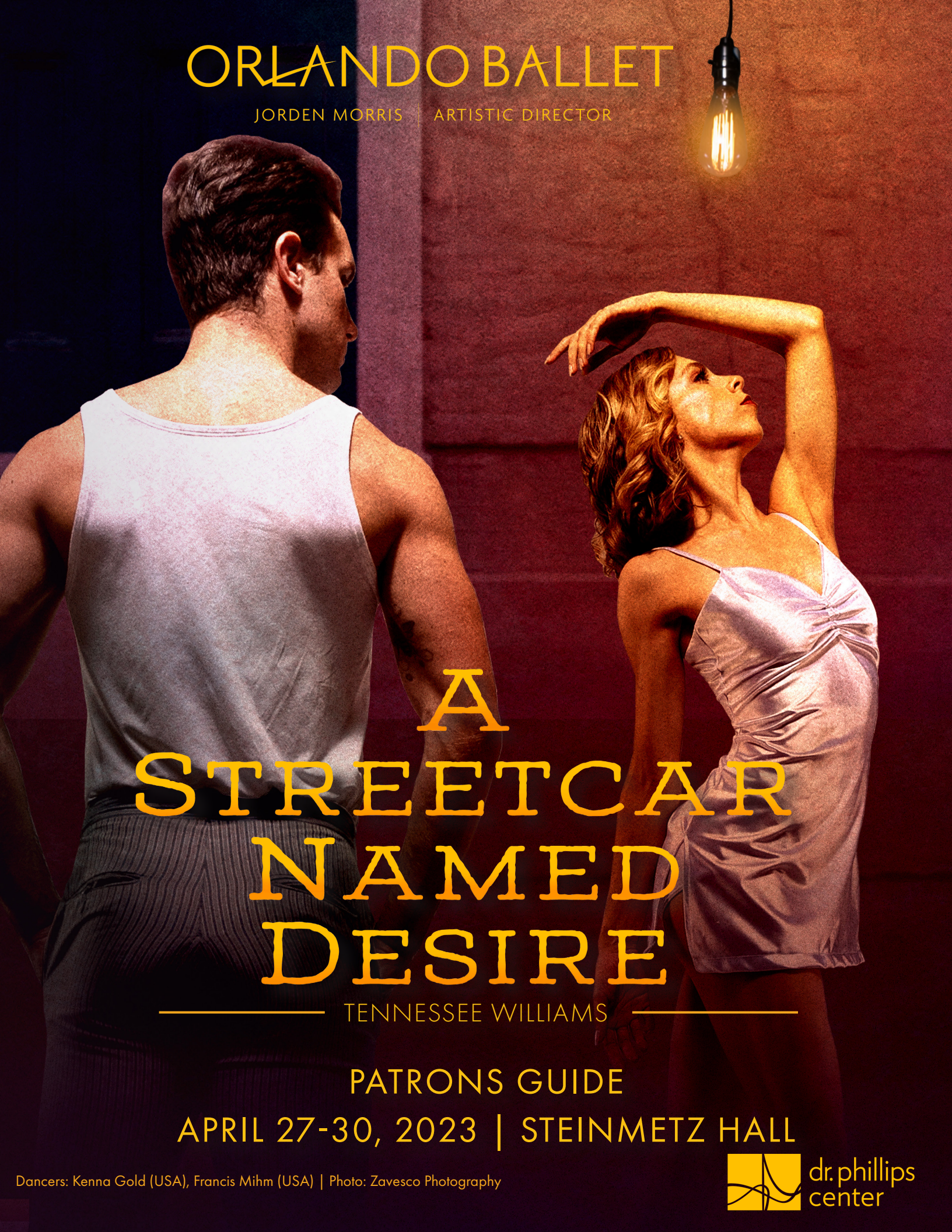


ORLANDO BALLET

JORDEN MORRIS | ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

— TENNESSEE WILLIAMS —

PATRONS GUIDE

APRIL 27-30, 2023 | STEINMETZ HALL

Dancers: Kenna Gold (USA), Francis Mihm (USA) | Photo: Zavesco Photography



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About Orlando Ballet

Founded in 1974, Orlando Ballet is Central Florida's only fully residential professional ballet company. Orlando Ballet produces year-round main stage productions at the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts and Harriett's Orlando Ballet Centre, featuring timeless masterpieces and innovative contemporary world premieres, achieving the highest level of professionalism and artistic excellence. Orlando Ballet promotes dance education through community enrichment programs, performance lecture demonstrations, the renowned Orlando Ballet School, and Orlando Ballet II, a second pre-professional company to train and support dancers as they approach the start of their dance careers. For information about Orlando Ballet, please visit our website at OrlandoBallet.org.



