From Print to Stage: Tennessee Williams (1911–1983)

Tennessee Williams is widely recognized as one of the greatest American playwrights—a writer beloved for enduring, oft-produced classics such as *The Glass Menagerie* (1944), *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), for which he received a Pulitzer Prize, and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955); all three plays were made into films. Although Williams’s collected papers can be found in libraries elsewhere, the Beinecke’s holdings include pristine first editions, scripts, pamphlets and clippings, representative samples of his short stories and essays, as well as correspondence with, for example, the actress Ruth Ford (sister of Charles Henri Ford, whose papers are also present in the Collection). Ford’s working copy of her understudy script for the role of Blanche DuBois in the original 1947 Broadway production of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, makes for an excellent association copy and print variant. Ford filled in for Jessica Tandy when the lead actress fell ill, and she maintained a close friendship with Williams over the course of many years.

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Carl Van Vechten, photograph of Ruth Ford (in a dress improvised from a sari by Pierre Balmain), November 9, 1947.


