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ANNA VLACH

## A classic way to bid farewell

A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE  
BAKEHOUSE THEATRE COMPANY  
BAKEHOUSE THEATRE

**T**HIS wrenching production of the Tennessee Williams classic, rooted securely in Greek tragedy, is as mesmerising as a car crash.

We witness and can do nothing. Director Michael Baldwin knows when to let his actors have their heads. A door is left ajar. Brendan Fitzgerald's playing can be heard. This is New Orleans, home of music and natural disasters. Stephen Dean fills the space with evocative light and sound. The play's the thing.

Blanche DuBois has lost her home, her husband and her mind. She embodies the virgin/whore dichotomy. Carried by desire she arrives at the Elysian Fields, home of heroes. Her sister Stella welcomes her but there's a monster in those fields, Stanley Kowalski, ex army, working class and a casual rapist.

Melanie Munt goes beyond the clichés of the faded southern belle in a pitch perfect incarnation. Paul Westbrook, insolently muscular, stalks her like a beast. He sweats sexuality and can howl "Stella" to wake the dead.

Around this couple, Justina Ward is a sympathetic Stella, accepting her husband's violent rages for the lovemaking that follows. Upstairs, Susan Cilento as Eunice has a much better, though frequently volcanic, relation with Steve, Nathan Brown.

Into this world wanders a young man, Matthew Adams, totally bewildered as Blanche's potential prey. Marc Clement is Mitch, tender, caring, who falls for Blanche and is the saddest victim of her delusions.

Magically, the doctor and nurse who come to take Blanche into asylum are played by Peter Green and Pamela Munt. They have guarded the Bakehouse for more than 20 years. They lead the tragic heroine out of the building, as if leading the theatre of emotion and illusion to another home.

- EWART SHAW



### A FINAL CURTAIN CALL

AFTER more than 40 years entertaining audiences, the Bakehouse Theatre closed its doors for the final time on Friday night.

A Streetcar Named Desire would be the final production performed at the historic city theatre, located on the corner of Angas and Cardwell streets.

Artistic director Pamela Munt and creative producer Peter Green have been unable to negotiate a lease with new landlords. Originally the site of Lovell's Bakery in 1890, and home to Farmers Radio in the 1950s, the building first hosted plays in the 1970s.

Green took over the venue in 1998 and renamed it the Bakehouse Theatre, before handing control to Munt in 2007.

Paul Westbrook as Stanley Kowalski  
in A Streetcar Named Desire.  
Picture: Michael Errey