

The AU Review: A Streetcar Named Desire – *La Boite Roundhouse Theatre*, Brisbane (performances until November 12th)

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A Streetcar Named Desire is to Tennessee Williams like Hamlet is to Shakespeare. It's a kneejerk reaction of thought that comes to your mind when you think of the particular playwright. La Boite is known for taking the classics and bridging them to the present. Their production of Williams other famous work, *The Glass Menagerie*, was likewise a success. But just how exactly should you expect to see *Desire's* success manifest itself?

Before a word is spoken, not even a breath drawn you encounter the stage. Andrew Mills and Timothy Mackie are to credit for this. The stage has alternating depths, lopsided gangways and rooms hovering in empty dark space. It drops and turns, and plunges again like staring down a dark hallway 5 shots of whiskey deep.

Williams writes from a time and place that is certainly not a similar sound to our Australian speech. The accents amongst the cast are a little inconsistent at times but in a sense it feels as if Williams time is so distant from us now its forgivable to waver a little – like ghosts or a projection on smoke. They're hard to connect to a distant past for so long without being drained.

Before we discuss the main cast though we have to applaud Kristal West and Parmis Rose. Both musically and in character they absolutely enveloped the stage with their presence.

Then of course there's Blanche played by Bridie Carter. Her character is a mixture of problems that manifest more of a catalyst for drama than a person but Carter does this so well. If we're not laughing at her wilting remarks we're fearful for her.

The hardest part is even though you know what's about to happen the cast all manage to shock you anyway, Stanley and Stella played by Travis McMahon and Ngoc Phan included. It's sickening, like watching two cars speeding at each other playing Chicken. You hope one of them will veer off even though you know the drivers have too much pride to do such a thing and inevitably go colliding into a haphazard wreckage curled in amongst one another anyway.

As always, La Boite appreciate what they're gifted, and being gifted with this text for a production is no different. Don't depend on the kindness of strangers – buy yourself a ticket before the season ends.