

## Interview with James Joyce

We caught up with actor James Joyce to talk about his role as Tom in the Coliseum co-production of *The Glass Menagerie*.

### Firstly can you tell us about Tom, the character you play in *The Glass Menagerie*?

Tom is a young man, in his twenties, who lives in St Louis in the 1930s. He works in a warehouse, a job he hates and dreams of escaping his humdrum life to become a writer. However, he is tied to his mother and his partially disabled sister, who need him for financial support. Consequently he is frustrated by his life, craving adventure, which he dreams of one day finding.

### The character of Tom has a double role in *The Glass Menagerie*, also acting as a narrator sharing his recollections with the audience. How does this change your approach to the role?

Well, in a sense I have to view Tom from two angles: The Tom in the play, and the narrator Tom who is older and looks back on the story he is telling. Both have different attitudes and perspectives even though they are the same person. It doesn't change my approach as such, but I do have to consider the different circumstances that each Tom is faced with.

### *The Glass Menagerie* is set in St Louis in 1937. Can you tell us how you begin to create the accent for the character?

Research is key; the Internet has so many resources available, including people from St Louis on YouTube. We have had accent support from a voice coach, which has been very useful in getting the accent as specific as possible. However, I supplemented this by talking to some friends in the States too. This helped me get a general American colour to my accent, before working specifically with the voice coach.

### *The Glass Menagerie* is opening at the New Vic Theatre, which is an in the round performance space and is then transferring to the Coliseum, which is a traditional proscenium arch theatre. What challenges does this create for an actor and how will you tackle them?

Well, working in the round has its own challenges for all involved. It's key to make sure that all parts of the audience feel equally involved and that you can be heard throughout. The change to proscenium arch will be quite a shock, however, there will be time scheduled to go over various parts, which may need to be re-blocked for that type of auditorium. It's an important part of the actor's stagecraft to be aware of where the audience is and to play to them accordingly.

### What made you want to pursue a career as an actor?

I don't think I can do anything else. But some early exposure to great radio acting sealed the deal, especially all the silly voices from the *Goon Show* and *Navy Lark*.



Model box of *The Glass Menagerie* set at the New Vic Theatre

**Do you have a favourite character that you have played during your career?**

Honestly, this one..... However, I really enjoyed playing Lussurioso in *The Revengers Tragedy* at drama school.

**What was the last thing you saw on stage that had a big impact on you?**

Mark Rylance in anything recently: *Jerusalem* and *La Bete*. I also loved *After The Dance* at the National.

**What advice would you give anyone who wants to become an actor?**

Everyone always says that it is difficult profession, but you won't know how difficult until you do it. But if you feel brave enough then, firstly go to drama school if you can, it's invaluable. Secondly, go to see lots of theatre and watch really good actors. Stealing their tricks is fine. But if you're going to steal, only steal from the best.



James Joyce in *The Glass Menagerie* rehearsals at the New Vic

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*The Glass Menagerie* opens runs the Oldham Coliseum Theatre from 20 October – 5 November. To book your tickets or for more information call 0161 624 2829 or visit [www.coliseum.org.uk](http://www.coliseum.org.uk).

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## Biography

**James Joyce – Tom.**

**Theatre credits include:**

*The Thunderbolt* (Orange Tree), *Carrie's War* (Apollo), *Graceland - 24 Hour Plays* (Old Vic), *Lotty's War* (Greenwich Playhouse), *Macbeth* (English Theatre Company), *Tunes Of Glory* (Middle Ground Theatre- national tour), *Tea and Sympathy* and *Young Woodley* (Finborough), *Faustus* (Etcetera), *Underground* (Tristan Bates), *Parentheses* (King's Head), *Fragments* (Old Red Lion) and *The Honest Whore - William Poel Festival* (Shakespeare's Globe).

**Radio credits include:**

*In Praise of Love*, *The Landlady*, *Playing for his Life*, *Scenes from Provincial Life*, *Soldiers' Loves* and *Soldiers' Lives* (BBC Radio Four); *The Country Wife* (BBC Radio Three).

**Film credits include:**

*The Destiny Of Britain* and *Hold Your Breath*.

James trained at LAMDA.

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