catholic church, reinforce an undercurrent of Catholic doctrine in society. Hierarchies of authority, with the church permanently affixed to the peak, are not questioned. Echoing Catholic beliefs, Sicilian

The Infiorata in Noto, Sicily is a festival of flowers celebrated at the end of the Easter season.

Photo by Stefano Mortellaro



culture historically suppressed female leadership and autonomy. Sexuality, as it is viewed by the Catholic church, is considered sacred and intended for reproductive purposes amongst married couples, leading to the commonness of marriages early in life. In line with Catholic strictures, transgressions of the church's code of morals and commandments are considered sins, which require reconciliation with an ordained male in order to be absolved. Much of one's life is spent in service of not only God but of the church as an institution. Religious holidays punctuate the year, just as religious iconography defines spaces.

Following the incorporation of Sicily into the Kingdom of Italy, its economy was driven by agriculture, though few owned the land that they worked on. Men farmed in the fields, and their children were often expected to work rather than attend formal education. Women tended to the home and frequently were in charge of a family's finances. As such, family units were critical for survival, and property rights were of the utmost importance to protect one's land. While these dynamics have shifted with new opportunities for women to work outside the home and establish financial independence, loyalty to one's family and respect for religion remain pillars of Sicilian society.

IN SEARCH OF NEW SHORES

Cracks began to form in these structures in the late 19th century as an agricultural crisis left Sicilians struggling to survive on the island. Between 1890 and 1920, 4.5 million Italians emigrated to the United States, many of whom were men who left their families behind, intending to make money and return home to an improved life. In Sicily, where women had been offered less independence and were unaccustomed to being a part of the public sphere alone, it was more common for entire families to migrate to the United States. For those women who were left behind by husbands migrating for labor, the fear of infidelity and abandonment loomed large. According to Linda Reeder's research on Sicilian migration trends, "Sicilians believed that prolonged exposure to 'America' undermined traditional values and morals and weakened a man's capacity to act honorably." In *The Rose Tattoo*, Serafina delle Rose reflects these common concerns through her distrust of American men and her skepticism toward the sexual freedom that America presented. •

SICILIANS ON THE GULF COAST



A group of Italians on Decatur Street in New Orleans, 1938
Photo by Lee Russell/Library of Congress

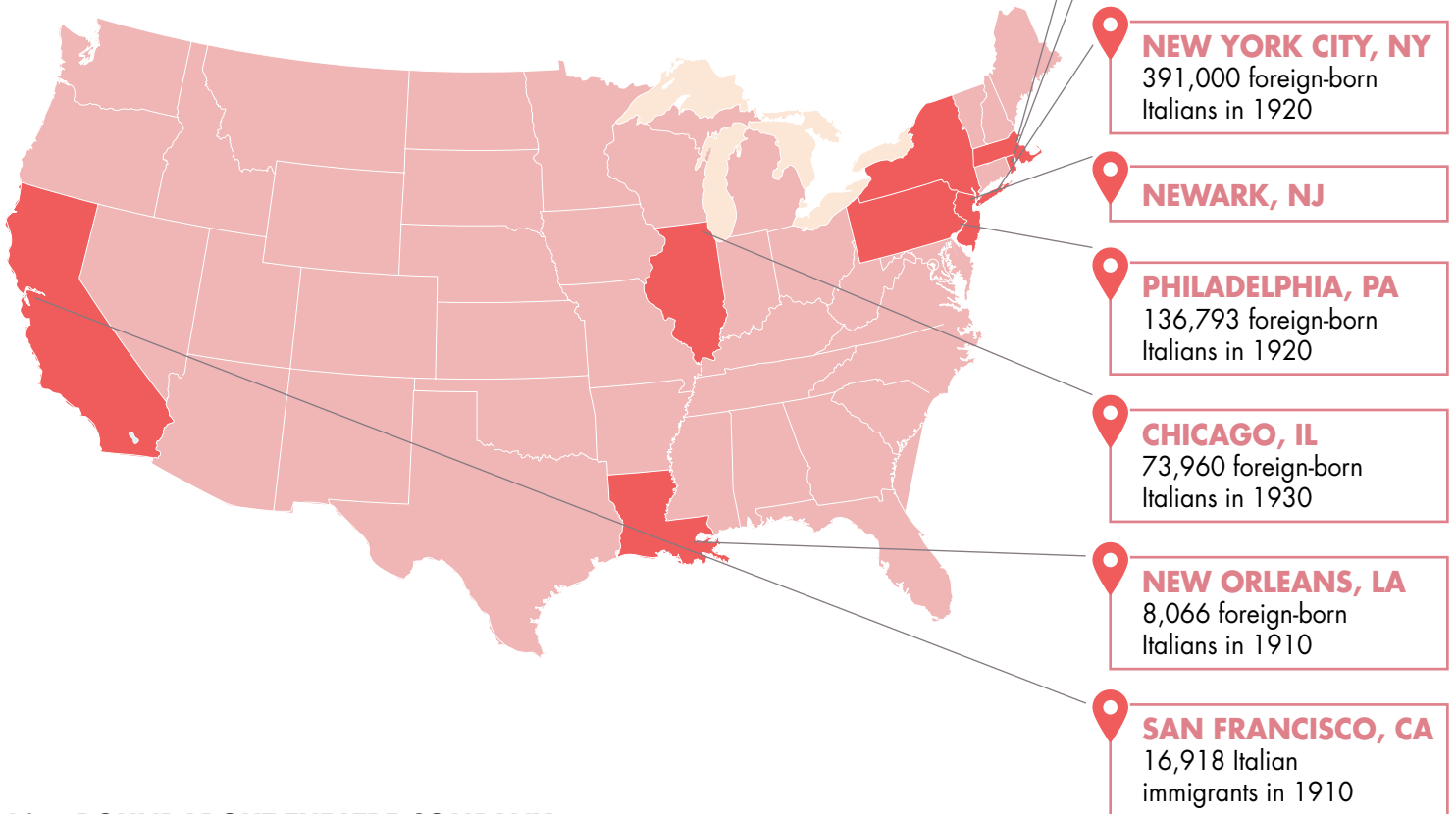
COME TO AMERICA

Italians have been immigrating to the United States for centuries, but the wave of “New Immigration” began in the 1880s. This was a period of rapid industrial growth, and the United States was eager for immigrants to arrive and work in various industries. While the Northern cities attracted the majority of immigrants coming to America in search of work, the Louisiana Immigration Association was founded in 1881 to encourage immigrants to settle in the South and work in agriculture. This organization focused on recruiting Italians, specifically sending representatives to Sicily to spread information. With the promise of free passage across the Atlantic and a well-paying job on the other side, many Sicilians flocked to America.

