

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: “WHO WANTS REAL? I WANT MAGIC!” MUSICAL
MADNESS IN A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

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In both the 1947 play and 1998 opera, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, both Tennessee Williams and André Previn depict the mental decline of the fragile Blanche DuBois through her desperate cries for human affection, her loss of sanity deriving from the constant struggle between male society’s prescriptions for female behavior, and her own internalization of these roles. The constant clash between Blanche’s thought and deed – her façade of the perfect Southern belle hiding nymphomaniacal tendencies – along with her rape, also contributes to her to madness.

In this paper I explore Blanche’s character and both Williams’s and Previn’s use of music to illustrate her lunacy. I then conclude with a consideration of the writings of prominent literary, theater, music, and feminist writers to show how gender roles and sexual violence serve as catalysts for the female madness manifested in *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

“WHO WANTS REAL? I WANT MAGIC!”
MUSICAL MADNESS IN A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

by

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A Streetcar Named Desire

Music by André Previn

Libretto by Philip Littel

Based on the play by Tennessee Williams

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Musical Examples.....	iii
Introduction.....	1
Female Madness.....	3
Blanche DuBois as Madwoman.....	8
Tennessee Williams's Musical Madness.....	15
André Previn's Musical Madness.....	22
Blanche's Madness and Feminist Psychology.....	33
Conclusion.....	41
Appendix.....	43
Bibliography.....	52

LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES

Example 1: “Varsouviana”.....	17
Example 2: “From the Land of the Sky-blue Water”.....	19
Example 3: “Paper Moon”.....	20
Example 4: “Desire” motive.....	23
Example 5: Final statement of “Desire” motive during rape scene.....	25
Example 6: “Vulgar” motive.....	25
Example 7: Nervous orchestration underlining Blanche’s shaky grasp of reality.....	26
Example 8: Chromatic narration of Blanche’s panic.....	27
Example 9: “Slow Waltz”.....	28
Example 10: Distorted “Slow Waltz”.....	28
Example 11: “Flores para los muertos”.....	30
Example 12: Blanche’s chromatic display of insanity.....	31
Example 13: “I can smell the sea air”.....	32

INTRODUCTION

“No good opera plot can be sensible, for people do not sing when they are feeling sensible.”

– *W. H. Auden*¹

“Human kind cannot bear very much reality.”

– *T. S. Eliot*²

In André Previn’s 1998 opera, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, based on Tennessee Williams’s 1957 play by the same name, Blanche DuBois’s desperate cries for human affection and acceptance mark her as a character who becomes, by most accounts, certifiably insane.³ Mental illness has always been subject to debate: who is sane, who is not, and who is qualified to judge? Every generation creates its own popular ideas about the causes and characteristics of madness and how a mad person should look and behave, and it is usually these prevalent ideas, claims Margaret Atwood, rather than those of medical professionals, that manifest themselves in literature, theater, and music.⁴ Thus, the processes of madness-construction in contemporary operas, such as *Streetcar*, are easy to access, as the audience is able to identify with Blanche’s experiences in their own cultural context.

What pushes Blanche to the psychological edge? Why does she lose her grip on reality? Barbara Hill Rigney offers one explanation: fictional women frequently suffer from madness as they are torn between male society’s prescriptions for female behavior,

¹ Quoted in Barry Paris, “A Knight at the Opera,” *Vanity Fair* no. 457 (Sept 1998), 226.

² Quoted in Leonard Berkman, “The Tragic Downfall of Blanche DuBois,” in Harold Bloom, ed., *Tennessee Williams’s A Streetcar Named Desire* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988), 38.

³ The terms “insanity” and “madness” will be used interchangeably throughout this paper.

⁴ Margaret Atwood, “Ophelia Has a Lot to Answer For” (lecture given at the Stratford Festival, Stratford, Ontario, Canada, September 1997), *Margaret Atwood Reference Site*, <www.web.net/owtoad/ophelia.html> (14 March 2003).

their own internalization of those roles, and “a nostalgia for some lost, more authentic self.”⁵ The constant clash between Blanche’s thought and deed (the façade of a perfect Southern belle concealing nymphomaniacal tendencies) and Stanley’s sexual violence leads to her mental destruction. Williams and Previn, through both prose and music, present Blanche as an example of a human being struggling with her dual nature, constrained and punished by society.

⁵ Barbara Hill Rigney, *Madness and Sexual Politics in the Feminist Novel: Studies in Brönte, Woolf, Lessing, and Atwood* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 119.

FEMALE MADNESS

We may understand Blanche as many things: the Other, the madwoman, the doomed operatic heroine. These elements of her character are best explained with concepts from literary analysis, feminist theory, and modern musicological and opera criticism, and a brief examination of these concepts will aid in our discussion. To begin, Michel Foucault describes the history of madness as

the history of the Other – of that which, for a given culture, is at once internal and foreign, therefore to be excluded (as to exorcise the interior danger)...by being shut away (in order to reduce its otherness); whereas the history of the order imposed on things would be the history of the Same – of that which, for a given culture, is both dispersed and related, therefore to be distinguished by kinds and to be collected together into identities.⁶

Foucault asserts that insanity should be defined according to a particular society's definition of irrational behavior, rather than an amalgam of symptoms. This phenomenon contributes to modern society's continually evolving characterization of madness. Moreover, he suggests that madness consists of peculiarities all people share, and by identifying and isolating those qualities in others, "we can relieve ourselves of the fear that this strangeness is our own."⁷ According to Foucault, society seeks to confine the Other lest it contaminate the social order. Those people considered "mad" are institutionalized so society may avoid those it deems beyond contempt; madness "betrays a form of conscience to which the inhuman can suggest only shame. There are aspects of

⁶ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), xxiv.

