



The first productions of Tennessee Williams' plays in São Paulo¹

As primeiras produções das peças de Tennessee Williams em São Paulo

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Abstract

This article presents and describes the circumstances surrounding the production of the first premieres of Tennessee Williams' plays in the theatrical context of São Paulo between 1948 and 1964. Through a comprehensive investigation into various academic and historical sources, describing the technical details, reception, and the importance of the show in the city's scene, the crucial role played by these productions in the revitalization of São Paulo's theater stands out. The productions not only contributed to the advancement of modern Brazilian theater but were also fundamental in consolidating the careers of several artists who became key figures in the history of theater in the country. This influence manifested itself not only in the success of the plays themselves but also in the way they impacted the theatrical aesthetics and dramatic narrative of the time. Therefore, this study sheds light on the lasting importance of Tennessee Williams' work in the Brazilian theatrical context.

Keywords: American theater; Brazilian theater; São Paulo theater renewal.

Resumo

Este artigo apresenta e descreve as circunstâncias das montagens das primeiras estreias das peças de Tennessee Williams no contexto teatral de São Paulo entre 1948 e 1964. Por meio de uma investigação abrangente em diversas fontes acadêmicas e históricas, ao escrever a ficha técnica, a recepção e a importância do espetáculo no cenário da idade, destaca-se o papel crucial desempenhado por essas produções na revitalização do teatro paulistano. As montagens não apenas contribuíram para o avanço do teatro moderno brasileiro, mas também foram fundamentais na consolidação das carreiras de diversos artistas que se tornaram figuras-chave na história do teatro no país. Essa influência se manifestou no sucesso das peças em si, mas também na maneira como impactaram a estética teatral e a narrativa dramática da época. Sendo assim, este estudo lança luz sobre a duradoura importância do trabalho de Tennessee Williams no contexto teatral brasileiro.

Palavras-chave: Teatro estadunidense; Teatro brasileiro; Renovação do teatro paulistano.

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Introduction

Tennessee Williams [1911-1983] achieved his first major success as a playwright with the Broadway debut of *The glass menagerie*. Two years later, *A streetcar named Desire* premiered on the famous circuit, solidifying the playwright's name both in the United States and internationally. It would not be long before his plays made their way to Brazil, which happened just a few months after the latter premiere. In this article, we will provide a brief overview of Williams' first play premieres within the context of the renewal of theater in São Paulo, between 1948 and 1964.

For building this panorama, it was necessary to rely on not only academic and biographical publications related to the historiography of Brazilian and American theater in Brazil but also periodicals. Many of the dates and details of the productions featured here are available in newspapers, databases, and archives related to Brazilian and American theater.

American playwrights in Brazil

The amateur theater groups in the United States, such as The Provincetown Players, in which Eugene O'Neill [1888-1953] was a member, were responsible for paving the way for modern theater on Broadway. This brought to the commercial circuit the possibility of staging plays by playwrights like Henrik Ibsen [1828-1906] and Anton Chekhov [1860-1904], and subsequently, works of modern American drama, which served as a platform for discussing latent social issues in the country at that time. O'Neill's plays, gaining prominence in this territory, paved the way for playwrights of the immediate post-World War II era, such as Tennessee Williams.

The modern American drama reached Brazil through the stages of Rio de Janeiro, then the main theatrical hub of the country, much like in the United States, starting with amateur groups. In the theater scene of São Paulo, among the amateurs, we highlight: the initiative of the Grupo de Teatro Experimental - GTE [Experimental Theater Group], founded in 1942 by Alfredo Mesquita [1907-1986], which was responsible for the first Williams' staging in São Paulo's theater scene. Following this, many other modern American playwrights would grace the stages of small theaters, which were beginning to establish themselves in the central area of the city.

In 1937, Jayme Costa [1897-1967] produced O'Neill's *Anna Christie*, directed by Eduardo Vieira (Enciclopédia, 2023b), which had premiered on Broadway fifteen years earlier (Internet Broadway..., 2023b). The American playwright only gained prominence in our midst with the local productions of *The emperor Jones*, in 1945, and *All god's chillun got wings*, in 1946, produced by the Teatro Experimental do Negro - TEN [Experimental Black Theater], both directed by Abdias do Nascimento [1914-2011] (Enciclopédia, 2023e; 2023f). Still in 1946, O'Neill's *Desire under the elms* would be presented in São Paulo by Os V Comediantes [The Five Comedians], directed by Miroel Silveira [1914-1988], making O'Neill the first American playwright to be staged in the São Paulo theaters (Enciclopédia, 2023c).