BIRDS OF PASSAGE

During the period of New Immigration, approximately 50% of Italian immigrants were so-called “Birds of Passage,” returning to Italy after working in America for a few years. These people rarely learned English or attempted to assimilate with American culture because they did not intend to settle permanently. However, there were still many Italians who decided to stay in America—often insulating themselves within Sicilian communities, distinguished by kinship and village lines.

WHERE THEY SETTLED



THE IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE

Because Sicilian immigrants spread to many cities across America, their experiences in various regions looked notably different. The seasonal nature of working in agriculture meant that Sicilians on the Gulf Coast held different jobs throughout the year. Their housing was in constant flux as they moved between city and countryside with the seasons. When they weren't working in the fields, Sicilians often found work building railroads and trucking fruit.

LEMONS AND BANANAS

Some of the first Sicilians to settle in New Orleans were citrus traders in the 1830s. The lemons they brought with them became integral to the American diet and economy. The lemons traveled across the Atlantic in ships, which also transported immigrants to the United States. Once they arrived in New Orleans, steamboats were used to distribute the lemons around the country to be used for cooking and preserving canned foods. Sicilians expanded this thriving business model to encompass many different fruits—including bananas, following the invention of refrigeration in the 1890s. One of the largest Sicilian-owned fruit distributors was the Vaccaro brothers' Standard Fruit Company, now known as Dole Food Company.

The Northern industrialized cities were hubs for immigration from around the world, whereas the Gulf Coast was a predominantly native-born population. Sicilians were caught in the middle of a socially stratified society that hinged on race. Prior to the Civil War, the social categorization in New Orleans accounted for many ethnicities: white Creoles, Creoles of color, free Blacks, descendants of German and Irish immigrants, and many more. However, during Reconstruction the social and legal classification of people narrowed to only two categories—black or white. Since Sicilians could not be neatly categorized, their status was highly contested. Initially, they were seen as racially inferior and often faced similar prejudices as Black populations. During this time, many Sicilians kept to their own communities. A section of the French Quarter in New Orleans became known as Little Palermo, because of the concentrated population of Sicilians. However, it is notable that the racial status of Sicilians changed over time. In 1898, the Louisiana state legislature exempted Italians from Jim Crow segregation. While Sicilians were still seen as “other,” they began to benefit from more privileges of whiteness.

CONNECTING WITH NEIGHBORS

Although generally remaining in their insulated communities, Sicilians did form connections with the African American community. These two populations lived in close proximity—the population of Little Palermo was 40% Black in 1905. These two communities often worked together and shared traditions with one another. Through worshipping closely with Sicilians, many African Americans adopted the practice of celebrating St. Joseph's Day by constructing altars and sharing a feast. Sicilians

also celebrated the music of the African American and Creole communities, with many musicians joining the jazz scene in the early 20th century. As these connections strengthened, Sicilians deepened their roots in America and began assimilating in a way that “birds of passage” did not. By 1900, 78% of Italians age five and older in New Orleans could speak English.

SHIFTING TRADITIONS

Though immigrants arrived from Sicily with many traditions, some faded away as their lifestyle shifted in the United States. While family is central to Sicilian culture, a new emphasis was placed on extended family as migration networks gained importance. Once the head of a household had established himself in America, he would send for his family to join him. After making the passage across the Atlantic, extended family members would live together as they gained stability in the new country.

Attitudes toward education also began to change. In Sicily, children were expected to work and help provide for the family as soon as they were old enough, so formal education was not highly valued. Older generations of Sicilian-Americans were wary of the “American values” being emphasized in schools. However, as the younger generations began having children and saw the social and economic benefits of being well educated, they placed more importance on formal schooling.

Through decades of living in the United States, Sicilians adopted new traditions and adapted old ones, creating a distinct Sicilian-American identity and culture. •



Courtyard of an Italian home,
New Orleans, before 1926
Photo by Arnold Genthe/Library of Congress

INTERVIEW WITH ACTOR MARISA TOMEI

Education Dramaturg Ted Sod spoke with Marisa Tomei about her work on *The Rose Tattoo*.

Ted Sod: Where were you born and educated, and where did you get your training as an actor?

Marisa Tomei: I was born in Brooklyn. My training is an ongoing process learning from many different teachers and different sources: literature, feminist studies, spiritual texts, inspired by Carol Burnett, Giuletta Mesina, and many others. More in the vein of traditional acting: Fred Kareman, Nancy Donahue, Natsuko Ohama, Joan Lader. As well as my Aunt Eileen Delgado and Fred Albee, who taught me to tap dance. I have studied with Kate McGregor-Stuart for most of my life. She is someone who I still work with to this day. I met her when I was in my early twenties, and we've had a life-long relationship of pondering plays and movie scripts and laughing and learning together.

TS: Why did you choose to do this role? Why do you feel it is important to do this play now?

MT: Tennessee Williams wrote this when he was very much in love with his longtime companion Frank Merlo. It's a real journey of rebirth. It lifts my spirit. This play is about pure joy, ecstasy, the Dionysian spirit, and the human heart bursting open. It's the joy of Feeling. I think it's important to do this play now because the play's mysticism and poetry are extremely uplifting, especially in the context of the intense grief in our world right now.

Also, I'm a quarter Sicilian, yet that part wasn't really paid attention to in my family. It was certainly not honored; it was a bit degraded. Through this play, I reclaimed Sicily and a part of my mother's lineage. Great roles bring so many things to your life that you were never expecting. They start to whisper to parts of your soul that you had tucked away. I experienced that with this play. I think that any great work is going to give the performer—and all the theatre-makers—surprises for their souls.

TS: What research did you do in order to play Serafina?