⁷ Jacqueline O'Connor, *Dramatizing Dementia: Madness in the Plays of Tennessee Williams* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1997), 7.

evil that have such a power of contagion, such a force of scandal that any publicity multiplies them infinitely. Only oblivion can suppress them.”⁸

So, what *is* madness? Foucault eloquently states that it “takes the false for the true...it needs no external element to reach a true resolution. It has merely to carry its illusion to the point of truth...In madness equilibrium is established, but it masks that equilibrium beneath the cloud of illusion.”⁹ Marilyn Yalom defines it more succinctly as “an imprecise, nonmedical term for a variety of abnormal mental states characterized by major impairment of personality functions, loss of reality testing, and marked disorders of mood.”¹⁰ Whichever definition we choose, madness is an emotive term. It serves to categorize, separate, and designate as different. Jane M. Ussher maintains that to use the term “madness” is to “recognize the meaning attached to the perception of illness or dysfunction in the psychological domain – the *stigma* attached” (italics mine).¹¹ This stigma is what links Foucault’s Other to female madness.

Because one of the foundations of madness is its social construction, feminist theorists easily view female madness as a result of misogynistic or patriarchal social principles. The feminist argument, as articulated by Ussher, is that “the concept of madness is used to maintain the dominant order,” with the insanity label functioning to preserve women’s position as outsiders within patriarchal society:¹²

misogyny makes women mad either through naming us as
the “Other,” through reinforcing the phallogentric

⁸ Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), 67; as stated by Jane M. Ussher, “the mad [are]...categorized, castigated and separated from the rest of us, lest we see ourselves mirrored in their eyes” [*Women’s Madness: Misogyny or Mental Illness?* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), 7].

⁹ Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 33-34.

¹⁰ Marilyn Yalom, *Maternity, Mortality, and the Literature of Madness* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1985), 7.

¹¹ Ussher, *Women’s Madness*, 10-11.

¹² *Ibid.*, 167.

discourse, or through depriving women of power, privilege and independence. Or misogyny causes us to be named as mad...Labeling us mad silences our voices. We can be ignored. The rantings of a mad woman are irrelevant. Her anger is impotent.¹³

The patriarchy's dismissal of women's anger or misery as madness also protects male society from critical scrutiny. Carolyn G. Heilbrun states that the view of female madness as a sane reaction to a mad world is "founded on the incarceration, mutilation and drugging of nonconforming women from the early nineteenth century on."¹⁴ Elaine Showalter goes on to consider female madness as women's conscious revolt against the patriarchy, with "insanity" being the label society attaches to "female assertion, ambition, self-interest, and outrage."¹⁵ Texts on madness in society often argue that what is labeled mental illness could be better explained as a troublemaker's disruption of the social and cultural orders. Therefore, if madness is as shameful and fearful as Foucault asserts it to be, madwomen are stigmatized and made outsiders – the "Other."

Throughout history, madness has been regarded as a female sickness, a manifestation of excess feminine sexuality. Various medical authorities during the Enlightenment believed that women confused reality with products of their imaginations: they were "enflamed by the hot vapors of the womb" ("hysteria" literally means "of the womb").¹⁶ The Victorian era also saw a marked increase in the number of women diagnosed insane for this very reason (the increase coinciding with the emergence of the male-dominated psychiatric profession). The prevailing view among Victorian

¹³ Ussher, *Women's Madness*, 7.

¹⁴ Carolyn G. Heilbrun, "Method in Madness: Why Lucia and Elektra Must Sacrifice Their Sanity to Preserve the Male Order," *Opera News* 58:9 (January 22, 1994), 19.

¹⁵ Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 72.

¹⁶ Charles Ford, *Così? Sexual Politics in Mozart's Operas* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), 153.

psychiatrists was that women were more vulnerable to insanity than men “because the instability of their reproductive systems interfered with their sexual, emotional, and rational control.”¹⁷ By the end of the nineteenth century, women had taken a decisive lead in the race for psychiatric treatment, and current data on mental illness indicates that in modern western industrial societies more women than men are “mentally ill” and in need of “care.”¹⁸

The proliferation of female madness in modern society likewise gave rise to the popularity of the musical madwoman. Catherine Clément affirms that opera is “the reflection of our historical reality,” and Carolyn Abbaté argues that madwomen are destroyed by operatic plots so that their “dangerous energy...will be rendered innocuous,” reminding us of the Other’s necessary confinement in that historical reality.¹⁹

In light of these ideas, how are operatic madwomen (including Blanche in *Streetcar*) musically portrayed? Susan McClary asserts that the links between insanity, women, and music “are neither irrelevant nor trivial.”²⁰ In *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality*, she notes the widely accepted idea that the musical madwoman typically reveals her insanity through “slippery chromatic deviations from normative diatonicism...[playing] maddeningly in the cracks of tonal social convention,” just as the traditional madwoman does within her society.²¹

¹⁷ Showalter, *The Female Malady*, 55.