In 1948, two years after the productions of O'Neill in Rio and São Paulo, there was an expansion of modern American Theater presence in Brazil. In addition to the Brazil's premiere of *Tobacco road* by Jack Kirkland [1902-1969] in May at the Teatro Fenix, directed by Ruggero Jacobbi and produced by the Teatro Popular de Arte - TPA [Popular Art Theater] (Enciclopédia, 2023d), there were two premieres of Williams' plays: in June, *Uma rua chamada pecado*,³ the first Brazilian title for *A streetcar named Desire*, and in August, *À margem da vida*,⁴ the first title in Brazilian Portuguese for *The glass menagerie*.

Born on June 23rd!

Uma rua chamada pecado, directed by Ziembinski [1908-1978], premiered on June 23rd, 1948, on the stage of the Teatro Ginástico [Ginástico Theater] in Rio de Janeiro (Enciclopédia, 2023h), running "until September 5th, 1948, with one hundred performances" (Oliveira, 2020, p. 59). According to scholar Rafael Francisco Fonseca de Oliveira, this was possible "in less than three months of being on stage, as two performances were held on Fridays, weekends, and holidays" (Oliveira, 2020, p. 65). Oliveira notes that Ziembinski, having previously directed O'Neill's Brazilian first production of *Desire*, accepted the invitation to do the same with *Uma rua chamada pecado*, dividing, as was done on Broadway, "the eleven scenes of the play into three acts" (Oliveira, 2020, p. 66).

³ Translator's note: In a literal translation to English: *A street named Sin*

⁴ Translator's note: In a literal translation to English: *On the edge of life*.

The characters quartet highlighted in the play, Blanche DuBois, Stella, Stanley Kowalski, and Mitch, were respectively interpreted by Henriette Morineau, Flora May, Graça Mello, and Ambrosio Fregolente (Enciclopédia, 2023h). Henriette Morineau [1908-1990], the first Brazilian Blanche, was inserted by Decio de Almeida Prado [1917-2000] in the theatrical historiography of the country as the one who introduced “post-war American theater by staging Tennessee Williams’ *A Street Named Desire*, under the title judged most provocative, *Uma rua chamada pecado*” (Prado, 2009, p. 42). Here we see that Prado had recorded the name of the play differently from the original, perhaps, as noted by Luis Marcio Arnaut de Toledo, to “validate the title reiterated by Mme. Morineau” (Toledo, 2019, p. 21).

Carlos Lage, the translator of the play, adapted the title and the characters names: “Stanley Kowalski became Roberto Kowolsky; and Hubbel, the surname of Steve and Eunice, was changed to Gunter” (Oliveira, 2020, p. 60). According to Oliveira (2020), the change of the title may have been intended to avoid license to performance payments. Therefore, it is believed that this debut of a Williams production in Brazil was an adaptation. Moreover, it seems noteworthy that the short time between the premiere of the play on Broadway in December 1947 (Internet Broadway..., 2023a) and this production in Brazil, only a six-month difference. This brevity would make this production the second premiere of *Streetcar* outside of the United States. Officially, the first was the one by “Cuban director Modesto Centeno on the stage of the Patronato del Teatro’s Salia Talia in Havana, in July 1948” (Oliveira, 2020, p. 60).

The Williams’ plays produced in the renewal of the theater in São Paulo

The American amateurs had at their disposal the Little Theatres in New York to stage texts of modern drama, as was the case with O’Neill and The Provincetown Players. The Little Theatres played a fundamental role in the development of modern theater in the United States during the 1910s and 1920s. They provided a space for theatrical experimentation, allowing directors and actors to explore new forms of expression and break with traditional conventions. Many of these small theaters focused on producing plays by American playwrights of that time, addressing a variety of social, cultural, and political themes. Many artists who started in these amateur theaters eventually migrated

to professional theater, contributing to the transformation of the theatrical landscape in the U.S.

In São Paulo, unlike the experiences of American amateurs in the Little Theatres, Paulista amateurs found few options for theatrical venues in the city. Sabato Magaldi and Maria Thereza Vargas note that

there were no smaller theaters in the city yet, such as the Teatro Brasileiro de Comédia - TBC [Brazilian Comedy Theater], suitable for the demands of modern drama, and the Municipal, the city's main stage, was not only rented out for social events, but also restricted the use of space by amateurs (Magaldi; Vargas, 2000, p. 187).