A Streetcar Named Desire is based on the original play by Tennessee Williams, and presented through special arrangement with The University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee.

A Streetcar Named Desire was commissioned by Scottish Ballet. World Premiere April 11, 2012, Theatre Royal Glasgow. ([Scottish Ballet](#))

Running time: Estimated 2 hours including one 20 minute intermission.

Content warning: Please note this production includes themes of suicide, addiction, and domestic and sexual violence. For more information, please refer to the synopsis. Recommended 14+.

Majority of text & photography content was supplied by Scottish Ballet.

Key Facts - Creating Movement

Direction: Nancy Meckler

Nancy was Artistic Director for Shared Experience Theatre between 1989 and 2011, specializing in directing classic texts including *Anna Karenina*, *The Bacchae*, *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, and *The Mill on the Floss*. These works fused the well-loved texts with new, exciting movement, often calling on actors to physicalize their emotions, motivations and desires, rather than relying on the words from the script. During rehearsals, Nancy worked closely with the dancers to develop the story from the text, but focused on new ways that ballet could tell the tale, rather than merely imitating previously explored art-forms.



Choreography: Annabelle Lopez Ochoa

Annabelle is an award-winning and sought-after choreographer that has created works for more than 70 dance companies around the world. A versatile choreographer, Lopez Ochoa creates regularly within the dance field but also for theatre, opera, and musical theatre. Her wide-ranging body of work includes short conceptual pieces, full-length narratives, and dance films. The Colombian-Belgian Lopez Ochoa completed her dance education at the Royal Ballet School of Antwerp. After a 12-year long career in a number of European dance companies Annabelle decided in 2003 to focus solely on choreography. That same year she was hailed as the “rising star of the Dutch dance scene” (NRC newspaper) and only 7 years later the Temecula Performing Arts Examiner wrote; “Ochoa is truly a masterful choreographer with an edge for what dance can

and should be in this constantly changing industry”. She has been creating new works and new forms ever since and is also frequently invited to teach.

Key Facts - Creating Music

Peter Salem

Peter Salem has worked with Helen Pickett on two full-length dance pieces – Camino Real for Atlanta Ballet and the award-winning *The Crucible* for Scottish Ballet, which opened the dance programme of the Edinburgh International Festival in 2019. He has composed music for four other contemporary ballets: *A Streetcar Named Desire* for Scottish Ballet, *Broken Wings* for English National Ballet, *Frida* for Dutch national Ballet, and *The Little Prince* for Ballet X – with choreographer Annabelle Lopez Ochoa.

Salem's media work is also internationally renowned, principally his music for *Call the Midwife* (BBC) as well as other high-profile productions including the dramas *Cider With Rosie*, *Five Daughters*, *Great Expectations* (BBC) and documentaries including Francesco's Venice and Simon Schama's *The Power of Art* (BBC2).

His extensive theatre work includes many scores for productions by the Royal Shakespeare Company, The Royal National Theatre and Shared Experience Theatre.



Creating a mood: *The Moth*

The opening of the ballet shows Blanche as a fragile moth, transfixed by a light bulb. Salem mirrors this tension between the electric bulb and the trembling moth's wings by contrasting a static, atmospheric background with short fluttering tremolo on the viola. This contrast between live music and recorded sound creates a tense, pressured atmosphere throughout the ballet, drawing the audience into the mood of the characters and the piece.

Setting the scene: *New Orleans Jazz*

When we first visit the streets of New Orleans, there is a feeling of liveliness, activity, and freedom in the movement. Salem uses recognizable jazz riffs, instrumentation and snippets of songs to create a musical backdrop and historical context for this piece, bringing us into the grittier reality of New Orleans after the lyrical, waltzing music of *Belle Reve*, the Dubois family home.

