

USC DRAMATIC EVENT OF THE YEAR 1964:

SOMETHING sentimental and heart-warming, something un-realistic, but surprisingly memorable, the wildly acclaimed Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* rode into town on turbulent November week of last year. Much to the surprise of many, it did not leave with the typhoon that invited itself into the heart of the city, impromptu threatening the play presentation; yes, something wonderful, something beautiful lingered in the memory....

The play presentation in arena-style, with barely two months of hectic preparation at the Cebu Youth Hall, geared for a showdown with the almost artistically-impooverished but James Bond-oriented Cebuano audience. It was like an egg about to be hatched and yet, when it was actually hatched, the chick would not come out of its broken shell, afraid the world might not suffer it.

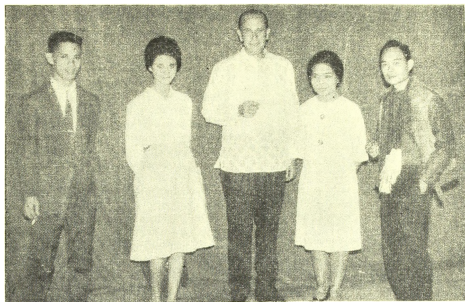
Nevertheless, through the erstwhile sponsorship of the 8th Supreme Student Council of the University in cooperation with Fulbright Professor Joseph Fitch and his workshop and USC Rector Rev. Fr. John Vogelgesang, S.V.D., the play was finally put to a test before a select audience of about 200 persons who (most probably) went to see the play in spite of the typhoon.

Almost as in a dream, the play headed for a happy ending with drama enthusiasts who witnessed the sudden dramatic rebirth in Cebu declaring thus, "The play was superb! Who's the director? Who are the casts? etcetera, etcetera, etcetera...."

The Play and The Author

Ably directed by visiting Fulbright Professor Joseph Fitch, the arena-style play presentation recreated Tennessee Williams' fiercest and boldest cry of "catastrophe without violence." While the Williams audience accepted for many years his outrageous and almost disgusting portrayal of violence which he was dealing out to them — of rape, castration, and cannibalism — the *Glass Menagerie* is a far cry from what he has been feeding us. Interviewed by *Newsweek* in the spring of 1960 after the first presentation of the play, Williams said, "I want to pass the rest of my life believing in other things. For years I was too preoccupied with the destructive impulses. From now on I want to be concerned with the kinder aspects of life."

It could not have been only a period of adjustment, the sudden turn in his literary career or that which was expected



The Director and the Cast of *The Glass Menagerie* pose for posterity before the final rehearsal of the arena-style presentation. Photo shows from left to right: Wilfredo Justimbaste, Hannah Flores, Professor Joseph Fitch, Vivien Ordoña, and Mr. Agapito Severino.

of Jean Paul Sartre when he rebuked the Nobel Prize in literature. The cry and the resolution came from someone alone, utterly and irrevocably, in his agony. It could have been an Osbornian crisis. But it was Williams': the writer of the macabre world of violence, making headway for the lost province of the more American, concerned with the more smiling aspects of life.

Violence portrayed in his plays as *The Night of the Iguana*, *The Rose Tattoo*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Suddenly Last Summer*, *Summer and Smoke*, and many others, perhaps, provides the springboard for this remarkable change in Williams. Anyway, as the philosophers would put it, the literary world should be dynamic and not static, which means it should be capable of transcending from one dimension to another.

The Glass Menagerie was hailed as a major dramatic event when it first appeared. The play survives mainly on symbols rather than the literal which holds to the fore the rise of the *memory play*.

by

Manuel S. Satorre Jr.

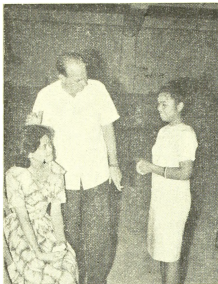
Williams has successfully woven a pattern which pieces together the fragmented lives of human beings, winding up into a tragedy quietly fulfilled in the words of one of its characters: "Blow out your candles, Laura — and so goodbye...."

The play — which Williams calls the "new plastic theater" where evanescent characters and images flicker across the stage momentarily, with characters who often want to withdraw from the blinding light of reality into the softer world of illusion — is a story of five characters, Amanda, the mother; Laura, the daughter; Tom, the son; Jim, the Gentleman Caller; and the father whose presence is felt in his absence.

It starts with Tom and his mother in mortal conflict. Amanda, in their poverty but without losing hope, wanted to create a new world for Laura who happens to have lost the essence of life when she suffered a limp after a fall. She asks Tom to get Laura a Gentleman Caller which thus ushers in the fragility in Laura's world imbedded in the symbolic "glass menagerie" she treasures in her home.

Finally, after hours of confrontation, Amanda succeeds in persuading Tom to bring into their anguish-ridden home a Gentleman Caller.