The Teatro Brasileiro de Comédia - TBC [Brazilian Comedy Theater], inaugurated in October of 1948, established a new paradigm in Brazilian Theater. Unlike the large theaters of the past, it was a 320-seat theater, suitable for modern drama, as the audience was closer to the actors and could interact more closely with the text. This space, like the Little Theatres in the United States, initially conceived as a venue for the projection of Paulista amateurs, quickly transformed into an institution fostering the renewal of theater in São Paulo, and consequently in Brazil, serving as a paradigm for the establishment of other spaces, such as the Teatro de Arena [São Paulo Arena Theater] and the Teatro Oficina [Oficina Theater].

A year before the TBC inauguration, Alfredo Mesquita had traveled to the United States, where he watched *The glass menagerie*. Marta Góes records that he “watched, in Boston, in the company of Caio Caiuby and other friends, a play by a young American playwright that had caused a sensation the previous year” (Góes, 2007, p. 193). In his article in the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo*, Mesquita emphasized that he would be watching a play by Williams for the first time.

We knew about the success achieved by the drama in New York, where it was no longer on stage. At the moment, it was being performed in Boston by understudies. This did not prevent it from causing a strong and strange impression on us. We left the theater shaken, somewhat confused, not knowing exactly how to express our opinion about what we had just witnessed. The very next day, I bought the brochure, which I did not read (Mesquita, 1983, p. 8).

Additionally, besides the information from Marta Góes and the account in the mentioned supplement, we had access to one of Alfredo Mesquita's travel diary, available in his private collection, kept at the Historical Archive of the State of São Paulo, in which

he records his impressions of the first Brazilian production of *The glass menagerie*. The entry dates to March 22nd, 1947.

A strange play that tries to create an atmosphere... fluctuating between comedy and drama. One waits, waits, and the thing doesn't come. In any case, 'tried' is more than the others I have seen... It was a great success on Broadway. Weak actors, especially the old woman, renowned nonetheless (Mesquita, 1947).

According to records available in the *Boston Globe*, and considering Mesquita's travel registration date, we understand that he attended the production that was on stage at the Plymouth Theatre between February 24th and March 16th of that year (Boston, 2023). This touring production had the same production and direction as the one that premiered on Broadway in 1945: respectively Eddie Dowling and Louis J. Singer/Eddie Dowling and Margo Jones. Although it no longer featured the original cast, Amanda was portrayed by Pauline Lord [1890-1950], who enjoyed considerable prestige on Broadway. It was she who starred in the original production of O'Neill's *Anna Christie* in the United States.

The strangeness caused by Williams' play prompted Alfredo Mesquita to acquire a brochure of the play,⁵ which would then mark the beginning of a longstanding relationship between Williams and São Paulo's Theater scene. One of the reasons for choosing this production for the GTE play, which would raise funds for the construction of the TBC, seems to be expressed in another excerpt from his testimony in *O Estado de São Paulo*:

On the day of my arrival in Santos - returning by steamer, my good friend Marina Freire, a very efficient and enthusiastic member of our Experimental Theater Group, was waiting for me at the dock. From the ship's railing, barely docked, I shouted to her: 'I bring a play with a great role for you!' That of Amanda Wingfield, which she indeed performed. [...] Tennessee Williams. I did not know him. His incipient glory had not yet reached Brazil (Mesquita, 1983, p. 8).

This unfamiliarity with Tennessee Williams' dramaturgy in Brazil is reiterated by Maria Silvia Betti, who records:

the name of Tennessee Williams was, then, unknown in Brazil, and the reading of the original of *À Margem da Vida*, recently brought by Alfredo Mesquita from the United States, did not fail to cause some strangeness,

⁵ We believe that by paperback Mesquita refers to the acting edition, which had been published at the time by Dramatists Play Services. These publications reflect the text as performed on stage, but not the original intention of the playwright.

due to its 'novelty' and its narrative and lyrical structure, even for Nydia Licia... (Betti, 2012, p. 12).

In another part of the testimony to the newspaper, Mesquita talks about the translation:

Upon arriving in São Paulo, and opening the crate of New York books, I separated the brochure of the young playwright, handing it to my sister, Esther Mesquita, the usual translator for the Grupo de Teatro Experimental [...] with her special gift for translation, the meticulous care that characterized her, she began her work. And soon she was enchanted with the play. She found it beautiful. Only the original title *The Glass Menagerie* seemed difficult, if not impossible, to translate. She suggested *À Margem da Vida*, an expression used by Tom Wingfield himself to define the way of life of his unhappy family (Mesquita, 1983, p. 9).