Moving the plot: *Trams and Streetcars*

During Blanche's Streetcar ride, Salem uses repeated ostinato rhythms with a shifting accent to create a feeling of drive and progression: the pulse literally drives the plot onwards. At different points in the ballet Salem uses these paced overlaid rhythms when the plot is moving forward or a looser free rhythm to allow space to delve deeper into a mood or image.

Exploring the characters: *Stella Dubois/Kowalski*

Stella comes from the same waltzing beginnings as Blanche, but once in New Orleans she is accompanied by more jazzy instruments and melodies; a muted trumpet, using sliding notes and a persistent, complex piano riff. These character-inspired musical themes are brought back with increasing intensity as Stella is drawn further into the jazzy, sensual world of New Orleans.

Key Facts - Creating Design

Costumes & Set: Niki Turner

Niki Turner trained in Theatre Design and has worked extensively in design for opera and theatre, also traveling the world researching street festivals, and curating her own exhibition in The Orangery, Gunnersbury Park, London.

In her theatre work, she has collaborated many times with Nancy Meckler, often creating bold, simple designs based on shifting colors and striking contrasts. In *A Streetcar Named Desire*, the costumes often reflect the emotional state of the characters; Stella and Blanche both deepening their palates from light pastels at the start, to deep, rich, contrasting colors by the end. The staging is sparse and striking; the dancers themselves create set and scenery using discarded boxes made from the crumbling remains of Belle Reve. The ballet has an industrial, minimalist look, to represent the harsh reality of life in New Orleans, in contrast to the lavish costumes and setting of Blanche's fantasies.



Lighting Design: Tim Mitchell

Tim is a prolific theatre and ballet lighting designer, and has worked with companies throughout Britain, as well as further afield in Iceland, Korea and America. The lighting for *A Streetcar Named Desire* was driven by Niki Turner's original concept of bare light bulbs used to create different spaces on the stage, and the ballet being dark and atmospheric, with any moments of light coming when Blanche is lost in fantasy, Tim builds on these original ideas, saying 'Lighting is reactive not proactive'; his concepts respond to the input from the director/designer, enhancing what they have already created. Just as Niki uses color to tell the story, Tim uses deep, rich purples and reds to create tension and illusion, contrasting with bright whites to represent moments of clarity or realism.



Photo: Scottish Ballet

Synopsis | Act 1

Belle Reve

Blanche, a beautiful young girl with her life ahead of her, meets and falls in love with Alan. At their wedding, Alan briefly meets a young man and begins a secret affair. When Blanche comes upon the two men, she is upset and rejects Alan. In despair, he shoots himself, dying in Blanche's arms.

Stella Leaves Home

Stella, Blanche's younger sister, leaves Belle Reve to make her way in the world, leaving Blanche alone with the family and their financial problems. The family home is lost and Blanche moves to a hotel. She is haunted by the guilt of Alan's death, seeking comfort in alcohol, and the arms of strangers. She is discovered seducing a young boy and forced to leave.

New Orleans

In New Orleans, Stella has met and fallen in love with **Stanley Kowalski**, a factory worker. Blanche travels to her sister in New Orleans, meeting up with them at the bowling alley and at their apartment. Stanley proudly tells her they are expecting a baby.

The Poker Game

Stanley's friends gather for their poker night; Stella and Blanche go out for the evening. Blanche drinks heavily and is haunted by an image of Alan. Shaken, they walk home, meeting a Mexican flower seller selling flowers for the dead.

Back at the apartment Stanley's poker game is in full swing. Blanche meets his friend **Mitch**, a shy man, non confident with women and unmarried, and Blanche flirts with him. When she invites Mitch to dance, Stanley becomes enraged at the interruption and Stella and Stanley argue. Stanley attacks his wife, and the two women run out onto the street. Full of remorse, Stanley calls out to Stella who, unable to resist her desire for him, returns.



Photo: Andy Ross

Synopsis | Act 2

The Next Morning

All is forgiven between Stanley and Stella, but Blanche sees him as a monster and is desperate to get Stella away. Stanley overhears Blanche trying to turn his wife against him, but Stella leaps into his arms. Blanche feels isolated and imagines she is surrounded by “desire”, she turns, as always, to drink.

