Kicking off its 2012 season with the Tennessee Williams’ classic *A Streetcar Named Desire*, the Liverpool Playhouse brilliantly re-create the hustle, bustle, swirl 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.
Ironic as it may seem given that women now have more choices, equality and independence, man's cruelty and the stuff of real human tragedy.

Manly-man-Stan any time - at least they were straight-forward, impulsive and interesting, or Love or hate Blanche for her prejudices, coquettish and wilful character, it is hard not to admire and a wider range of acceptable couplings, we seem to be less tolerant of any behaviour we compared to its modern day equivalent of a "Cab to a Counsellor"! Gimme Bonkers Blanche and a sparse but well thought out set and complimentary soundtrack. I was left with a different kind of desire; a desire to read the original play, as so much of the script was poetic, observant and

treatment of the likes of Blanche DuBois has been replaced by documented and dismally

tendency to turn to professionals for help with "problems" she might also be a regular on the contrary.

Bound by social norms?), she is not fearful of men or of being intimate with them – on the contrary.

But she doesn't play the victim card or cry for compassion, acetate alone is not the answer, but she is not as fragile as some think, and a resilient and independent woman who can manage to stay upright and sane for longer than most. Unlike her modern day sisters who

alongside the decline in traditional marriage we have a range of carefully calculated options; along with an increasing number, be registered with an on-line dating agency in search of

have I just been deluded by the memory of Brando in that T-shirt?

relationships these days seem to be one area that is far more complicated than back in the

pre-nuptial agreements, cohabitation contracts, civil partnerships and contractual protection

appears to be a mental breakdown and is whisked off to an institution (described as a holiday in

of desire; a desire to read the original play, as so much of the script was poetic, observant and

and primitive state - representative of the new immigrants and the industrial urban working class

were bound by social convention to behave in particular and restrictive ways, and when such

behaviour), when in fact she has been sacked for having an affair with a student - one of many

audience. But this story is set in New Orleans in the 1940's when lustful and passionate women

treatable addiction. She wasn't ill, Blanche was just a "slut".

In true stereotypical style, Blanche is depicted as cultured and virtuous whereas Stanley is
distorted somewhat by Stella's subordination to Stanley, even though she is of a higher social

husband having a homosexual tryst. Blanche and her affairs would by today's standards make

action was seen as un-womanly and unbecoming in a "lady" of her class, rather than as a

originally come from what Blanche considers to be the more refined circumstances of a large

touching sweetness by the well-cast Leanne Best) and brother-in-law Stanley, she is shocked

finally has no strength left with which to wrestle.

fidgeting she gives an exhausting and authentic performance of a lost and unhappy woman on

Stella adores her husband and is aroused by his animal-like primal behaviour which she finds

Blanche and Stanley clash constantly – Blanche is sniffy about Stanley, calls him primitive,

and primitive state - representative of the new immigrants and the industrial urban working class

gentle and verdant countryside being somehow more virtuous - is a description many opponents

such expressive fervour, especially from women.

The reference to the streetcar named "Desire" is symbolic. Blanche not only has to travel on an

and primitive state - representative of the new immigrants and the industrial urban working class

behaviour), when in fact she has been sacked for having an affair with a student - one of many

audience. But this story is set in New Orleans in the 1940's when lustful and passionate women

treatable addiction. She wasn't ill, Blanche was just a "slut".

In true stereotypical style, Blanche is depicted as cultured and virtuous whereas Stanley is
distorted somewhat by Stella's subordination to Stanley, even though she is of a higher social

husband having a homosexual tryst. Blanche and her affairs would by today's standards make

action was seen as un-womanly and unbecoming in a "lady" of her class, rather than as a

originally come from what Blanche considers to be the more refined circumstances of a large

touching sweetness by the well-cast Leanne Best) and brother-in-law Stanley, she is shocked

finally has no strength left with which to wrestle.

fidgeting she gives an exhausting and authentic performance of a lost and unhappy woman on

Stella adores her husband and is aroused by his animal-like primal behaviour which she finds

Blanche and Stanley clash constantly – Blanche is sniffy about Stanley, calls him primitive,

and primitive state - representative of the new immigrants and the industrial urban working class

gentle and verdant countryside being somehow more virtuous - is a description many opponents

such expressive fervour, especially from women.

The reference to the streetcar named "Desire" is symbolic. Blanche not only has to travel on an

and primitive state - representative of the new immigrants and the industrial urban working class

behaviour), when in fact she has been sacked for having an affair with a student - one of many

audience. But this story is set in New Orleans in the 1940's when lustful and passionate women

treatable addiction. She wasn't ill, Blanche was just a "slut".

In true stereotypical style, Blanche is depicted as cultured and virtuous whereas Stanley is
distorted somewhat by Stella's subordination to Stanley, even though she is of a higher social

husband having a homosexual tryst. Blanche and her affairs would by today's standards make

action was seen as un-womanly and unbecoming in a "lady" of her class, rather than as a

originally come from what Blanche considers to be the more refined circumstances of a large

touching sweetness by the well-cast Leanne Best) and brother-in-law Stanley, she is shocked

finally has no strength left with which to wrestle.

fidgeting she gives an exhausting and authentic performance of a lost and unhappy woman on

Stella adores her husband and is aroused by his animal-like primal behaviour which she finds

Blanche and Stanley clash constantly – Blanche is sniffy about Stanley, calls him primitive,

and primitive state - representative of the new immigrants and the industrial urban working class

gentle and verdant countryside being somehow more virtuous - is a description many opponents

such expressive fervour, especially from women.

The reference to the streetcar named "Desire" is symbolic. Blanche not only has to travel on an

and primitive state - representative of the new immigrants and the industrial urban working class

behaviour), when in fact she has been sacked for having an affair with a student - one of many

audience. But this story is set in New Orleans in the 1940's when lustful and passionate women

treatable addiction. She wasn't ill, Blanche was just a "slut".

In true stereotypical style, Blanche is depicted as cultured and virtuous whereas Stanley is
distorted somewhat by Stella's subordination to Stanley, even though she is of a higher social

husband having a homosexual tryst. Blanche and her affairs would by today's standards make

action was seen as un-womanly and unbecoming in a "lady" of her class, rather than as a

originally come from what Blanche considers to be the more refined circumstances of a large

touching sweetness by the well-cast Leanne Best) and brother-in-law Stanley, she is shocked

finally has no strength left with which to wrestle.

fidgeting she gives an exhausting and authentic performance of a lost and unhappy woman on

Stella adores her husband and is aroused by his animal-like primal behaviour which she finds

Blanche and Stanley clash constantly – Blanche is sniffy about Stanley, calls him primitive,