THE GLASS MENAGERIE



Professor Joseph Fitch coaches Hannah Flores (left) and Vivian Ordoña (extreme right) the proper diction and the art of drama.

When Jim, the Gentleman Caller, comes, Laura, (afraid because she realizes the man is the same person whom she had a crush on during her school days) refuses to see him. But Amanda, playing the matchmaker successfully brings them together in happy reunion.

But the twist as in any other play comes. Laura discovers that Jim, the sweetest thing that ever came into her life, is engaged with another woman. Laura is left alone painfully trying to heal her wounds. Amanda sighs. While Tom leaves their home in search for adventure.

Commenting on the play, Dr. Roger Stein, Assistant Professor of English at the University of Washington, said, "The particular excellence of *The Glass Menagerie*, by contrast, is that Williams was able at this one point to sustain both a credible dramatic situation of the anticipation and appearance of the Gentleman Caller at the same time that he developed with extraordinary skill the secondary level of allusion which gives to the drama its full symbolic significance. The pattern of allusion, the tightness of poetic texture, transforms the pathetic story of the Wingfield family into a calamity of immense proportions."

THE ARENA AND THE MEMORY PLAY

The arena is a new technique in theater presentation. It places the stage in the center with the spectators viewing the play from all sides which brings to the limelight the character and the drama and moves the play right into the midst of the audience. This is effected by the proximity of the players to the spectators and the concomitant austerity

of the set, because of its own nature, the audience has to be limited and the acting stressed.

The memory play is perhaps most suitable for the arena. As Williams describes it: "The scene is memory and is therefore non-realistic. Memory takes a lot of poetic license. It omits some details. Others are exaggerated. According to the emotional value of the articles it touches, for memory is seated predominantly in the heart. The interior is therefore rather dim and poetic."

Dr. Stein explains it this way: "The structure of the play helped Williams to move away from realistic drama and too great a dependence upon only the literal significance of word or action. His development of *The Glass Menagerie* as a 'memory play,' organized around Tom's remembrances of things past, gave Williams the freedom to develop the "new plastic theatre" of which he spoke in the author's production notes to be published versions of the play. Lighting, music, and the device of the narrator who is both a commentator on and a part of the series of tableaux which he presents in his search for the meaning of the past all contribute to the play's fluidity, a quality and metaphor which one critic sees as central to Williams' art."

observe his students performing during the actual presentation of *The Glass Menagerie* at the Youth Hall last November 19 to 22, 1964. Many were even amazed how he succeeded in letting his actors speak with an American accent!

Fitch who was a professor of theater arts at Montana State College, is a United States Educational Foundation grantee at the University. He has both theoretical and practical knowledge of drama and the arts. He holds the degree of Bachelor of Science in English from Murray State College. From the same institution, he obtained a Master of Arts degree in Education and Psychology. His Master of Fine Arts degree in drama he obtained from Yale University. He had made special studies of the theater and television at the American Theater Wing.

Helping Professor Fitch bring *The Glass Menagerie* into a successful conclusion were the cast and the production and promotion staff of the play.

Mr. Agapito Severino, an English instructor in the university, played the role of Tom, the poet whom Jim, portrayed by Wilfredo Justimbaste, called Shakespeare. Although Severino was a little bit older for his role of Tom, he successfully displayed intensity in his characterization. "Maybe," Severino said



Mr. Agapito Severino (left) executes a dramatic pose before Wilfredo Justimbaste in a touching scene in *The Glass Menagerie*.

THE DIRECTOR, CAST, AND PRODUCTION STAFF

The visiting Fulbright professor, we may call him: Professor Joseph C. Fitch. He was responsible for the success of the play presentation.

As someone who has not really been used to the Cebuano temperament, it was amazing how Professor Fitch managed to direct the play in utter smoothness. We can still remember how he would nervously walk around the arena and

when asked to comment after the play presentation, "it was due to my ulcers that I really looked like Tom."

The role of Amanda, played by Vivien Ordoña, a former Graduate School student, now an East-West researcher, was the most taxing of all the performances.

Hannah Flores, a Commerce student in this university, was just perfect for the role of Laura: naive, innocent-looking and a first timer.

Those who composed the production
(Continued on page 47)

THE SANTO NIÑO OF CEBU

(Continued from page 22)

6. **Spoon-feeding** — Too much spoon-feeding is evident in our schools and universities. Students show aversion to subjects or methods of instruction which require thinking. More attention on training how to think should be given and the greater use of the library should be encouraged to develop the habit of independent study.

7. **Teachers' and students' load** — More emphasis on quality than quantity should be exercised; on what the diploma stands for than on the diploma proper. A passion for thoroughness and hard work should be inculcated in the students. Similarly, professors should not be overloaded, but be allowed time to improve themselves professionally and meet students for much-needed consultations.