In the following lines, we embark on a description of the productions of Williams' plays, many of them national premieres, within the scope of the renewal of the theater scene in São Paulo, between 1948, the inauguration of TBC, and 1964, the establishment of the Civil-Military Coup.

À margem da vida [The glass menagerie]

According to *O Estado de São Paulo* in 1948, the Brazilian premiere of *The glass menagerie* took place on August 10th of that year. The newspaper note mentions the successful ticket sales for the performance of the play by the "Grupo de Teatro Experimental, on the 10th of the current month, at 9 p.m., at the Municipal Theater" (*O Estado...*, 1948, p. 6). From Nydia Licia's testimony, we have a perspective on how this premiere unfolded, representing not only the transition of GTE from the Theatro Municipal [São Paulo City Theater] to TBC but also the impact of Williams' text on the renewal of São Paulo's Theater scene. She informs us that the production

premiered at the Theatro Municipal before a packed audience who received it very well. It was reprised on another day, also with good attendance. In the program of the show, for the first time, the TBC logo appeared, as the proceeds would go towards the renovation works of the future theater. Almost no one in the audience knew what these three letters meant; some even thought it was a benefit performance for a tuberculosis sanatorium. [...] The play made a very big impact, not only because of the very modern text but also because of the performances. All the critics considered it Alfredo Mesquita's greatest direction (Licia, 2007, p. 35-36).

The production directed by Alfredo Mesquita featured performances by Marina Freire as Amanda Wingfield, as previously mentioned, Abilio Pereira de Almeida [1906-1977], also a producer and playwright, as Tom, Nydia Licia as Laura Wingfield, and finally, Caio Caiuby, who had seen the play with Mesquita in the United States, as Jim O'Connor (Enciclopédia, 2023a).

The TBC, conceived by Franco Zampari [1898-1966] as a stage for São Paulo amateurs, included *The glass menagerie* on its inaugural program. There were 22 performances, starting on November 11th, 1948, with the same cast from the Theatro Municipal, with an audience of “more than three thousand and five hundred spectators” (Guzik, 1986, p. 17-18). This resonance, according to the researcher, was due to the “quality of Tennessee Williams’ text, combined with the careful production” (Guzik, 1986, p. 18).

Unlike the Theatro Municipal de São Paulo [São Paulo City Theater], TBC offered American drama a more intimate space, with 320 seats. Decio de Almeida Prado comments in one of his reviews that then “free from the Municipal, which stole part of its voice and a large part of the scenic play, Marina Freire Franco could demonstrate that she truly has a great role in Amanda Wingfield, worthy of the best in national theater” (Prado, 1948, p. 8).

Within the proposed temporal scope, there were two other productions of the play, both by the Teatro de Arena de São Paulo. The first one was in 1955, the year of the inauguration of the space on Rua Teodoro Baima, and in 1958, the year when the *Seminários de Dramaturgia* [Dramaturgy Seminars] took place, led by Augusto Boal [1931-2009], who had recently returned from the United States. The first of these productions occurred at a time when Arena had begun “to establish itself as the vanguard of Brazilian theater” (Basbaum, 2009, p. 67). The premiere of this production took place on October 25th, 1955, directed by José Marques da Costa: the cast included Barbara Fazio, Fabio Cardoso, Floramy Pinheiro, and Jorge Fischer, Jr. The second one, in 1958, directed by José Renato (1926-2011), featured Lelia Abramo, Miriam Mehler, Oduvaldo Vianna Filho, and Chico de Assis in the cast (Basbaum, 2009, p. 66).

A connection between Williams’ dramaturgy and the Arena was established as early as the Escola de Arte Dramática de São Paulo – EAD [The São Paulo Drama Art School], inaugurated in 1947, which would train José Renato and other colleagues who

founded the Arena. The school had incorporated American dramaturgy into its curriculum, including plays by Williams, both full-length and one-act. The company itself, which would be established in 1953, was founded with the staging of a one-act play by Williams, *The long goodbye*.

Williams' dramaturgy had already shown an affinity for the theatre-in-the-round-style spaces in the United States. Margo Jones had directed Williams' plays "in this stage modality at Theatre '47 in Dallas, which greatly contributed to Tennessee's work becoming known in the country" (Betti, 2017, p. 14-15). Furthermore, the excellent reception of the second production of *Summer and smoke* at the Circle in the Square in New York contrasted with the poor reception of the play at its Broadway premiere five years earlier.

