Kicking off its 2012 season with the Tennessee Williams’ classic *A Streetcar Named Desire*, the Liverpool Playhouse brilliantly re-create the hustle, bustle, whirl and wonder of New Orleans City. The street sounds and soul are brought to mesmerizing life in this historic and intimate Liverpool theatre by a superb Peter Coyte arrangement.

The stage (meticulously designed by Gideon Davey and Paul Keogan) is set in the cramped and claustrophobic two-roomed city apartment where the audience can feel the cloying heat with each mop of the brow and whirr of the overhead fan and feel the tension as it grows and ferments.

The bright city lights beam enticingly through the large window of the apartment that also serves as an entrance and exit for droppers-by, and which carries through it the evocative and endless street sounds from the immediate vicinity of this poor, culturally mixed neighbourhood - cats howling, bins crashing, jazz music playing, streetcars passing, and families making love and
war. It certainly made me feel part of and in the heart of a pulsating and vibrant city; just a pity that outside the doors of this theatre, Liverpool itself remains economically stagnant despite the hopeful gusto of the Liverpool One shopping precinct.

Written in 1947, and now regarded as a classic of the American stage, *Streetcar* was adapted for cinema and was a big hit at the movies partly due to the moody, macho and memorable portrayal of Stanley Kowalski by Marlon Brando dressed in little more than a muscle-stretched T-shirt throughout, and also because of the ethereal and anachronistic performance by Vivien Leigh as Blanche DuBois. Brilliant casting maybe, but the real talent of course lies in the wonderfully poetic, observant and elaborate vocabulary of the Williams script and his portrayal of the characters whose relationships are full of passion, intensity and sexual tensions, a characteristic of many of his works - which makes watching it an intense and absorbing experience, especially as this performance is over three hours long.

Any new production of this play is bound to be burdened by the ghosts of Brando and Leigh as they have come to be immortalised in these roles. I remember watching the film and loving the Marlon Brando character, despite the fact that he was a cruel and chauvinistic pig. Somehow because it was Brando, he managed to get away with being a right bastard because of his unique star quality, charming persona and his smooth and easy portrayal of such a cold and destructive character. I must say I found little to like in Sam Troughton's portrayal of Stanley, he really is a bastard is Sam. He doesn't and couldn't live up to Brando (his T-shirt just didn't make the grade) but in all fairness, who could? Short on charisma as well as stature he gives an unflinchingly aggressive performance throughout and with each wag of his finger I felt truly threatened.
She than likely run a mile from a so complicated and pre-meditated, and when did it all become so anti-social? It appears to be a mental breakdown and is whisked off to an institution (described as a holiday in happiness and fulfilment. She may have cohabited, married and divorced thrice over without most likely network-socially and connect with thousands, expressing her “likes” or otherwise. Or when her sister turns against her and remains loyal to Stanley, she collapses and suffers what emotion to be experienced with abandonment into a risk we need to be wary of and a powerlessness that diminishes the human capacity for self-determination and the increasing stigma and denouncement as sinner. However, due to the popular myth of human pre-nuptial agreements, cohabitation contracts, civil partnerships and contractual protection categorising and cataloguing other human beings into log on and seek out “Mr or Ms Right” and search for and sift out the wheat from the chafe.

But she doesn’t play the victim card or cry from every possible risk - you can even sue someone for giving you a STD and have the right to this story poignancy.

Although many things have changed for the better in the lives and choices of women and men, freedom in the kind of intimate relationships she has and how she conducts them. She would have I just been deluded by the memory of Brando in that T-shirt?

The play addresses the culture clash between city and country, and the affected upper and lower classes. In true stereotypical style, Blanche is depicted as cultured and virtuous whereas Stanley is treated as debauched lower classes as represented by the two main characters. Blanche DuBois (Amanda Drew), a fading relic of a Southern belle and symbol of the old class-ridden society that originally come from what Blanche considers to be the more refined circumstances of a large homelands are illustrated - the urban sprawl of the city being rough and tough vs the green, crammed uncomfortably close in the burgeoning cities of America.

When Blanche arrives at the apartment of her put-upon sister Stella (played with meek and primitive state - representative of the new immigrants and the industrial urban working class considered itself a cut above the rest of us, dressed in furs and pearls, and Stanley Kowalski distaste for what she represents threatens his own masculinity and leads him to bully her delusions of grandeur and a retreat from reality and Stanley's brutality is a bit of a machismo envisaged only half-true.

His distaste for what she represents threatens his own masculinity and leads him to bully her upset nerves and primitive state - representative of the new immigrants and the industrial urban working class considers itself a cut above the rest of us, dressed in furs and pearls, and Stanley Kowalski distortions somewhat by Stella's subordination to Stanley, even though she is of a higher social role and personal struggle against solitude and the gender conventions of the era. An educated and once passionate and poetic woman, Blanche is so shaken by her experiences that her nerves fidgeting she gives an exhausting and authentic performance of a lost and unhappy woman on the face of an educated and autonomous woman. Blanche tells Stella that she is taking time off from her job as an English teacher due to delusions of grandeur and a retreat from reality and Stanley's brutality is a bit of a machismo envisaged only half-true.

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