8. **Size of class** — The size of classes, especially in laboratory courses, should be kept as small as possible.

9. **Student apprenticeship** — Students in engineering and other course preparing for a scientific profession should be encouraged to take apprenticeship in some industries or business firms. The mixing of work and study is a wholesome arrangement for a growing mind.

10. **Equipment and facilities** — Since the laboratory place an indispensable role in technological education, it should be adequately equipped with materials and equipments for individual, group and class experiments. But most of the supplies have to be imported, so the government should help decrease the cost and difficulty of procuring them by minimizing if not abolishing red tape and import taxes on them.

Inspired with the unselfish efforts of the private sector of education for the upliftment of our educational system, the Board of National Education created a Revamp Committee with Secretary of Education Alejandro R. Roces and the then Undersecretary Miguel B. Gaffud as Co-chairman to look over our present system. With the realization of this projected educational revolution, we hope our country's need for scientist-engineers who are liberally educated and who can assume without further effort the managerial aspects of industry will thus be met more effectively. ¶

tury before the formal introduction of Christianity during the successful colonization of the islands by Miguel López de Legazpi. Hardly realizing its true significance, the early Cebuanos had held the image in great reverence, petitioning it in all their necessities, and offering sacrifices to the Santo Niño in the manner of their other idols. The Santo Niño became, then as now, the symbol of deliverance in times of drought, famine and plague, and protector in times of fire and other dangers, which in those early days were manifested in "Moro" attacks. After the Spaniards came, the cult of the Santo Niño spread to the rest of the islands where important secondary centers were set up in the islands of Luzón (the southern part) and Panay.

In Panay the early parishes established by the Augustinians where, up to this day the devotion to the Santo Niño is well established, were in Aklan, Banga and Ibayjay. Aklan, which is now a separate province, incorporates the municipalities of Banga and Ibayjay, and in addition, three other centers of Santo Niño devotion: the pro-

vincial capital of Kalibo and the municipalities of Makato and Altavas. An indigenous religious practice connected with the devotion to the Santo Niño of Cebú, is taking the Santo Niño in fluvial procession. This is still very much in evidence in Aklan and the practice is called "Pasalom." For that matter, the fluvial procession is evident throughout those other areas where the Santo Niño devotion is strong among the people. In the Visayas, one other area which merits mention is the island of Leyte, especially the City of Tacloban.

In Manila, aside from the city proper, the districts with a flourishing devotion to the Santo Niño are Pandacan, Tondo and Makati. Immediate surrounding provinces with a strong devotion to the Santo Niño are Bulacan and Cavite. Highly responsible for the propagation of this devotion in the above-mentioned areas, were, no doubt, the pioneer Augustinian missionaries who belonged to the Province of Santísimo Nombre de Jesús. From these early centers the devotion was, in turn, spread throughout the rest of the islands. ¶

THE GLASS MENAGERIE

(Continued from page 26)

and promotion staff are the following: Resil Mojares, executive chairman; Leandro Quintana, production manager; Eddie Yap, and Vic Cui, stage managers; Tony Buagas Jr., Manny Manlegro, Nestor Magan, Frank Coliflores, Edgar Saso, Manuel Amora and the Engineering Deltans, stage crew; Vic Cui, light; Edgar Gica, sound; the Deltans and the USC-SCCAC Chapter, property; Fely Lucas, make-up; Beth Hermosisima, costumes; Ellen Viloria, hair-do; Jennie Kimkong, finances; M. Satorre, Jr., program, sales, publicity; Vivien Alix, Rise Faith Espina, reception; Sally Go, cocktails; Fotorama, Inc., photography and Rev. Fr. John Vogelgesang, S.V.D., adviser.

Obviously, as in any play or story, we must end. Tennessee Williams sleeps, but his works tremble all over the world like a burning candle stirred by the wind. Professor Fitch would soon leave us and leave for the United States. Some members of the Cast and of the production staff must have graduated and left the

university by now. But the memory lingers, one turbulent November week of last year cries out the unfulfilled echo of Williams, in agony:

"I didn't go to the moon. I went much farther. For time is the longest distance between two places.... I travelled around a great deal. The cities swept about me like dead leaves, leaves that were brightly colored but torn away from the branches. I would have stopped, but I was pursued by something. It always came upon me unaware, taking me altogether by surprise. Perhaps it was a familiar bit of music. Perhaps it was only a piece of transparent glass.... Oh, Laura, Laura, I tried to leave you behind me, but I am more faithful than I intended to be! I reached for a cigarette, I cross the street, I run into a movie or a bar. I buy a drink, I speak to the nearest stranger — anything that can blow your candles out — for nowadays the world is lit by lightning. Blow out your candles, Laura.... And so — goodbye!!"