Another factor that automatically linked Williams' dramaturgy to the Teatro de Arena in São Paulo was economic-related. In this type of space, it was possible to produce plays with lower investment: "in addition to being more economical in terms of production costs, arena stagings were compatible with a broad and eclectic repertoire ranging from classics to modern works" (Basbaum, 2009, p. 52).

O anjo de pedra [*Summer and smoke*]

*O anjo de pedra*⁶ was the first professional staging of a Williams play at TBC. It was directed by Luciano Salce, one of the directors brought from Italy to TBC by Zampari, with Sergio Cardoso [1925-1972] as his assistant. The cast included Cacilda Becker [1921-1969], the first Brazilian Alma Winemiller, Sergio Cardoso himself as John Buchanan, Jr., Cleyde Yaconis as Nelly, and Nydia Licia as Rosa Gonzalez. Also in the cast were Elizabeth Henreid, Frank Hollander, Fredi Kleeman, Glauco de Divitis, Joseph Guerreiro, Margot Police, Marina Freire, who had portrayed Amanda Wingfield in the Brazilian premiere of a Williams play, Maurício Barroso, Neli Patricio, Raquel Moacyr, Rui Afonso, Sergio Cardoso, Victor Merinov, and Waldemar Wey (Correio, 1950). The translation was made by Raimundo Magalhães Junior. Nydia Licia records that he

barely heard about a play premiering on Broadway before requesting the license to translation. The issue was that no one could translate so many texts simultaneously, so he would assign the task to some young aspiring journalist who barely understood English. The result was a completely crazy translation. Ruy Affonso and I rewrote almost the entire text (Licia,

⁶ Translator's note: In a literal translation to English: *Stone angel*.

2007, p. 174).

Thus, we see that the first translation of this Williams text had a substantial contribution from Nydia Licia, who went beyond her presence on stage.

The production premiered on August 16th, 1950. This first Brazilian staging of the text totaled 89 performances (Programa, 1959, p. 29). Guzik indicates the reasons why TBC staged this play, which, unlike *The glass menagerie* and *A Streetcar...*, did not succeed critically and commercially in its first Broadway production:

When staging Williams, the theater already showed clear preferences for plays capable of increasing producers' investments at the box office; news of success abroad would be a decisive factor in the selection of many titles that would be part of the house's repertoire. However, *O anjo de pedra* did not come with such support; it seems to have reached the stage due to Salce's confidence in the text and the urgency of giving Cacilda a quality character. [...] Alma Winemiller [...] seemed to have enough depth for the twenty-eight-year-old actress to demonstrate the assurance of a growing talent as the leading female figure of the house (Guzik, 1986, p. 43).

A new season of TBC's production of *Summer and smoke* would be staged in 1959, presented at the Teatro Maria Della Costa [Maria Della Costa Theater] due to renovations at TBC. Prado (2002) records Williams' play's contribution to the consolidation of the careers of more than one of our actresses. Nathalia Timberg would portray Alma Winemiller on stage for this second time. In this new production, directed by Benedito Corsi, alongside the actress, Leonardo Villar portrayed John Buchanan, Jr. Also in the cast, Alzira Cunha, Cândida Teixeira, Cecilia Carneiro, Chico Martins, Dina Lisboa, Elísio de Albuquerque, Elizabeth Henreid, Ericka Falken, Henrique Ogalla, Jorge Chaia, Miriam Mehler, Moacyr Marchesi, Odavlas Petti, Sergio Albertini, and Vera Lucia (Programa, 1959).

Gata em teto de zinco quente [Cat on a hot tin roof]

TBC would once again feature Williams' dramaturgy for another historic milestone in Brazilian Theater. The first Brazilian production of *Cat on a hot tin roof* received one of the largest audiences in theater of the time. Directed by Maurice Vaneau [1926-2007], starred Cacilda Becker as Maggie and Walmor Chagas [1930-2013] as Brick. Alongside them were Célia Biar, Dina Lisboa, Ziembinski, Jorge Chaia, Leonardo Vilar, Maria Nuzzo, Mario Nuzzo, Nicolas Bliochas, Niki Bliochas, Sadi Cabral, and Samuel dos Santos

(Programa, 1956). Its premiere took place on October 18th, 1956, with 92 performances. Guzik records: “In October, the theater’s curtains open for *Cat on a hot tin roof*, and Tennessee Williams’ play finds in Brazil the same warm reception it had on Broadway” (Guzik, 1986, p. 140). According to the researcher, if we add up the performances of the play by TBC in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, there were one hundred and eighty, with an estimated audience of over thirty-five thousand spectators.