Blanche & Mitch

Mitch arrives to take Blanche on a date and we see their courtship over the summer. Blanche continues to put up a front of innocence and refuses Mitch any intimacy beyond a goodnight kiss.

The Letter

Time has passed, and Stella is heavily pregnant. Stanley arrives home with a letter telling him of Blanche’s promiscuous past. He leaves with the letter, and Blanche imagines it is being seen by everyone in town, including Mitch. Mitch arrives; he has the letter and tries to force himself on Blanche before leaving in disgust. Alone, she dances her vulnerability as a moth.

Blanche Retreats into Fantasy

Blanche is brought back to reality by the arrival of a newspaper delivery boy. She tries to seduce the boy, but is haunted by figures from the past. She retreats into fantasy, dressing up in a ball dress and imagining she is the star attraction in her own life. She is once again brought back to reality when Stanley appears. Terrified to be alone with him, she defends herself with a broken bottle, but Stanley takes her by force.

Ending

Some days later we see Blanche being prepared for a trip to the mental hospital where Stanley has had her committed. When the doctor arrives, Stella has to choose where her loyalty lies, and decides to stay with Stanley. As Blanche leaves the apartment, she imagines the doctor is a friend and she is in a field of flowers for the dead.



Photo: Scottish Ballet

Key Themes - Motifs

The Moth

When Tennessee Williams began writing his play *A Streetcar Named Desire* he thought of calling it *The Moth*. Our first image takes its inspiration from this title when we see a young girl, Blanche, dancing under a bare light bulb. She is a delicate creature fluttering towards the light, a light which attracts but which can also burn: a light which represents desire.

Later in the ballet, when Blanche feels she has lost every chance for survival, she dances her youthful vulnerability as a moth.



Photo: Scottish Ballet

Desire vs Death

Over time, Blanche has to deal with many deaths and losses, including her parents, the family home Belle Reve, the loss of her young husband, and the distancing of her little sister and Mitch. Throughout the ballet, whenever Blanche feels isolated, she imagines herself surrounded by 'desire' in the form of couples locked in passionate embrace, or 'death' in the image of her husband Alan or the Mexican flower seller, who chants "flores para los muertos".



Photo: Scottish Ballet

Key Themes - Motifs

Fantasy vs Reality

Blanche's life in Belle Reve sets us up for a beautiful fantasy crumbling to reveal a harsher reality. Her wedding is elegant and genteel even though the once wealthy family is soon to lose its home due to mounting debt incurred through gambling and profligate spending. Fantasy and reality continue to collide as Blanche is haunted by the image of Alan and the night of his death. Blanche drinks heavily when Mitch abandons her, dressing up in an old ball dress and imagining she is the star attraction in her own life. As she leaves the apartment with the Doctor, she fantasizes that the doctor is a friend and she is in a field of flowers, the flowers for the dead we saw her buy in the street from the Mexican Flower Seller.



Photo: Scottish Ballet

Individual vs Society

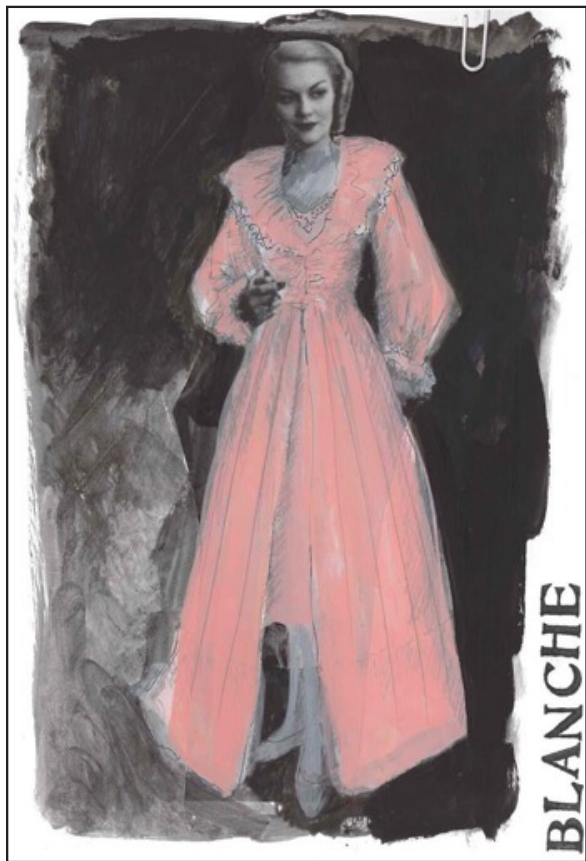
The corps de ballet dance as a chorus: a bridge between the audience and Blanche. They provide a counter-point to Blanche's loneliness by moving as one body, often embodying the emotions or judgments of outside society.