MT: The name Serafina means "fiery one." She is a character who is re-experiencing joy through laughter and eroticism, getting out of the depths of her grief and the betrayal she experiences. I studied Southern Italian song, dance, history, and Healing Ways, as well as the Black Madonna Herself. I am diving into the feelings of what it means to emigrate. Serafina is an immigrant finding her way. She's a self-made woman supporting herself and her daughter. She's been ostracized and degraded. There's a too-long tradition of women being repressed by the culture and the church. For example, a lot of women shut down, and one of the ways they found to come back to life was through song and movement. Tarantella is a "Spider Dance." The Dance was a mini-exorcism for women to come back to their life force and unleash their repressed sexual energy. Serafina taps into that energy.

It's a stew of many things.

TS: What is your understanding of the relationship between Serafina and her daughter Rosa?

MT: Serafina probably met her husband and immigrated to America when she was very young, around her daughter's age now, and her



daughter is coming into her own raw sensuality. There's some kind of resistance and transference going on that is enraging Serafina, but at the same time, she understands. Her heart is so soft. Serafina has so many opinions, and she is fierce. She really melts when love is brought into the conversation. She understands where her daughter is coming from ultimately.

Also, there's a disconnect because her daughter is first-generation Sicilian-American. All the rules that Serafina grew up with, which are very strict regarding how women are to behave in relation to men and what their place is in society, are absolutely up for grabs now. I don't think she was expecting that her core customs were going to be shaken by her own daughter.

TS: What do you look for from a director when you are working on a role like this?

MT: A sense of play and humor in the rehearsal room throughout the process is paramount. I look for a collaborative spirit, a director who creates a safe space where actors can make mistakes and surprise one another. I look for someone who is not solely intellectual; someone who respects the instincts that the body brings forth. Trip is a joy to work with. He has a great laugh and unending passion for the project. •

INTERVIEW WITH ACTOR EMUN ELLIOTT

Education Dramaturg Ted Sod spoke with Emun Elliott about his work on *The Rose Tattoo*.

Ted Sod: Where were you born and educated? Did you have any teachers who had a profound influence on you?

Emun Elliott: I was born in Edinburgh, Scotland. After finishing high school, I went to The University of Aberdeen to study English literature and French. After my first year, I left to audition for drama school. I studied acting at The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, which is in Glasgow. It's a program that's rooted in the classics, so we were given many opportunities to explore some of the greatest plays of all time. I was lucky enough to train under many influential and inspiring teachers including Hugh Hodgart, Joyce Deans, and Ros Steen.

TS: Why did you choose to play the role of Alvaro Mangiacavallo in Tennessee Williams's *The Rose Tattoo*? What do you think the play is about?

EE: I wouldn't say that I chose to play Alvaro—it felt more like I was chosen. After auditioning for Trip Cullman and Jim Carnahan in London, I was asked to fly to New York to read with Marisa. I received a call when I landed back in London to say that they wanted to offer me the part. There was no way I could say no. I've been a fan of Tennessee Williams since I first read *A Streetcar Named Desire* in high school. He's undeniably one of the greatest American playwrights of all time, and any opportunity or offer to be involved in his work today should be taken seriously, especially with a director like Trip at the helm and an actress like Marisa at its core. To me, *The Rose Tattoo* explores many aspects of life and the human condition, in particular: loss, grief, sex, community, immigration, suffering, religion, superstition, loneliness, belonging, expectation, and pride. All of these things are as relevant today as they were when the play was written—perhaps even more relevant during these turbulent times in which we live.

TS: Can you give us some insight into your process as an actor? Can you share some of your preliminary thoughts about who Alvaro is with us?

EE: My process always starts with the script and is informed by the clues within it. Williams leaves clues for actors all over the page—all you have to do is find them! Alvaro is Sicilian, so I'll have to work on the specifics of that accent and explore Sicilian culture particular to that time in history. He is also an immigrant, so I will be looking into what was going on in Sicily at this time and what provoked a Sicilian's impetus to travel to America during this time. Without a doubt, Alvaro is a family man. That's something we both have in common. His love and concern for his family is tangible from the offset. This is something we share. I also find his need for love and affection extremely appealing. There is great vulnerability within Alvaro—he's almost childlike—and that's something that I'll not only have to locate and pinpoint within the text but also find a way to play physically. All of this will be a welcome challenge.

TS: What can you tell us about the relationship between Alvaro and Serafina?

EE: Alvaro makes it pretty blatant early on that because he comes from such a humble background and has a very low paid job, all he really



has to offer is his "love and affection." He recognizes in Serafina a deep desire for this, too, whether she realizes it or not. It's difficult and perhaps a little disingenuous for me to say any more on this, as I don't want to pre-empt what we will hopefully find during the rehearsal process. I will say that something both Serafina and Alvaro share is a deep, animal instinct that manifests itself in many different ways.

TS: What do you look for when working with a director?

EE: Initially when meeting a director for the first time, I'm looking for a connection on a human level. I speak for myself, however I felt that Trip and I connected straight off the bat. I remember feeling a deep sense of encouragement, support, intelligence, and empathy during our first encounter. It felt safe. He is clearly passionate about the material and has a deep understanding of the treasures to be found within the material itself and in the playing of it onstage. I look up to every director I work with in an effort to serve their vision of what the character and the play should be; however, I also value being given the space to explore things for myself and try things out in the rehearsal room that may not necessarily work without feeling embarrassed or humiliated. Actors can be fragile beings. •

THE WOMEN OF WILLIAMS

The character of Serafina Delle Rose in *The Rose Tattoo* stands as one of many iconic female characters who Williams became known for bringing to life in his major plays. As with Serafina (see "*The Rose Tattoo: Tennessee Williams's Love Play to the World*" on p. 4), Williams crafted several of these complex and controversial protagonists after people and events in his own life. Who are some of his major plays' other female characters, and what connections do they have to Williams's real-life experiences?



Calista Flockhart and Julie Harris in Roundabout's 1994 production of *The Glass Menagerie*
Photo by C Rosegg

The Glass Menagerie

AMANDA & LAURA WINGFIELD

Character Summary

Amanda, mother to adult children Laura and Tom, was left by her husband years ago and now leads her family with a combination of strictness and delusion. Constantly reminiscing about the romances of her youth, Amanda is intent on finding Laura a suitor, ignoring the social anxiety that Laura suffers as a result of the leg brace she wears.