¹⁸ Ibid., 52; Ussher, *Women’s Madness*, 163 (Ussher reports that research on the mentally ill during the late nineteenth century looked at in-patient treatment, private psychiatric care, and general practitioner statistics, with all results remaining the same).

¹⁹ Catherine Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, trans. Betsy Wing, with a foreword by Susan McClary (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 118; and Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), ix.

²⁰ Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 81.

²¹ Ibid., 100.

Music, however, cannot act alone in the world of opera; text plays an all-too-important role. In her article “Operatic Madness: A Challenge to Convention,” Ellen Rosand notes that opera’s double language of text and music provides a ideal outlet for the madwoman’s fragmented character:

Music and text: two distinct modes of discourse, each with its own potential for expression, rational or irrational, its own rules and conventions, to be followed or broken. The portrayal of madness in opera enlists the power of both – as two separate but simultaneous languages, working independently, in conflict, or else conjoined, reinforcing and complementing one another.²²

Opera is able to strain society’s traditional codes of conduct by introducing “the conflicting forces that disturb or undermine equilibrium...The portrayal of madness tests the power of the two languages not only to cohere, but to separate”²³; it creates the perfect environment in which the madwoman may express herself to a culture fearing her upsetting version of reality.

²² Ellen Rosand, “Operatic Madness: A Challenge to Convention,” in Steven Paul Scher, ed., *Music and Text: Critical Inquiries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 243.

²³ *Ibid.*, 287.

BLANCHE DUBOIS AS MADWOMAN

In *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Tennessee Williams depicts the total mental collapse of Blanche DuBois, whose elaborate illusions about herself and the world eventually lead to her complete withdrawal from reality and ultimate retreat into a fantasy world. When the play opens, the faded Southern belle has lost her family plantation, Belle Reve (“Beautiful Dream”), after presiding over the deathbeds of close relatives. Blanche views these deaths, as well as the suicide of her young, homosexual husband Allan, as abandonment, and relinquishes herself to a life filled with what she calls, shameless “intimacies with strangers” in order to “fill [her] empty heart.”²⁴ This debauchery leads not only to her dismissal from a teaching post for seducing a seventeen-year-old student, but also to her later eviction from a seedy hotel for lewd behavior. Ultimately, the refuge she seeks with her sister Stella in New Orleans crushes Blanche’s last fragments of sanity. There she is overwhelmed by her beau Mitch’s rejection and dominated by her brother-in-law Stanley’s sexual violence.

In his article “*A Streetcar Named Desire* – Nietzsche Descending,” Joseph N. Riddel eloquently and accurately describes Blanche’s character, especially the internal and external battle between her world of illusion and that of reality:

Blanche, as her name implies, is the pallid, lifeless product of her illusions, of a way of life that has forfeited its vigor... Her life is a living division of two warring principles, desire and decorum, and she is the victim of civilization’s attempt to reconcile the two in a morality. Her indulgent past is a mixture of sin and romance, reality and illusion, the excesses of the self and the restraints of society... Blanche lives in a world of shades, of Chinese

²⁴ Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire* [1950 ed.], with a foreword by the author (New York: New American Library, 1963), 118.

lanterns, of romantic melodies that conjure up dream worlds, of perversions turned into illusory romances, of alcoholic escape, of time past – the romantic continuity of generations to which she looks for identity...²⁵

Blanche admits to her frail mental condition in the beginning of the play (“I was on the verge of – lunacy, almost!”²⁶); and even though she is already near the edge well before she reaches New Orleans, Stanley’s verbal and physical behavior acts as her final means of destruction by pushing her closer to her breaking point. As she foreshadows in Scene 6: “The first time I laid eyes on him I thought to myself, that man is my executioner!”²⁷ The ongoing conflict between Blanche and Stanley throughout the play is an externalization of Blanche’s aforementioned internal conflict between illusion and reality, and Scene 10 (Mitch’s confrontation and Blanche’s rape) portrays brutal reality’s conquest of a woman whose entire being depends on the preservation of fantasy.²⁸

Tennessee Williams illustrates Blanche’s madness in myriad ways throughout *Streetcar*, the most visible being her fear of loneliness and abandonment. In “A Trio of Tennessee Williams’ Heroines: The Psychology of Prostitution,” psychologist Phillip Weissman asserts that Blanche’s need for constant affection stems from the deaths of her family members: “every relationship is but a transient negation in her search for an unattainable reunion...”²⁹ Death, to Blanche, is certain and invincible, violently pulling her against her will, and anxiety over its finality forces her to search for ways of escape,

²⁵ Joseph N. Riddel, “A *Streetcar Named Desire* – Nietzsche Descending,” in Harold Bloom, ed., *Tennessee Williams’s A Streetcar Named Desire*, 25; the quotes and opinions I have chosen regarding Blanche’s sanity (or lack thereof) are representative of the writings in this area of Williams scholarship. Throughout my thorough investigation of this topic, I found no conflicting views.

²⁶ Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, 21.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 93.

²⁸ Felicia Hardison Londré, “A *Streetcar* Running Fifty Years,” in Matthew C. Roudané, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Tennessee Williams* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 59.