A rosa tatuada [*The rose tattoo*]

The Teatro Maria Della Costa – TMDC was inaugurated in 1954, the year of São Paulo’s four hundredth anniversary, and was envisioned as a “second company of the same quality as TBC” (Magaldi; Vargas, 2000, p. 247). Magaldi and Vargas (2000) note that in this new theater, there was “a beautiful hall with four hundred seats [...] and with a large stage, completely removable” (Magaldi; Vargas, 2000, p. 247).

A few months before the premiere of *Cat on a hot tin roof* at TBC, we have a new debut of a Williams play, staged in Brazil after its Broadway production. *The rose tattoo* premiered in São Paulo on May 16th, 1956. The production was directed by Flaminio Bollini [1924-1978], another of the Italian directors brought by TBC, starring Maria Della Costa [1926-2015] as the protagonist Serafina Delle Rose, and Jardel Filho [1928-1983] as Alvaro Mangiacavallo.

In addition to them, the cast included Beila Genauer, Benjamin Cattan, Diana Morell, Edmundo Lopes, Jardel Jarcolis, Jurema de Magalhães, Ilena de Castro, Mariah Dilnah, Marlene Rocha, Odete Lara, Rosamaria Murtinho, Serafim Gonzalez, and Sidneia Rossi (Brandão, 2009).

The rose tattoo, like *The glass menagerie*, produced by Teatro de Arena in 1955 and 1958, are, in the set of productions of Williams’ plays we are discussing, examples of productions in our contexts that occurred after the Hollywood film adaptation, which then began to be a driving force for theatrical audiences. In the case of *The rose tattoo*, the play premiered on Broadway in 1951 and the film adaptation followed four years later, directed by Daniel Mann (Internet Movie..., 2023). In the journalistic coverage of the premiere of this first Brazilian production, we find more details about the show:

A rosa tatuada, by Tennessee Williams, translated by R. Magalhães Junior, directed

by Flaminio Bollini Cerri. [...] will feature Maria della Costa in another significant role; several debuts: Jardel Filho, Diana Morell, and Benjamin Cattán. The cast will also include: Odete Lara, Beyla Genauer, Jurema de Magalhães, Ilena de Castro, Mariah Dilná, Edmundo Lopes, and Serafim Gonzalez. Plus, a few extras, including 7 children (Correio, n.d., n.p.).

On the stage of the Teatro Maria Della Costa, we would still have a new premiere of a Williams text in São Paulo's Theater scene, which would happen through another company. We will talk more about this new premiere now.

***Doce pássaro da juventude* [Sweet bird of youth]**

Sweet bird of youth would receive the title *Doce pássaro da juventude* for its debut in Brazil, translated by Brutus Pedreira. He would also translate two other Williams texts, *Suddenly last summer*, and for the new staging of *A streetcar...* in 1962.

With production by the Pequeno Teatro de Comedia - PTC [Little Comedy Theater], the Brazilian premiere took place on August 9th, 1960. Ademar Guerra [1933-1993] directed the play. Mauro Mendonca played Chance Wayne, Felipe Carone portrayed Boss Finley, and Irina Grecco portrayed Heavenly.

In addition to them, the cast included Cecília Carneiro, Elias Gleizer, Francisco Martins, Glauce Rocha, Maria Célia Camargo, Marcos Vinícius, Mauro Mendonca, Sergio Alexandre, and Tarcísio Meira (Correio, 1960, n.p.).

***Lembranças de Berta* [Hello from Bertha]**

Nearly ten years after the first national staging of *Hello from Bertha* at the *Teatro das Segundas-feiras* [Theater on Mondays],⁷ at TBC, Nydia Licia, now with her own theater company, staged the play at the Teatro Bela Vista - TBV [Bela Vista Theater] as part of a program titled *Trio*, which also included besides this play, O'Neill's *Before breakfast* and Pirandello's *The man with the flower in his mouth* [L'uomo dal fiore in bocca]. The premiere of this triple program took place on May 21st, 1959. From a note in the newspapers, published at the premiere, we are presented with more details:

⁷ The *Teatro das Segundas-feiras* [Theater on Mondays] took up the TBC artists' day off, offering an alternative space for plays such as one-act plays. This initiative had the same origin and name as what was already being done by the amateurs of the GTE and GTU [University Theater Group] at the Teatro Boa Vista [Boa Vista Theater].