Connection

Williams's most autobiographical play, *The Glass Menagerie* features a family very similar to Williams's own (with the character of Tom serving as a well-known representation of Williams himself). In the character of Amanda, Williams recreated his perception of his mother, Edwina's, highly restrictive mode of parenting, long-winded daydreams about her past, and emotional distance from her husband. Williams based the debilitatingly fearful Laura on his sister Rose, whose deep emotional instability was amplified by the repressive household her parents maintained. Rose was eventually diagnosed with schizophrenia and lobotomized at her mother's request.



Mrs. Williams with Rose and Tom (Tennessee); Illustration from *Remember Me to Tom* by Edwina Dakin Williams and Lucy Freeman—Published by G.P. Putnam's Sons

A Streetcar Named Desire

BLANCHE DUBOIS

Character Summary

Arriving unannounced one day at her sister's New Orleans home, Blanche DuBois seeks the comfort of family after personal tragedy. Haunting her is her husband's recent suicide, caused in part by Blanche's own response of disgust after he came out to her as gay. Instead of security, however, Blanche faces only antagonism from her sister's brutish husband Stanley, whose aggression soon threatens Blanche's entire life.

Connection

In the words of *A Streetcar Named Desire's* original director, Elia Kazan, "Tennessee Williams equals Blanche." The forces doing battle inside Blanche directly relate to Williams's own major conflicts at the time he wrote *Streetcar*. In particular, Blanche's guilt over her husband's death parallels William's own shame over the lobotomy that his mother forced upon his sister Rose. Blanche's complicated mix of attraction and fear toward Stanley mirrors Williams's relationship with his magnetic but often violent partner, Pancho Rodriguez.

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof

MARGARET

Character Summary

Once an impoverished child, Margaret has married into a wealthy Southern family, the patriarch of which has been diagnosed with terminal cancer. Margaret's husband Brick is in line to inherit much of the family fortune, but Brick, a closeted gay man, doesn't love Margaret anymore. Margaret nevertheless tries to seduce Brick, ultimately claiming she is pregnant to secure her place in the family.

Connection

Williams openly based the character of Margaret on his close friend Maria Britneva, an actress known for her no-holds-barred outspokenness and brazen mischief. Britneva shared Margaret's seductive boldness, as well as her tendency to lie as a means to position herself closest to those with money and power. Just as Margaret lies about her pregnancy, so did Britneva fabricate a family story of extravagant nobility and political strife to work her way into the circles of the rich and famous.

Orpheus Descending

LADY TORRANCE

Character Summary

Lady Torrance is trapped in a marriage of hatred with her ailing husband Jabe, with whom she owns and operates a dry goods store in Mississippi. But Lady quickly falls for a newcomer in town, Val Xavier, who inspires her to pursue her dream of opening a confectionary. When the men of the town demand that Val leave, however, Lady is committed to joining him, even if it means plotting to kill her husband and revealing that she is pregnant with Val's baby.

Connection

Williams based Lady Torrance's extraordinary tenacity on the actress Anna Magnani, who won an Academy Award for playing Serafina in the film adaptation of *The Rose Tattoo* (1955). A friend of Williams whose confident, unconventional approach to life fascinated him, Magnani was known for both her exceptional talent and her unapologetic individualism. Despite having the part modeled after her, Magnani declined to perform the role of Lady in the show's Broadway production but would later play the role in the film version, titled *The Fugitive Kind* (1959).

Suddenly Last Summer

CATHARINE HOLLY & MRS. VIOLET VENABLE

Character Summary

In the wake of her son Sebastian's mysterious death, Violet Venable attempts to convince a doctor to lobotomize her niece Catharine to keep Catharine from spreading her belief that Sebastian was gay and was violently murdered as a result of his lifestyle. Despite the threat of lobotomy, Catharine insists that Sebastian had been using both Violet and herself, without their knowledge, as a way to attract male partners. Horrified, Violet demands that the doctor "Cut this hideous story out of her brain!"

Connection

As with *The Glass Menagerie's* Amanda and Laura Wingfield, Williams modeled Violet Venable after his mother Edwina, and he wrote Catharine Holly to represent his sister Rose. Larger than life in its setting and style, *Suddenly Last Summer* directly tackles Williams's resentment at his mother for requesting his sister's lobotomy, as well as his guilt over his sister's forever-altered life. Written while Williams was discussing his family history at session with a psychiatrist and frequently visiting his sister at her assisted living facility, this "autobiographical exorcism" played out Williams's strong anger at his mother, depicting Violet as a ruthless tyrant bent on destroying Catharine's life.



Barbara Bel Geddes as
Maggie the Cat, 1955
Photo by Carl Van Vechten



Carla Gugino in Roundabout's 2006
production of *Suddenly Last Summer*
Photo by Joan Marcus

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS BIOGRAPHY



Tennessee Williams at age 5
Houghton Library, Harvard University

Thomas “Tennessee” Lanier Williams III was born in Columbus, Mississippi, on March 26, 1911, child of Edwina Dakin Williams and Cornelius Coffin “C.C.” Williams. His sister, Rose, was 14 months older; his brother, Dakin, was seven years younger.

Williams spent the first years of his life in his maternal grandparents’ rectories in small towns across Mississippi, absorbing the grace and elegance of the old South, as well as the religious worldview that life was a constant battle of good vs. evil.

In 1918, the family moved to St. Louis. Williams’s heart rebelled against the urban landscape, and his parents fought constantly, making home a volatile and unsafe place. Williams’s mother bought him a used typewriter, and he began his writing career with a story titled “Isolated” in his junior high newspaper. He studied journalism at the University of Missouri until he failed ROTC. C.C., who disparaged his son’s dreams of becoming a writer, forced him to leave college and work for the International Shoe Company.

Williams eventually graduated from the University of Iowa in 1938. He began submitting plays as “Tennessee Williams,” using the name of his father’s home state.

