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 Troughtons 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.
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 risk and unpredictability of meeting someone in person. Instead of getting out there and having along with an increasing number, be registered with an on-line dating agency in search of ask them to get tested before signing up to commitment of some type. It's enough to drive any log on and seek out “Mr or Ms Right” and search for and sift out the wheat from the chafe, her resilience in the face of such lack of compassion and understanding. It is her valiant battle 1940's. We now live in a risk averse society where from the comfort of our own homes we can designed strategies for managing a lawful, healthy and productive relationship - how did it all get stigma and denouncement as sinner. However, due to the popular myth of human Love or hate Blanche for her prejudices, coquettish and wilful character, it is hard not to admire disability benefits.

of desire; a desire to read the original play, as so much of the script was poetic, observant and abandoning of the likes of Blanche DuBois has been replaced by documented and dismally categorising and cataloguing other human beings into Manly-man-Stan any time - at least they were straight-forward, impulsive and interesting, or man's cruelty and the stuff of real human tragedy. An emotion to be experienced with abandonment into a risk we need to be wary of and a Blanche into the arms of a professional therapist or a month in re-hab. The passionate couch of a therapist, labelled an addict and be dependent on a regular therapy session and have I just been deluded by the memory of Brando in that T-shirt?

When her sister turns against her and remains loyal to Stanley, she collapses and suffers what

This production is long, intense and benefits enormously from the wonderful Hollywood-like performance of Amanda Drew as Blanche, is well supported by a small cast of local actors, and compared to its modern day equivalent of a “Cab to a Counsellor”! Gimme Bonkers Blanche and contrary.