²⁹ Philip Weissman, “A Trio of Tennessee Williams’ Heroines: The Psychology of Prostitution,” in Jordan Y. Miller, ed., *Twentieth Century Interpretations of A Streetcar Named Desire: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1971), 63.

either in the actual world or that of illusion. Dharanidhar Sahu agrees with Weissman, and maintains that Blanche's drive to run from a vengeful world she cannot control manifests itself in an existential urge for physical pleasures to make her forget the trauma of mortality.³⁰ Blanche confirms his idea in Scene 9 when she states that desire is the opposite of death.³¹

Blanche's guilt over her "sexual failure" with Allan partially explains her promiscuity, as if she were trying to succeed with strangers where she failed with him.³² By seeking out lovers her husband's age at the time of his death (soldiers camped near Belle Reve, her student, a paper collection boy), Blanche's search for "protection" in Scene 5 is actually her attempt to compensate for her failure with Allan:

I've been – not so awf'ly good lately. I've run for protection... from under one leaky roof to another leaky roof – because it was storm – all storm, and I was – caught in the center... People don't see you – *men* don't – don't even admit your existence unless they are making love to you. And you've got to have your existence admitted by someone, if you're going to have someone's protection.³³

In her line, "That's why I've been – not so awf'ly good lately," Blanche admits to some of the behavior she has hidden from Mitch in order to gain a more permanent type of shelter from the world. Stanley's eventual discovery of her past and Mitch's subsequent rejection are two of the final events severing her link to sanity.

³⁰ Dharanidhar Sahu, *Cats on a Hot Tin Roof: A Study of the Alienated Characters in the Major Plays of Tennessee Williams* (Delhi: Academic Foundation, 1990), 178-179.

³¹ Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, 120.

³² Alice Griffin, *Understanding Tennessee Williams* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 49.

³³ Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire* [1947 ed.], in *Plays 1937-1955* (New York: The Library of America, 2000), 515. Williams substantially revised his work between 1947 (the original edition) and 1950, and portions of this speech were cut and revised for the latter. I feel that it is necessary to use the original version of Blanche's speech here as it cites important information on her desperation and need for human connections. Unless otherwise indicated, all further quotations from Williams's play are taken from the 1950 revision.

Another illustration of Blanche's fragile mental state is her obsession with physical appearance. Sahu asserts that "fear is occasioned by...the inevitable decay of youth," and, as Blanche ages, she clings desperately to illusions of refinement – pretty clothes, ostentatious jewelry, perfume – creating a false world in which she can hide.³⁴

Laurilyn J. Harris describes Blanche's state and finds that

individuals tormented by fragile egos and minimal self-confidence need constant positive reinforcement from others. Their self-esteem rises and falls according to the image of themselves they see reflected in the eyes of those emotionally or spatially close to them. ...Blanche's preoccupation with how she "looks" does not spring from narcissism or vanity, but from her crumbling sense of self-worth. As she grows more and more unstable under the pressure of Stanley's unrelenting contempt and his awareness of that part of her self she most wishes to hide, she frantically seeks to create a romanticized, reassuring self-portrait that she can study endlessly in the living mirrors within her sphere of influence...³⁵

Glass mirrors also lend themselves to Blanche's dramatic fixation with physical beauty. Just after Mitch confronts Blanche with her past sexual indiscretions, she initiates a feigned discussion with imaginary admirers in which she catches sight of her face in a hand mirror, recognizes in it the true, repellent version of herself, and "*slams the mirror face down with such violence that the glass cracks*" (Scene 10, stage directions).³⁶ The broken mirror here anticipates the imminent disintegration of Blanche's already fragile consciousness; in Jungian terms, her personality is likened to "a mirror broken up into splinters," as the unified psyche is "shattered into fragments."³⁷ In this light, we may

³⁴ Sahu, 222.

³⁵ Laurilyn J. Harris, "Perceptual Conflict and the Perversion of Creativity in *A Streetcar Named Desire*," in Philip C. Kolin, ed., *Confronting Tennessee Williams's A Streetcar Named Desire: Essays in Critical Pluralism* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993), 86.

³⁶ Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, 122.

³⁷ Judith J. Thompson, *Tennessee Williams' Plays: Memory, Myth, and Symbol* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987), 45.

view Blanche's main identity threat as time, which can only be conquered by escaping the general groundwork from which it derives its meaning: reality.³⁸

In addition to mirrors, Blanche's false world requires the outside assistance of soft lighting, and Williams uses his protagonist's fear of bright lights as prominent way to illustrate her mental decline. On one level, of course, dim lighting disguises physical signs of aging, but it also has a further and more telling significance, expressed by Mary Ann Corrigan: "just as bright lights must be turned off or shaded, so every sordid reality must be cloaked in illusion."³⁹ Scene 3 finds Blanche asking Mitch to cover the bedroom light bulb with a paper lantern bought on Bourbon Street; she states: "I can't stand a naked light bulb, any more than I can a rude remark or a vulgar action."⁴⁰ Blanche's equation of the naked bulb with harshness and the paper lantern with softness implies the contrast between the reality she cannot face and the enchantment she wishes to create. When Mitch insists on viewing Blanche under the uncovered light fixture in Scene 9, she exclaims: "I don't want realism. I want magic! Yes, yes, magic! I try to give that to people. I misrepresent things to them. I don't tell truth, I tell what *ought* to be truth. And if that is sinful, then let me be damned for it! – *Don't turn the light on!*"⁴¹ Mitch does remove the paper lantern, however, and Blanche is forced to face the true reality that leads to her mental breakdown. When Stanley once again tears the paper lantern off the bulb in Scene 11 and thrusts it at her, the stage directions indicate that she is to "[cry]out

³⁸ Nada Zeineddine, *Because it is My Name: Problems of Identity Experienced by Women, Artists, and Breadwinners in the Plays of Henrik Ibsen, Tennessee Williams, and Arthur Miller* (Braunton Devon: Merlin Books Ltd., 1991), 117.