For the next five years, Williams moved around several places, including the French Quarter in New Orleans, New York (where he studied playwriting at the New School), as well as St. Louis, Macon, Mexico, and more. He worked menial jobs while writing, battling against anxiety, depression, and hypochondria. Williams grew up in an atmosphere of sexual repression. He had several girlfriends as a young man, though he knew he was attracted to men. He did not begin to grapple with himself as a sexual being until he was in his mid-twenties. Williams felt a strong desire—for sex, for creation, for drink—and his plays reflect the tension between this raw desire and the taboo of acting on it. His first major play, *Battle of Angels*, failed.

Williams’s dear sister, Rose, was diagnosed with schizophrenia. In 1943, a prefrontal lobotomy—a type of experimental brain surgery severing connections in the brain—was performed on Rose, changing her personality and rendering her incapable of taking care of herself. Williams was told only after the fact. He wrote, “Rose. Her head cut open. A knife thrust in her brain. Me. Here. Smoking.” Williams lived in fear of developing a similar mental illness.

The next year, *The Glass Menagerie*, inspired by his mother and sister, established Williams as a playwright. His success compounded with a string of his best-known plays: *A Streetcar Named Desire*; *The Rose Tattoo*; *Camino Real*; and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. Several of these became movies.

Williams’s personal life and career suffered in the early 1960s. He broke up with his longtime partner, Frank Merlo (for more information on this relationship, turn to page 4), and split with Director Elia Kazan and some of his longtime producers. He fell increasingly into drinking and prescription drug abuse, though he continued writing, producing (among others) *The Night of the Iguana* and *The Milk Train Doesn’t Stop Here Anymore*. “I had... become dependent on hypnotic drugs to reach my unconscious in order to work at all,” he wrote in reflection. In 1969, Dakin had Williams committed to a hospital psychiatric ward, where he was diagnosed with acute drug poisoning. Williams never forgave his brother, whose actions saved his life.

After his hospitalization, Williams remained sober enough to continue writing through the 1970s. He spoke out against the Vietnam War and admitted his homosexuality on national television. Williams died of an overdose in 1983. He left his fortune and future royalties to Rose and to the University of South, his beloved grandfather’s alma mater. •

THE HISTORY AND SYMBOLISM OF ROSE TATTOOS

Roses are some of the most popular flowers in the world. Examples of roses as symbols can be seen throughout time and across cultures around the globe. The myriad of meanings assigned to roses makes them a common choice for tattoos. Color, thorns, and petal construction impact the meaning of a rose tattoo.

The rose tattoo gained popularity in America in the 1930s, when sailors often had them inked on their bodies as reminders of their wives, girlfriends, and mothers while at sea. This custom evolved into a trend of men getting tattoos of roses with their lover's name incorporated into the design on their chests. As tattoos became more culturally accepted in the 1960s, both men and women placed their rose tattoos on a variety of visible parts of their bodies. In present day, the connotation of the rose depends on its color and configuration and less on placement on the body.

WHAT DOES YOUR TATTOO MEAN TO YOU?

Tattoos are personal expressions of beliefs, values, appreciation, and artistic individuality and mean something different to everyone. With that said, trends in design can be identified and often correspond with an individual's intention for getting the tattoo.

ROSE COLOR MEANINGS

RED	PINK	ORANGE	YELLOW
Passion	Elegance/Grace	Energy	Joy
True Love/Romance	Healing	Enthusiasm/Excitement	Friendship
Passion/Desire	Femininity/Motherly Love	Fascination	Devotion
Sacrifice/Memorial	First Love	New Beginnings	Jealousy
BLUE	PURPLE	BLACK	WHITE
Impossibility	Enchantment	Death/Grief	Purity
Fascination	Royalty	Tragic Love	Innocence
Falsehood	Love at First Sight	Completion of an Arduous Journey	Virginity
Virgin Mary/Faith	Wealth	Strength	Mysticism

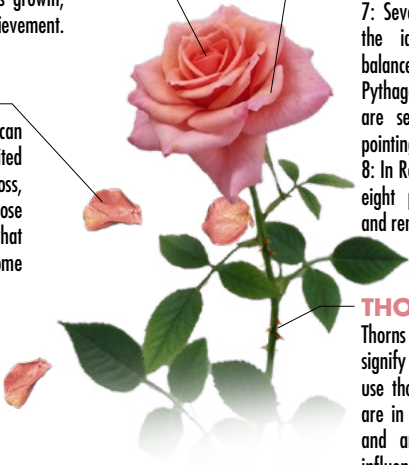
ANATOMY OF A ROSE

GROWTH

The stage of the rose's life cycle can be used to parallel points in one's own life or to map certain events. Buds represent new beginnings, youthfulness, or fresh starts. A full bloom symbolizes growth, maturity, and achievement.

DEATH

A wilting flower can signify unrequited love, defeat, loss, or death. Fallen rose petals mean that something has come to an end.



NUMEROLOGY

The number of petals or the number of blooms carries its own symbolic meaning.

3: In Freemason symbolism, three roses represent the three guiding principles of love, life, and light.

5: In Christianity, five petals represent the five wounds that Christ incurred on the cross.

7: Seven petals often represent the idea of perfection and balance, which is based on Pythagorean's belief that there are seven directions in space pointing to seven planets.

8: In Renaissance art, a rose with eight petals represents rebirth and renewal.

THORNS

Thorns in rose tattoos are used to signify an occupied soul. People use thorns to indicate that they are in control of their own fate and are not open to others' influence. They often signify conviction in one's own values and resistance to the influence of others.

ROSES AROUND THE WORLD

Roses are widely influential symbols and take on different meanings for different cultures and religions.

PERSIA

The rose originated in Persia, where it was seen as a masculine symbol.

GREECE

In Greek mythology, roses are associated with Aphrodite, the goddess of love. The first white rose sprung forth during her birth. Aphrodite is responsible for staining the roses red when she cut herself rushing to the aid of her lover.

ROME

In Rome, roses are the symbol of Diana, goddess of the hunt, who transformed her lover into a rose. The Romans also used rose products to demonstrate wealth, because the flowers require so much time and attention.

EGYPT

Ancient Egyptians honored the god Isis with roses.

ENGLAND

England's national flower is the Tudor rose. In the 15th century, it represented two important families: the Lancasters (represented by the red rose) and the Yorks (represented by the white rose). The War of the Roses occurred between 1455 and 1487 when both of these houses competed with each other to rule England.

