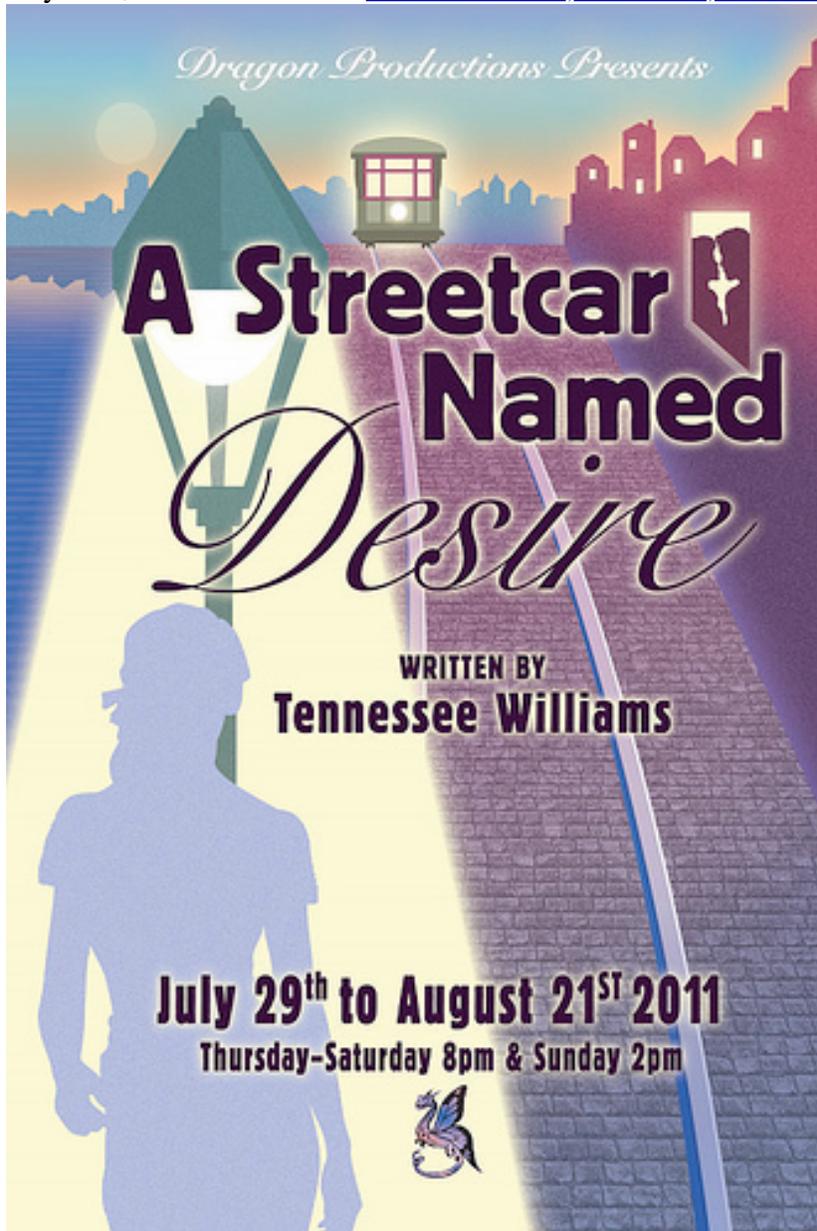


# Lust, Betrayal, and A Streetcar Named Desire

By [Kerry Smith](#)

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Friday night I had the pleasure of seeing Tennessee Williams' iconic classic, *A Streetcar Named Desire* at [Dragon Productions Theatre Company](#) in Palo Alto. Streetcar won Tennessee Williams a Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1947.

In this production, director Jeanie K. Smith chose to focus on Blanche's story as opposed to Stanley's as many other renditions have. We follow Blanche DuBois who is an aging Southern Belle trying to run away from her shameful past in Mississippi. When she moves to New Orleans to live with her sister, Stella, and

brother-in-law, Stanley, Blanche clashes with their rough, industrial lives and learns that she can run but she cannot escape trouble.

I went into the theatre having never seen a staged production of the show. I saw the movie years ago, but tried not to compare what I was seeing on stage in front of me with what little I remembered from the movie. It's difficult not to compare if you've seen other versions of this play. Have you ever seen this play in a small theatre that seats 42 audience members?

Jeanie had a challenge; how do you tell such a big story in such a small space? Her answer? Simplicity. Keep the set minimal and let the actors tell the story. This worked wonderfully because we were able to be right there with the characters and feel their emotions, see every layer, every nuance and not be distracted by a busy set. And the actors did a fantastic job of telling the story.

Blanche DuBois is a very complex character. She puts on airs and insults her sister's way of living, all the while taking one shot of whiskey after the next and obviously not being able to deal with whatever she is escaping. Meredith Hagedorn, who plays Blanche, creates a somewhat likeable character who you just can't seem to take your eyes off of, arrogant and an emotional wreck, or not. Meredith sucks you into Blanche's story and makes it easy to feel pity for her and to want everything to work in her favor.

Andrew Harkins is perfect as the rough and crude Stanley Kowalski. I wasn't sure the momentum of the scene leading up to the famous "Stella" line was enough to put him in the emotional state of someone who is ashamed of what he's done and is madly and deeply in love with the woman he did it to, but he did. He dropped to his knees, sobbing, and the whole audience felt the intensity.

Katie Anderson is brilliant as Stella Kowalski. She plays a very calm Stella. Her calm nature gives the audience someone to turn to during times of chaos. She is nurturing, understanding, and lovable.

Also lovable is Mitch, played by Troy Johnson, Stanley's friend who dates Blanche. Troy creates an extremely likable character in Mitch. Sweet and innocent, like a big teddy bear.

The rest of the cast was quite talented as well: Charles McKeithan, Monica Colletti, Phillip Raupach, and Mary Lou Torre.

This production is a definite must see!

[A Streetcar Named Desire](#)

July 29 – August 21, 2011

[Dragon Productions Theatre Company](#)