³⁹ Mary Ann Corrigan, "Realism and Theatricalism in *A Streetcar Named Desire*," in Robert A. Martin, ed., *Critical Essays on Tennessee Williams* (New York: G. K. Hall & Co., 1997), 87.

⁴⁰ Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, 55.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 117.

as if the lantern was herself.”⁴² Blanche is as delicate as a paper lantern and cannot deflect the hard light of Stanley’s realism.

Williams also links light images to Allan, Blanche’s first and only love. Blanche first equates her late husband with light when she states in Scene 6: “It was like you suddenly turned a blinding light on something that had always been half in shadow...”⁴³ After recounting his suicide, she says, “the searchlight which had been turned on the world was turned off again and never for one moment since has there been any light that’s stronger than this – kitchen – candle.”⁴⁴ With his death, Blanche’s life plunged into the symbolic darkness offered by the kitchen candle; since her beloved Allan was as bright as a blinding searchlight, all her sordid sexual affairs with strangers are represented by the dim, flickering kitchen candle – poor substitutions for the real thing.

A third sign of Blanche’s encroaching madness is her growing reliance upon alcohol. Medical experts agree that multiple factors predispose a woman to become an alcoholic or problem drinker, including disruption in a once-secure family life (the successive deaths of Blanche’s family and husband) and the confusion of societal gender roles (to be discussed later in this paper).⁴⁵ These factors often lead to depression, which has strong ties to alcoholism in women: much evidence indicates that heavy drinking follows depression as a coping strategy. Thus, Blanche’s constant and frantic search for alcohol in the Kowalski apartment, as well as her ensuing drunkenness (Williams describes her on more than one occasion as being “boxed out of her mind”), appear on her symbolic journey via the streetcars *Desire* and *Cemeteries* towards *Elysian Fields* (her

⁴² Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, 140.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁴⁵ Janet Shibley Hyde, *Half the Human Experience: The Psychology of Women*, 5th ed. (Lexington: D.C. Health and Company, 1996), 378-9.

sister's apartment), where in classical mythology inhabitants drink of the river Lethe to forget their past lives.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Griffin, 50.

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS'S MUSICAL MADNESS

Tennessee Williams employs music throughout *Streetcar* to provide the necessary expressive links from reality to madness. Music represents not only objective occurrence but inner action, as well, enabling the audience to better understand Blanche's breakdown. The playwright also relies heavily upon music for structural unity, emphasis of mood and atmosphere, and thematic dramatization.

THE BLUES

A distinctly American form of music, the blues developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries from slave and work songs, spirituals, and black secular music to commemorate surviving hardship.⁴⁷ According to Bruce Bastin's *Red River Blues*, many former slaves moved to cities following the Civil War only to discover that there were fewer opportunities than expected; despite their freedom, the former slaves were still enslaved socially, politically, and economically.⁴⁸ The blues thus grew as a creative response to the frustration and powerlessness African-Americans felt at this time, and helped show "rugged individual endurance" in the face of adversity.⁴⁹ Elia Kazan, director of *Streetcar*'s film version, claims that the blues' connotations of survival and innate sexuality are used by Williams throughout the play to help reinforce certain aspects of Blanche's position within her society, as well:

⁴⁷ Dana Jeanine Barnett, "Tennessee Williams's *American Blues* (master's thesis, University of Alabama, 1997), 1.

⁴⁸ Bruce Bastin, *Red River Blues: The Blues Tradition in the Southeast* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 18-19.

⁴⁹ Albert Murray, *The Hero and the Blues* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1973), 107.

The Blues is an expression of the loneliness and rejection, the exclusion and isolation of the Negro and their (opposite) longing for love and connection. Blanche too is “looking for a home,” abandoned, friendless. “I don’t know where I’m going, but I’m going.” Thus the Blue piano catches the soul of Blanche, the miserable unusual human side of the girl which is beneath her frenetic duplicity...⁵⁰

Houston A. Baker, Jr. states in *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory* that the blues is generally about people who exhibit “a toughness of spirit and resilience” and a “willingness to transcend difficulties.”⁵¹ In many ways, this statement could refer to Blanche, since her imaginative spirit created the illusions that enabled her to rise above the emotional adversity she encountered throughout *Streetcar*. Additionally, just as the post-Civil War African-Americans endured the lack of social prospects that they were promised when moving to a new land of opportunity, Blanche must bear the hardships she experiences after her move to New Orleans.

From the play’s opening scene, a tinny “Blue piano” sounds in a bar around the corner from the Kowalski apartment, evoking the French Quarter’s sultry character and underscoring a sensation of desire. The “Blue piano” plays as Blanche arrives in the French Quarter and is particularly dominant when she recounts the deaths at Belle Reve (Scene 1), while she kisses the newspaper collection boy (Scene 5), and as the Doctor leads her away to the asylum (Scene 11). When Blanche senses that Stanley has disclosed something terrible about her to Stella in Scene 7, Williams writes that “*the*

⁵⁰ Elia Kazan, “Notebook for *A Streetcar Named Desire*,” in Toby Cole and Helen Krich Chinoy, eds., *Directors on Directing: A Sourcebook of the Modern Theater* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1963), 371.