CHRISTIANITY

In Christianity, the rose is associated with the Virgin Mary, Mother of God. It is from the rose that the rosary gets its name. Red roses are sometimes associated with the blood of Jesus.

TAROT

The rose is considered a symbol of balance. The beauty of this flower expresses promise, hope, and new beginnings. It is contrasted by thorns, which symbolize defense, loss, and thoughtlessness.

DESIGNER STATEMENTS

MARK WENDLAND—SET DESIGN

"The world is violent and mercurial—it will have its way with you. We are saved only by love—love for each other and the love that we pour into the art we feel compelled to share: being a parent; being a writer; being a painter; being a friend. We live in a perpetually burning building, and what we must save from it, all the time, is love."

"I prefer a play to be not a noose but a net with fairly wide meshes. So many of its instance of revelations are wayward flashes, not part of the plan of the author but accidentally struck off, and perhaps these are closest to being a true celebration of the inebriate god."

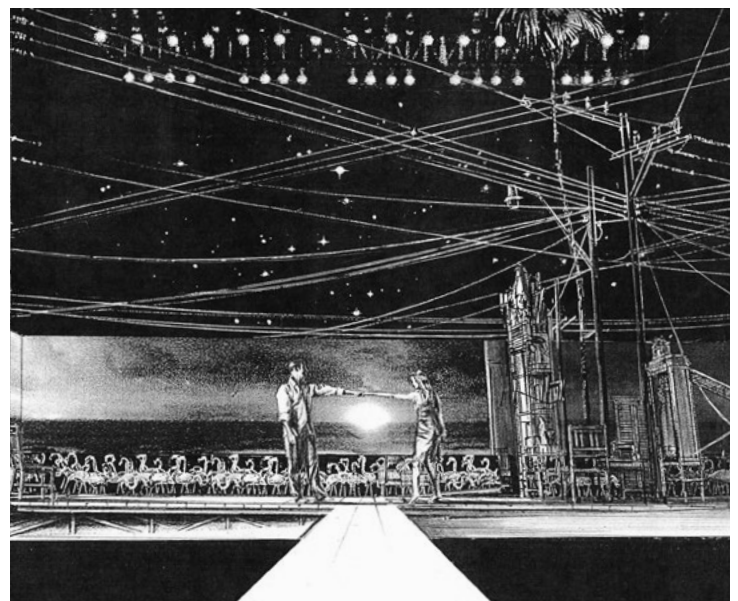
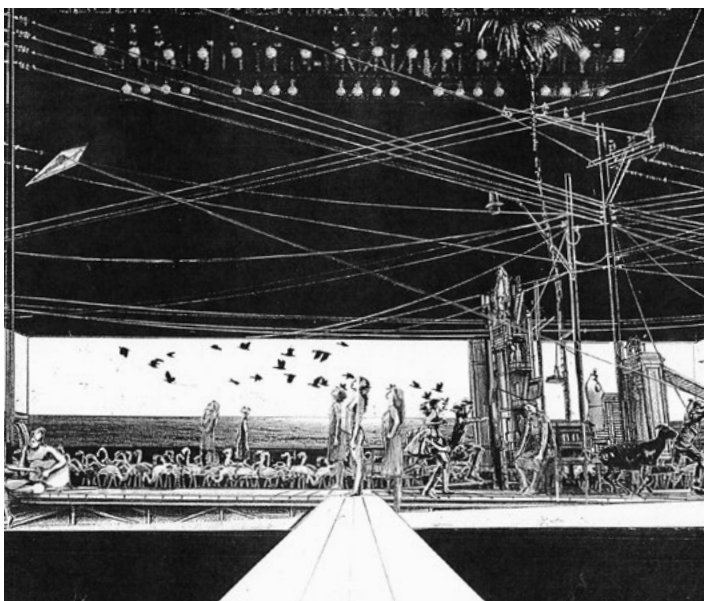
"The Rose Tattoo is the Dionysian element in human life, its mystery, its beauty, its significance." —Tennessee Williams

On the heels of his huge success on Broadway with *A Streetcar Named Desire*, the thirty-six-year-old Williams fell in love with Frank Merlo, a twenty-five-year-old Sicilian American. They spent the following year together on the coast of Italy. Williams later said of Frank, "He was so close to life, he tied me down to earth." Within two years, Williams wrote *The Rose Tattoo*. The dedication: "To Frank in return for Sicily." In his *Memoirs*, Williams called *The Rose Tattoo* his "love play to the world." Williams worked his whole life to disturb the status quo. He wanted to push his art beyond the expected in an effort to get to something greater: Greater truths about the human condition... greater connection to the human spirit! He pushed himself to rethink what the theatrical event could be, even to the point

of who could be the heroine of a work of drama! If we are to honor that spirit, Theatre Artists must work to meet Williams in that space between what we think we know and what we dream—all to create "a true celebration of the inebriate god!"

CLINT RAMOS—COSTUME DESIGN

The costume design for *The Rose Tattoo* is based on this idea of otherness. It is centered around this immigrant woman who, through tragic loss, is navigating her way through the impending tidal wave of uncertainty. Historically, we are in the early '50s, by the sea in Louisiana. Emotionally, we are in Serafina's heart and mind as she bumps against the box that society has placed her in. The characters that Williams parades in and out of Serafina's house are very diverse, and their costumes reflect that range. The clothes are rooted in reality, but absurdity seeps in when we factor in faith, desire, and sometimes, madness. A large part of what is exciting for me is a central character who makes clothes. Exploring how Serafina appears and how she dresses herself versus the appearance of the characters for whom she makes clothes is how we create tension in the design. Also, because Serafina is, in essence, an outsider—I needed to make sure that we perceive her as a believable human being. Her clothes must render her in a real manner and sometimes that means choosing the simpler options that the period offers. Modulating her appearance so we don't lose her otherness but also bridging her to the audience's realm of understanding is of utmost importance. Ultimately, *The Rose Tattoo* is about humanity, acceptance, and love—and the lengths we go to to deny ourselves those. It is about the theatre of appearance and what we look like when we unmask ourselves.



