

THE TENNESSEE WILLIAMS ANNUAL REVIEW

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2024 Tennessee Williams Scholars Conference

Friday, March 22, 2024
Schedule of Events

*The Williams Research Center
at the Historic New Orleans Collection
410 Chartres Street, New Orleans, LA 70130*

- 9:00–9:05 Welcome, Margit Longbrake, Historic New Orleans Collection
- 9:05–9:15 **Opening remarks, Bess Rowen, Villanova University**
- 9:15–10:30 **The Archive, the Motel, and the Con Man: Queering in and with Williams**
Scholars track queerness in Williams's work as it destabilizes ideas, traditions, and places many in the US take for granted: the literary canon, the archive, and even public spaces look different when viewed through the lens of Williams's plays.
Moderator: Bess Rowen, Villanova University
Panelists:
Kelly I. Aliano, New-York Historical Society
Stephen Cedars, Graduate Center, City University of New York
Benjamin Gillespie, Baruch College, City University of New York
- 10:45–12:00 **Getting the Male: Learning to Read the Semiotics of Men in Williams**
Silent, scene-stealing studs? Violent villains in—and victims of—an oppressive society? Radical rewriters of the male–female binary? All of the above? Scholars and directors from the US and Germany look at the challenges Williams's men characters pose to actors, directors, audiences, and rigid societal structures in the 21st century and ask why it matters.
Moderator: John "Ray" Proctor, Tulane University
Panelists:
Caroline Bühler, Ludwig Maximilians University, Munich
David Kaplan, Provincetown Tennessee Williams Theater Festival
Bess Rowen, Villanova University
- 1:15–2:45 **Williams and the Postwar Broadway and Beyond**
R. Barton Palmer, editor-in-chief of the *Tennessee Williams Annual Review*, engages a quartet of the field's most distinguished scholars in a lively, thought-provoking discussion of Williams and the postwar



Scholars Conference

Main

Past Years

Broadway renaissance—and of the surprising legacies of his boldly transgressive work and public persona.

Moderator: R. Barton Palmer, Clemson University (emeritus)

Panelists:

Mark Charney, Texas Tech University

Brenda Murphy, University of Connecticut (emerita)

Annette J. Saddik, Graduate Center and City Tech, City University of New York

Henry I. Schvey, Washington University, St. Louis

3:00–4:15

An Outrage for the Stage: Williams Productions in the 21st Century

Perspectives of the scholar, the playwright, the director, and the performer meet in a kaleidoscopic panel that looks at contemporary stagings of works by and about Williams on two continents. Productions discussed incorporate autoethnography, aesthetics of speed and trash, McCarthyism, 20th-century blues artists . . . and even have the audacity to present Williams’s work as social realism.

Moderator: Annette J. Saddik, Graduate Center and City Tech, City University of New York

Panelists:

John Michael DiResta, Skidmore College

Levi Frazier, Jr., Southwest Tennessee Community College

Joshua Polster, Emerson College

Kerstin Schmidt, Ludwig Maximilians University, Munich

4:30–5:15

A Staged Reading of *Entrances to Heaven*

Theater director, actor, and educator Nisi Sturgis and her University of Illinois theater company present a six-person staged reading of *Entrances to Heaven*, a version of an early, never-produced Williams play born of the playwright’s fascination with the 20th-century troubadour poet Vachel Lindsay. Written less than a decade after Lindsay’s tragic suicide, the play features a young couple whose knife-throwing act is suffering. On a train they meet the ghost of Lindsay, traveling back to his childhood home in Illinois. Lindsay declaims his verse and recounts the difficulties of his later years, inviting audiences to connect him with the wandering poet Val Xavier from *Orpheus Descending* and other Williams characters forever struggling in a world without a place for them.

Tennessee Williams scholar and professor emeritus Tom Mitchell introduces the piece and offers insights about its history and evolution.

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