The Nydia Licia-Sérgio Cardoso Company begins today at 9 p.m. at the Teatro Bela Vista, the presentation of *Trio*, a show composed of three one-act plays: *Antes do café* [Before breakfast], a monologue by O'Neill, performed by Wanda Kosmo; *O homem da flor na boca* [The man with the flower in his mouth], by Pirandello, performed by Sérgio Cardoso and Alceu Nunes; and *Lembranças de Berta*, performed by Nydia Licia, Suzi Arruda, and Rita Cleos. Sets and direction by Sérgio Cardoso (O Estado..., 1959, p. 8).

The first production at TBC had been directed by Ziembinski and starred Nydia Licia and Raquel Moacyr. This one at TBV was directed by Sérgio Cardoso, featuring Nydia Licia, Rita Cleos, and Suzi Arruda.

***De repente, no último verão* [Suddenly last summer]**

Suddenly last summer, translated by Brutus Pedreira, premiered at TBV on June 16th, 1961. The production had its national premiere at the Maison de France Theater in Rio de Janeiro. As recorded in a note in *O Estado de São Paulo*:

The Nydia Licia Company began rehearsals for the play *De repente, no último verão* by Tennessee Williams, under the direction of Egydio Eccio. [...] When joining the Nydia Licia Company, Egydio Eccio agreed to direct the American play in São Paulo, while the original cast member, actress Miriam Mehler, remained [...] The roles for the São Paulo version are distributed as follows: Mrs. Venable, Nydia Licia; Catharine, Miriam Mehler; Dr. Sugar, Tarcísio Meira; Mrs. Holly, Marina Freire; George, Wolney de Assis; Sister Jane, Jane Hegenberg; and Miss Foxhill, Ada Hell. [...] The translation of *De repente, no último verão* was done by Brutus Pedreira [...] (O Estado..., 1961, p. 9).

Miriam Mehler, who was responsible with the Companhia Nidia Licia [Nydia Licia Theater Company] for this production, commented that Eccio “really wanted to direct *Suddenly, Last Summer*. We ended up leaving TBC together to stage this Tennessee Williams play” (Ledesma, 2005, p. 69).

***Um bonde chamado Desejo* [A streetcar named Desire]**

Um bonde chamado Desejo is the title of the first production of *A streetcar named Desire* staged by a São Paulo theater company, a feat achieved almost fifteen years after Madame Morineau's. This new production originated within the scope of the Escola de Teatro da UFBA [Federal University of Bahia Theater School], which at that time had the presence of American professionals. According to the researcher Jussilene Santana:

In the credits for *Um Bonde* [*A streetcar...*], the artist-teachers are listed in their respective artistic roles and as 'supervisors of student teams': Charles McGaw, in directing supervision; Norman Westwater, in set and costume supervision; and Robert Bonini, a former student of Izenour at Yale, in lighting. Steve Frey is also present, specifically in charge of Blanche Du Bois's costumes (Santana, 2011, p. 266).

The scholar further explains the reason for this direct relationship between the UFBA Theater School and the United States. Eros Martim Gonçalves [1919-1973], its founder, had managed, in 1958, to establish an agreement between the school and "the Rockefeller Foundation" (Santana, 2011, p. 222). Through the subsidy linked to this agreement, Martim Gonçalves would direct investments towards the school's documentation center, the theater museum, and the translation department, which "since August 1958 was under the administration of Brutus Pedreira [...] who was responsible, among other things, as will be seen, for the translation of *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams" (Santana, 2011, p. 223).

From the production in Salvador, as reported by Santana (2011), in addition to featuring technical innovations for the Brazilian stage, such as the first use in South America of equipment developed at Yale University, capable of making "28 scene changes, synchronizing the play of light with variations in sound effects and the actors' lines" (Santana, 2011, p. 266), there was also the adaptation of Williams' text to the original. The researcher notes that "there was great anticipation generated by the new translation into Portuguese of Tennessee Williams' text, carried out by Professor Brutus Pedreira" (Santana, 2011, p. 266).

Maria Fernanda [1928-2022], who would portray Blanche in the Teatro Oficina production, had previously played the role in the UFBA one. Moreover, even before that, she had interpreted the character "in two television productions [of the play] produced by TV Tupi" (Oliveira, 2020, p. 84). In this production, Stanley was portrayed by Othon Bastos [1933-].