Design sketches by Mark Wendland for *The Rose Tattoo*



Costume Sketches by Clint Ramos for *The Rose Tattoo*

BEN STANTON—LIGHTING DESIGN

Passion and superstition surround Tennessee Williams’s beautiful and funny play *The Rose Tattoo*. In approaching the design for this piece, we have tried to build a world filled with mystery, emotional tension, and potential. A close-knit environment that has boundaries but also allows for new opportunity to walk right through the front door. Our set designer Mark Wendland has done a magnificent job of honoring the many demands of this text—giving us an interior space that showcases Serafina’s eclectic nature and an exterior world that gives us clues about the time and place in which this story takes place. Surrounding all of this, Mark has designed huge, panoramic projection surfaces on which our projection designer Lucy Mackinnon tells us a story of a seaside town with never-ending sunsets, and waves that are both comforting and an uneasy reminder of time passing and youth slipping away. Our protagonist is both terrified of and driven by her passion, and this idea helped me find the vocabulary for the lighting design. I try to create mystery through the use of shadows and moments of darkness, while also maintaining a slightly surreal nostalgic beauty to the world around them. I want to help the audience feel the intensity of the fear and longing at the heart of this play. Serafina is a force of nature, at once cautious and wild, superstitious and a rebel. She wants something to come through that door but is terrified of what that will be.

LUCY MACKINNON—PROJECTION DESIGN

The video design of *The Rose Tattoo* is intentionally simple. I have filled three video screens with images of the ocean. The screens are massive and monolithic, like the ocean itself. Hanging inside and as backdrop to Mark Wendland’s otherwise delicate, earthy, off-kilter set, they reflect the contrast between the chaotic and unbalanced inner life of the show’s main character, Serafina, and the stable, comparatively simple and beautiful world around her. At the same time, the video reflects Serafina with its extreme romanticism, saturated colors, and essential beauty.

FITZ PATTON—SOUND DESIGN

The Rose Tattoo is a landscape of the human soul played out on the border between land and sea in which love, loss, age, and youth find transformation against a backdrop of blazing sunlight. Its reckless passion and old-world feel for the beyond that binds the young and old is best expanded in music. The play lays the foundation. The composer stands there and lifts these improbably powerful poles of life into the air to be heard another way, through music. There is no way to do more or to be more than the play itself, so the composer is free to fly as high as he can, to find in the poetic light of music that which can’t be expressed in any other way but which must be expressed. •

UP FOR DISCUSSION

1 WHAT DO YOU THINK THE TITLE OF THE PLAY MEANS?

2 WHAT ARE SOME WAYS IN WHICH *THE ROSE TATTOO* REFLECTS BOTH THE TIME WHEN IT WAS WRITTEN (1951) AND THE TIME IN WHICH IT IS BEING PRODUCED NOW?

CONSIDER

The immigrant experience after World War II

The Rose Tattoo first opened on Broadway in 1951, six years after the end of the Second World War. During this period, Americans were preoccupied with returning to “normal life” by promoting a culture of uniformity in the shadow of the war. In response to rising immigration, Congress passed special legislation enabling refugees from Europe and the Soviet Union to enter the US during this time.

The immigrant experience in 2019

Roundabout’s production of *The Rose Tattoo* is being produced in 2019. At this time, strict policies are being implemented that limit immigration, notably targeting people entering through the US-Mexico border.

3 WHAT EXPERIENCES IS TENNESSEE WILLIAMS EXPLORING THAT DIFFER FROM HIS?

CONSIDER

A male playwright writing a female protagonist.

A non-immigrant writing the story of Italian immigrants. Williams writes in broken English and Sicilian throughout the play although he did not speak the language. There are also many slurs used against and by the Italian characters (Wop, Dago, Macaroni). Why does he use this language? How does it sound in our ears today?

FURTHER QUESTIONS

ARE THERE EXAMPLES YOU CAN DRAW FROM TODAY’S CULTURE OF SOMEONE’S NATIVE LANGUAGE BEING USED AGAINST THEM AS A WEAPON?

HOW IS SOCIETY AWARE OF CULTURAL APPROPRIATION AND REPRESENTATION TODAY?

OBSERVE **THE SET DESIGN**

ONCE IN YOUR SEAT, LOOK AT THE SET.

What's the first thing that you notice? Take note of that part of the set. At intermission, reflect on how that element is influencing your observation of the play. Take a moment to notice the lighting in the theatre and on stage. **What mood and atmosphere is the lighting designer creating? How does that change throughout the show?**

TENNESSEE IN NYC!

READ

Tennessee Williams is one of America's most cherished playwrights. There have been multiple tributes to his canon over the years. A recent example of this was seen at The Morgan Library's exhibit *Tennessee Williams: No Refuge but Writing*. Click **HERE** to read an archived collection of the works showcased in the exhibit.

- How does what we know about Williams impact our reception of *The Rose Tattoo*?
- Does *The Rose Tattoo* echo any of Williams's life experiences? Refer back to the articles contained in this guide.
- What information would you highlight in your own biography of Williams?

VIEW

KABUKI THEATER—HANAMACHI

The *Rose Tattoo*'s set designer has made very deliberate use of the *hanamachi* (the long walkway that extends further into the audience than the rest of the stage.) To look at other examples of hanamachi in theatre click **HERE**.

- What are the differences between other set designs and *The Rose Tattoo*'s use of hanamachi?

VISIT THE ITALIAN AMERICAN MUSEUM IN LITTLE ITALY

DO

Continue exploring the journey of Italian immigration to the United State of America. Located in New York's Little Italy, the museum strives to "establish and maintain a museum dedicated to the struggles of Italian Americans and their achievements and contributions to American culture and society." Learn more **HERE**.

GLOSSARY

WOP: A derogatory term for Italians or people of Italian descent. Traditionally misunderstood as meaning "without papers" or "without passport," the term originates from the Southern Italian dialect term "guappo," roughly meaning "stud." Pronounced "wah-po," the term was appropriated by Americans as a slur during the early 1900s.

DAGO: A disparaging term referring to Italians or people of Italian descent. It is believed to be a reference to immigrants employed in day work, or as the "day goes."

OUR LADY/ HOLY MOTHER: Another name for The Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus according to the Christian New Testament.

STREGA: The Italian word for "witch."