In turn, they become Blanche's dying family, the jazz-infused street people of New Orleans, the whispering, disapproving inhabitants of Blanche's hometown, couples intoxicated with desire, other lonely souls drawn to desire like moths to a flame, the inhabitants of Blanche's fantasies and the ghosts of the dead haunting her nightmares.



Photo: Scottish Ballet

Key Characters & Quotes



Blanche Dubois - The Moth

A beautiful young girl from a privileged, but declining family in the America South. Blanche begins her life in the family home Belle Reve, but her moth-like fragility means she is ill prepared for the hardships that befall her and she turns to drink and fantasy. She longs for a safe haven, and protection from the world's harshness, but can see no way to find this unless she can find her husband.



Blanche Dubois - The Moth

'Soft people have got to shimmer and glow... and put a - paper lantern over the lights... It isn't enough to be soft. You've got to be soft and attractive. And I - I'm faking now! I don't know how much longer I can turn the trick.'

- Blanche: Scene 5

Key Characters & Quotes



Alan - Blanche's Husband

Alan is a gentle and sensitive young man. At his wedding to Blanche, Alan briefly meets a young man and finds he is attracted to him. Alan is clearly uncertain about his sexuality and although he loves his wife, soon begins a secret affair. He reappears throughout the ballet, haunting Blanche's dreams and drunken nightmares.

'There was something different about the boy, a nervousness, a softness and tenderness which wasn't like a man, although he wasn't the least bit effeminate looking - still - that thing was there.... He came to me for help... He was in the quicksands and clutching at me - but I wasn't holding him out, I was slipping in with him'

- Blanche: Scene 6

Stella Dubois - Blanche's Younger Sister

Stella leaves the family home for New Orleans, where she meets and falls passionately in love with Stanley, a factory worker. Unable to resist her desire for Stanley and his need for her, Stella forgives him for his violent nature again and again. Eventually Stella has to choose whether to protect Blanche or to be loyal to Stanley - but in the end she is as much a slave to her desires as Blanche.

'But there are things that happen between a man and a woman in the dark-that sort of make everything else seem-unimportant.'

- Scene 4



Key Characters & Quotes



Stanley Kowalski - Stella's Husband

Stanley is fiercely territorial and resents Blanche's presence in his home; he feels that Blanche looks down on him and thinks him common. Stanley has a violent temper and attacks his wife when drunk, but is full of remorse afterwards; his desire for Stella outweighs his brutality.

'He acts like an animal has an animal's habits! Eats like one moves like one talks like one! There's even something sub-human-something not quite to the stage of humanity yet! Yes something - ape like about him like one of those pictures I've seen in - anthropological studies. Thousands and thousands of years have passed him right by, and there he is - Stanley Kowalski - survivor of the Stone Age! Bearing the raw meat home from the kill in the jungle! And you - you here - waiting for him! Maybe he'll strike you or maybe grunt and kiss you! That is, if kisses have been discovered yet!'

- Blanche: Scene 4

Harold Mitchell (Mitch) - Friend of Stanley

Mitch is a shy man non confident with women and unmarried. In the early fifties, few women could imagine survival or happiness without being married. Sensing that Mitch is her only chance, Blanche is desperate to convince him that she is still young and innocent. He is entranced by Blanche and believes her facade of a young southern belle.

'You need somebody. And I need somebody, too. Could it be - you and me, Blanche?'

- Mitch: Scene 4





Dancers: Francis Milhm & Kenna Gold | Photo: Zavesco Photography

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