⁵¹ Houston A. Baker, Jr., *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 11.

*distant piano goes into a hectic breakdown.*⁵² This music also grows from “*barely audible*” to “*louder,*” finally turning “*into the roar of an approaching locomotive*” just before her rape (Scene 10). Stanley, the unstoppable locomotive, physically takes the isolated and oversexed Blanche, who, Corrigan relates, is “forced to become part of this world of hot music and lust.”⁵³

“VARSOUVIANA” POLKA

To depict Blanche’s growing insanity, Williams’s *Streetcar* also uses the “Varsouviana” (Ex. 1) as a reminiscence motive; only Blanche and the audience are able to hear the tune, indicating that we are in the world of her memories.

Ex. 1: “Varsouviana”⁵⁴

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Varsouviana" in G major (three sharps) and 3/4 time. It consists of three systems of piano accompaniment. Each system has a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The melody is primarily in the treble clef, featuring eighth and sixteenth notes with some rests. The bass clef provides a steady accompaniment with chords and single notes. The piece concludes with a final chord in the bass clef.

⁵² Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, 105.

⁵³ Corrigan, 88-89.

⁵⁴ Transcription based on Tex-I-An Boys, “Put Your Little Foot (Varsouvianna),” from *Cowboy Songs on Folkways*, Smithsonian/Folkways SF 40043. The “Varsouviana” (sic) is a traditional cowboy tune that was later adapted as a polka and became very popular in dance halls in the first half of the twentieth century.

The polka, played as her husband killed himself, ends in Blanche's mind only with the sound of a distant gunshot; while the gunshot *itself* is not pleasant, it happily halts the torment her late husband's memory brings. Quoting literary critic Dianne Cafagna:

The polka compels Blanche's memory to a crescendo, then suddenly dies. Too much truth. Hearing again the gunshot has purged, for a lovely moment, all the fear and ugliness of reality, the impending disaster again shoved back into a schizophrenic haze, the lie of beauty and youth restored like a promise made to herself that these circumstances will never let her keep.⁵⁵

Through its association with impending death, the "Varsouviana" represents imminent catastrophe. Blanche first hears the tune after Stanley asks her, "You were married once, weren't you?" (Scene 1), again when her brother-in-law hands her a bus ticket back to Laurel (Scene 8), and throughout Scene 9, in which Mitch confronts Blanche with his knowledge of her promiscuous background.⁵⁶ Williams writes in the stage directions: "*The rapid, feverish polka tune, the 'Varsouviana,' is heard. The music is in her mind; she is drinking to escape it and the sense of disaster closing in on her, and she seems to whisper the words of the song.*"⁵⁷ In the same scene the polka tune fades in as a Mexican street vendor arrives, chanting an omen of mortality: "Flores para los muertos" ("Flowers for the dead").⁵⁸ She last hears a distorted version of the "Varsouviana" in Scene 11, embodying reality for Blanche in all its harshness when she realizes she is to be committed to an asylum.

⁵⁵ Dianne Cafagna, "Blanche DuBois and Maggie the Cat: Illusion and Reality in Tennessee Williams," in *Critical Essays on Tennessee Williams*, ed. Robert A. Martin (New York: G. K. Hall & Co., 1997), 126.

⁵⁶ Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, 31.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 119.

“FROM THE LAND OF THE SKY-BLUE WATER”

Williams also has Blanche sing two songs to exhibit her deceptions and retreat into fantasy, including Scene 2’s “From the Land of the Sky-blue Water” by Charles Wakefield Cadman, which depicts an innocent, Native American girl removed from an idyllic dream and held prisoner in a harsh, realistic world (Ex. 2).

Ex. 2: “From the Land of the Sky-blue Water”⁵⁹

The image shows a musical score for the song "From the Land of the Sky-blue Water". It consists of two staves of music in 3/4 time, with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff contains the lyrics: "From the Land of the Sky - blue Wa - ter, They". The second staff contains the lyrics: "brought a cap - - - tive maid".

From the Land of the Sky-blue Water,
They brought a captive maid;
And her eyes they are lit with lightnings
Her heart is not afraid!

But I steal to her lodge at dawning,
I woo her with my flute;
She is sick for the Sky-blue Water,
The captive maid is mute.⁶⁰

Blanche feels she has been taken from her “Land of the Sky-blue Water” (her childhood home, Belle Reve) to New Orleans, and is held captive by Stanley and Stella’s home.

Also the “captive maid,” Blanche is unafraid because her fantasies help guard her from the truth of her situation. Finally, she becomes “mute” to the real world once she goes insane, her personal illusions clouding her voice.

⁵⁹ Nelle Richmond Eberhart and Charles Wakefield Cadman, “From the Land of the Sky-Blue Water,” in *American Art Songs of the Turn of the Century*, Paul Sperry, ed. (New York: Dover Publications, 1991), 28-29.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 28-31.

“PAPER MOON”

Described by Williams as “a saccharine popular ballad,” “Paper Moon” was written in 1932 by Harold Arlen for the play *The Great Magoo*. In that play, one of the two female protagonists “bounces from man to man in pursuit of her dream,” and the other “suffers objectification” in her quest for love.⁶¹ Blanche experiences the same situations in her search for shelter from the “storm” she describes to Stella in Scene 5. In *Streetcar*, Blanche sings “Paper Moon” in the bath as Stanley reveals her sordid past to Stella in Scene 7, asserting the capacity of Blanche’s imagination to create truth (Ex. 3).