ROUNABOUT ARCHIVES

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS AND ROUNABOUT'S 10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

Fan from Roundabout's Production of *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore*



One of the most rewarding aspects of my job as the archivist for Roundabout Theatre is discovering interesting events that happened in years past, ones that were important at the time but perhaps forgotten over the course of the company's long history. Sometimes these events are made known through oral history interviews with artists and collaborators, but just as often I stumble upon something in a newsletter or critic's review.

Case in point: along with a deposit of other documents related to Roundabout's operations in the mid-1970s came a copy of Roundabout's institutional newsletter known as *Subtext*. The Archives does not have a complete series, nor does it know how long the newsletter was printed, but we have a few issues from the 1970s, and each sheds fascinating light on the events and programming of the era.



Tennessee Williams at Opening Night of Roundabout's 1996 Production of *Summer and Smoke*

Vol. III, No. 1 of 1975 is particularly wonderful. Not only does it identify early educational initiatives and mention modern dance programming (a lesser-known fact of Roundabout's early history), it also includes a fantastic photograph of a smiling Tennessee Williams standing in front of Roundabout's 10-year anniversary banner. According to the article in *Subtext*, Roundabout and Mr. Williams both received awards from Mayor Abraham Beame's office: Roundabout for "the presentation of quality theatre for all New Yorkers" and Mr. Williams, praised as "America's greatest living playwright."

Natasha Richardson and John C. Reilly in Roundabout's 2005 production of *A Streetcar Named Desire*
Photo by Joan Marcus



Summer and Smoke—which Mr. Williams would have seen the night of October 6, 1975 when he was in attendance at the gala performance—is the first Williams play staged by Roundabout. In the years following, we have staged seven more: *The Glass Menagerie* (1994), *Summer and Smoke* (1996), *The Night of the Iguana* (1996), *A Streetcar Named Desire* (2005), *Suddenly Last Summer* (2006), *The Glass Menagerie* (2010) and *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore* (2011). *The Rose Tattoo* will be the ninth Williams production, and certainly not the last. •

Costume sketch by David C. Woolard from Roundabout's 2011 production of *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore*



For more information on the Roundabout Archives, visit <https://archive.roundabouttheatre.org> or contact Tiffany Nixon, Roundabout Archivist, at archives@roundabouttheatre.org



Ted Sod: Tell us about yourself. Where were you born and educated?

Alan Kauffman: I was born and mostly raised in the Bronx, but due to divorced parents and a peripatetic father, also lived in Manhattan, upstate New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Nottingham, England while growing up. I attended Bronx HS of Science and then went on to State University of New York at Binghamton, where I majored in Psychology. While compiling statistics for my psychology thesis, I worked with a computer for the first time (a room-sized IBM), and I've been fascinated by and working with technology ever since.

TS: How and when did you become RTC's Director of Technology Services?

AK: After two decades as Chief Information Officer at a national non-profit organization, I was looking for a change. A CIO colleague was assisting RTC on an interim basis and suggested that I might be interested in the Director position. I have always loved theatre and had attended many Roundabout productions in the past and found the opportunity irresistible. I joined RTC in March of 2017 and have never regretted it for an instant.

TS: Describe your job at RTC. What are your responsibilities?

AK: I'm responsible for the usability, reliability, and security of all systems used at RTC, as well as our online presence. I have the great pleasure of supervising a staff of dedicated and expert individuals who support our users, manage our network and systems, ensure that information is readily accessible to our staff, cast, and crew, develop our website, and administer our ticketing and constituent relationship systems. These people work

tirelessly behind the scenes to keep everything running, and I am freshly grateful each day for the opportunity to work with them. Over time, I hope that my staff and I can do more to leverage technology to advance RTC's mission to promote theatre to new audiences and educate young people.

TS: What is the best part of your job? What is the hardest part?

AK: The best part? The first thing that comes to mind is getting to crawl around backstage sometimes and see the incredible art and science that goes into producing a play. More seriously, the best part is that RTC is a fast-moving and well-run organization. I have received strong support from across the organization to make (sometimes disruptive) technological changes that have had long-term benefits.

The hardest part? As with any non-profit organization, there's always much more we'd like to do to fulfill our mission than we have the budget or capability to achieve. Having to delay or pass on good ideas for innovation in favor of other priorities is always frustrating, as is not always being able to provide our staff with the array of tools and services that many corporations can afford.

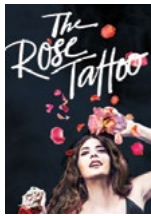
TS: Why do you choose to work at Roundabout?

AK: Love of theatre. Really good people. Valuable mission. How could I choose not to? •

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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ROUNABOUT THEATRE COMPANY • 2019-2020 SEASON



Roundabout Theatre Company (Todd Haimes, Artistic Director/CEO), a not-for-profit company founded in 1965, celebrates the power of theatre by spotlighting classics from the past, cultivating new works of the present, and educating minds for the future. More information on Roundabout's mission, history and programs can be found by visiting roundabouttheatre.org.

Learn more at roundabouttheatre.org. Find us on:



IN THIS THEATRE

American Airlines TheatreSM



The Selwyn Theatre in 1935

1. This theatre, originally named The Selwyn Theatre, was built in 1918 and was designed in an Italian Renaissance style. The theater included novel features for the time, such as separate smoking rooms for men and women, as well as a shower and telephone in each dressing room.
2. In 1951, as *The Rose Tattoo* premiered on Broadway just two blocks north, this theatre was screening films. The interior at that time was said to be "unpleasant" to be in and had a "dank smell" to it.
3. While now a notable tourist destination, in the 1970s and '80s this block was known as "The Deuce" and called "the sleaziest block in America" by Rolling Stone magazine. At this time, the Selwyn Theatre was one of several theatres on the block to screen adult-only movies.
4. After Roundabout Theatre Company acquired the building with plans to restore it to conditions suitable for stage productions, the street-facing portion collapsed unexpectedly, destroying the historic facade. This gave firefighters, police officers, and demolition workers only one day to clean up the debris and reopen a portion of the street before the 1998 New Year's Eve celebration in Times Square.

Partial underwriting support for *The Rose Tattoo* generously provided by Ravenel Curry.

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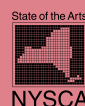
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