In São Paulo, the production directed by Augusto Boal featured Maria Fernanda as well as Mauro Mendonça as Stanley, Celia Helena as Stella, and Maurício Nabuco as Mitch. Additionally, the cast included Cecília Rabelo, Che Junga Quinzoto, Elizabeth Kander, Fuad Jorge, Lourdes Lins, Lysia Araújo, Paulo Barreto, Renato Borghi, Ronaldo Daniel, Tereza Austregesilo, and Wolney de Assis (Enciclopédia, 2023g). Its premiere took place on "April 9th, 1962, on the Teatro Oficina's theatre-in-the-round-style. The company

managed to adapt this type of stage for the show thanks to the efforts of the set designer Flávio Império" (Oliveira, 2020, p. 96). According to a newspaper note in the *Correio Paulistano*, the production had reached a significant audience: "13,440 people have already watched *Um Bonde Chamado Desejo* by Tennessee Williams, which will be on stage for the 64th time today" (Correio, 1962, p. 3).

One month after the play's premiere, the Old Vic company from London would have a season at the Municipal Theater of São Paulo, as part of the Vivien Leigh [1913-1967] tour, internationally associated with *Blanche* due to the Hollywood film adaptation. Maria Fernanda and Renato Borghi [1937-] decided to take advantage of this conjunction and went to the Municipal Theater to invite the English actress. In Renato Borghi's memoirs, it is recorded that she accepted the invitation on the condition "that there be no one from the press" (Seixas, 2008, p. 84). On the appointed day, "a taxi stopped at the theater's door and Vivien got out accompanied by her *protégé* [...] Maria performed two scenes and Ronaldo gave a speech presenting the silver plaque" (Seixas, 2008, p. 84-86).

A noite do iguana [The night of the iguana]

Ten years after the inauguration of TBC, São Paulo already had its own theatre-in-the-round-style, Teatro Maria Della Costa, among other smaller venues that emerged. In 1958, two new additions to this renewal scheme: Oficina and the creation of the Teatro Cacilda Becker - TCB [Cacilda Becker Theater], in Rio de Janeiro, and established in São Paulo in 1960, remaining active until 1973, even after the actress's death. The name of the company renamed the Teatro Federação [Federação Theater], which became its headquarters.

A national premiere of *The night of the iguana*, titled *A noite do iguana* in the translation by Carlos Lage in partnership with Ligia Nunes, took place at TCB on March 5th, 1964, under the direction of Walmor Chagas, on the brink of the Civil-Military Coup (initiated on March 31st). This premiere, three years after the one on Broadway, preceded the film adaptation directed by John Huston. The cast of the production included Cacilda Becker as Hannah Jelkes, Walmor Chagas as Reverend Shannon, along with Ferreira Maia, Gaby Go, Julcir Rossi, Jurandyr Vianna, Karin Balz, Kleber Macedo, Leo Lopes, Lilian Lemmertz, Olga Navarro, N. N., Ricardo Zoucas, Ulrich Neise, and Yolanda Cardoso

(Prado, 2002, p. 287-288).

Conclusion

As we demonstrate in this article, the debut of Tennessee Williams' plays, between 1948 and 1964, is intrinsically linked to the renewal of theater in São Paulo. From the genesis of this movement that took hold of the theater scene in the capital of São Paulo State, beginning with the inauguration of TBC in 1948, to the TCB, with the formal interruption of this flow due to the coup established in 1964.

Based on data gathered from various academic and historiographical sources, Williams' productions, in this context, not only contributed to the establishment of new theaters but also to the consolidation of the careers of many key figures in the history of Brazilian theater. These include Augusto Boal, Cacilda Becker, Celia Helena, Cleyde Yáconis, José Celso Martinez Correa, José Renato, Nathália Timberg, Maria Della Costa, Maria Fernanda, Mauro Mendonça, Miriam Mehler, Nydia Licia, Renato Borghi, Sérgio Cardoso, Walmor Chagas, Ziembinski, among many others.

The presence of Williams' dramaturgy within the context of Brazilian theater added to the efforts of São Paulo's Theater scene, which rose from being subordinate to Rio de Janeiro's theatrical scene in the mid-1940s to a position of prominence in national theater. This evolution reached a point where, just over a decade after the first staging of a Tennessee Williams play in São Paulo, theater groups from the United States, such as The New York Repertory Theater and The Theatre Guild American Repertory Company, began to perform in São Paulo theaters in 1961, presenting scenes from the playwright's works.

We believe that the article can contribute to the historiographical research of Brazilian theater by providing information on the initial encounter of Tennessee Williams' dramaturgy with the theatrical scene of São Paulo, and, in most cases, as national premieres, influencing Brazilian theater as a whole. Furthermore, it broadens the perspective on the international reach of Williams' dramatic work, in this case, based on the impact of his work on the São Paulo and national theater scene.

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