Ex. 3: “Paper Moon”⁶²

Say, it's on-ly a pa-per moon Sail-ing ov-er a card-board sea

But it would-n't be make-be-lieve if you be-lieved in me

Say, it's only a paper moon,
Sailing over a cardboard sea –
But it wouldn't be make-believe
If you believed in me!

It's a Barnum and Bailey world,
Just as phony as it can be –
But it wouldn't be make-believe
If you believed in me!

Without your love,
It's a honky-tonk parade!
Without your love,
It's a melody played
In a penny arcade.
It's only a paper moon,
Just as phony as it can be –

⁶¹ C. Scott Ananian, “Salvation by Spider: A review of *The Great Magoo*,” 4, 25 November 1996, <cscott.net/Pton/ENG347/magoo.pdf> (28 December 2003).

⁶² Transcription based on Harold Arlen, “It's Only a Paper Moon,” from *Ella Fitzgerald Sings the Harold Arlen Songbook*, Verve 314 589 108-2 BK01.

But it wouldn't be make-believe
If you believed in me!⁶³

In Williams's play, the song expresses Blanche's hopes for her relationship with Mitch: as she lies to him about her past, the world that Blanche creates for him *is* "make-believe" and "phony"; her song suggests that it would not be a fantasy world, however, if Mitch believed in, loved, and married her. Williams also ties "Paper Moon" to Blanche's Chinese lantern purchased on Bourbon Street. Throughout the play, the lantern over the bedroom light bulb acts as a "paper moon," shading her past and fading beauty, as well as creating an altered reality with artificial materials. When Mitch and Stanley tear the paper cover off the light, Blanche recoils in horror: instead of offering her the shelter she so desperately wanted, the "paper moon" only destroys her hopes for the future.

⁶³ Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, 98-100.

ANDRÉ PREVIN'S MUSICAL MADNESS

André Previn insists *A Streetcar Named Desire* was destined for the operatic stage; he told Martin Kettle in 1998: "I think it's a great play: poetic, and moving, dramatic and funny and everything. And it's also, if you think about it, very operatic. Blanche, oh yes, indeed, is a great operatic part."⁶⁴ In fact, most actors in Tennessee Williams's plays act their parts as though "singing" arias – long reflective flights of poetic speech – rather than reciting monologues or soliloquies.⁶⁵ In order to create a three-hour libretto from an eleven-scene play, librettist Philip Littell needed to cut much of the spoken dialogue, reducing the number of Blanche's "arias" to only two. The Williams estate kept a close watch over Littell in this regard in order to retain the play's key themes and focus, but allowed Previn the creative freedom not to use Williams's extensive musical selections in his score:

When Williams says "You are conscious of the music of the street" it's because it's a spoken play and there hasn't been any music in it. So when, in the play, you hear music that's supposed to be playing somewhere nearby, well, that would have made an immense effect. But if the music's going on all the time anyway, as it is in an opera, then you don't really need that...I don't use his references [either]. For instance, Williams has Blanche sing Paper Moon. Well, that's not necessary in an opera.⁶⁶

How, then, does Previn manifest Blanche's insanity? Dissonant and disjunct lines dominate *Streetcar*'s through-composed score, reminding us of McClary's previously-described "chromatic excess" of musical madness. With these characteristics, Previn's

⁶⁴ Martin Kettle, "On Time, On Track: Martin Kettle Investigates Previn's *Streetcar*," *Opera* 49:9 (Sept. 1998), 1032.

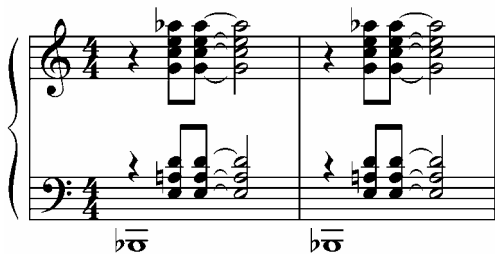
⁶⁵ Lyle Leverich, "Orpheus Ascending," in Notes from André Previn, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Deutsche Grammophon 289 459 366-2, 18.

⁶⁶ Kettle, 1038.

opera successfully escapes “formal and diatonic conventions,” and constitutes a conventional vocabulary “derived ultimately from a condensation of traditional signs of madness, rage, suffering,” illustrating Blanche’s escape from reality.⁶⁷

Previn’s *Streetcar* also employs recurring themes as reminiscence motives just as Williams did with the blues and the “Varsouviana” (see Appendix for a detailed comparison between music of the play and opera). Instead of the “Blue piano,” Previn creates two main motives, which I call “Desire” and “Vulgar.” The “Desire” motive appears throughout the work when the audience is to recognize the passions that are Blanche’s downfall; it is a simultaneous combination of two or more triads – whether they be major, minor, diminished, or augmented – with Previn’s indication that brass players are to bend the second pitch each time the motive occurs, evoking the seedy nature of desire, itself (Ex. 4).

Ex. 4: “Desire” motive (Act I, Prelude; mm. 1-2)⁶⁸



Named after the streetcar that transports her to Stella’s apartment, the “Desire” motive refers to Blanche’s persistent need to overcome loneliness, whether through family ties, amorous liaisons, or alcohol. Thus, the motive opens and closes the opera, and sounds in Act I when Blanche first appears onstage (Scene 1; mm. 18-22), again when she remembers that Belle Reve was lost to creditors (mm. 72-73), and as she embraces Stella

⁶⁷ McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 82 and 136.

⁶⁸ All opera examples from Andre Previn, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Milwaukee: G. Schirmer, 1999).

(mm. 109-110). Most importantly, however, the motive illustrates Blanche’s “mad” desires: when displaying her alcoholism by frantically searching the apartment for liquor (Act I, Scene 1; mm. 78-85), as she flirts with and kisses the young newspaper collector (Act II, Scene 1; throughout mm. 264-322), and while Stanley reveals the secrets of Blanche’s sordid past to Stella (Act III, Scene 1; mm. 64-65, 103-105, and 202-205).

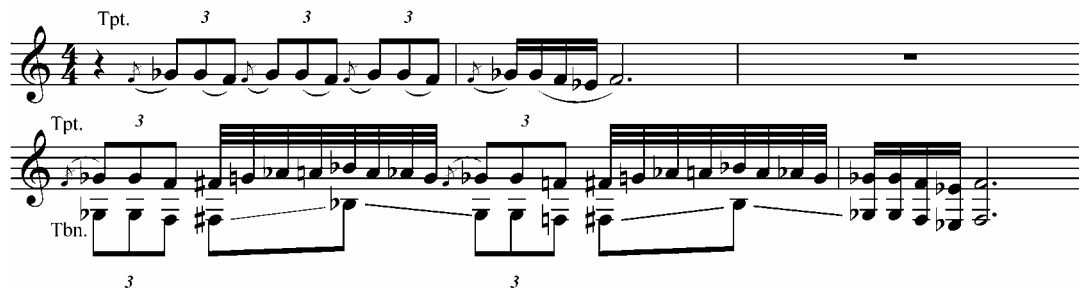
The “Desire” motive serves its most expressive purpose during Blanche’s interactions with Stanley: it foreshadows how the desire for sexual passion will lead to her demise. The motive makes its first appearances in this context when Blanche flirts with Stanley in Act I, having him button the back of her dress with his “big hands” (Act I, Scene 2; mm. 252-253), and again when she entrusts her papers from Belle Reve to Stanley’s “big, strong and capable hands” (mm. 377-378). Both of these instances not only indicate Blanche’s physical obsessions, but also the stereotyped Southern belle’s need for a man’s protection. The motive’s indication of Stanley’s role in Blanche’s eventual mental destruction comes to its climax in Act III’s rape scene, during which the orchestra plays the motive four times; the last iteration slightly longer and lower in pitch than its predecessors and incorporates light ascending violin harmonics, signifying that with the rape’s completion, so too is Blanche’s outward spiral into madness (Ex. 5; Act III, Interlude; mm. 56-57, 61-62, 83-84, 86-88).

Ex. 5: Final statement of “Desire” motive during rape scene (Act III, Interlude; mm.86-88)

The musical score is written in 4/4 time. The top staff is for the Violin (Vn.) playing harmonics, with notes on the G string (G4, A4, B4, C5) and a final half-note on D5. The piano accompaniment is in the bottom two staves. The right hand (treble clef) plays chords on the G4 and A4 strings, while the left hand (bass clef) plays chords on the E2, F2, and G2 strings. The piece concludes with a final chord in the right hand and a whole note in the left hand.

Previn creates a second recurring phrase to replace the “Blue piano.” The “Vulgar” motive is so called due to the composer’s wishes that the phrase be played in a “vulgar” fashion. Moreover, I named the motive “Vulgar” because when the characters discuss sex or sexual urges, either a jazz trumpet or clarinet will bend its pitches to insinuate a lewd meaning (Ex. 6).

Ex. 6: “Vulgar” motive (Act I, Scene 1; mm. 356-360)



We initially encounter this motive in Act I, when Blanche refers to her family members’ deaths: the first sounds just after Blanche exclaims, “I took the blows on my face and my body. Death after death all of those deaths!” (Act I, Scene 1; mm. 356-360). As described earlier in this paper, Blanche took the blows of her family’s mortality and “all of those deaths” sexually by giving herself to man after man, creating “the little death” and exhibiting what society deems “vulgar” behavior. We later hear the motive in Act II during Blanche’s disclosure to Mitch of her young husband’s homosexuality and suicide. “Vulgar” appears here due to what Blanche feels is Allan’s unseemly sexual behavior, along with her statement, “I couldn’t help him, and I couldn’t help myself...” indicating the inability to change either his or, later, her own sexual deviance (Act II, Scene 2; mm. 341-344). Later in the same speech, when she recounts her last words to Allan (“I know...I saw...You disgust me!”), we hear a variation of the motive’s first bar in a

polka-like 3/4, harkening back to Williams’s “Varsouviana,” and once more reiterating her contempt for Allan’s homosexuality (mm. 413-414).

Throughout the opera, Previn uses his orchestra as an omniscient third party, continually commenting on the characters’ thoughts and actions in the manner of Richard Wagner. This technique is especially useful to trace Blanche’s descent into madness: we hear her progressively losing grip on reality through the orchestra’s narration. When she displays nervousness and a tenuous hold on sanity, the orchestra tends to become restless, incorporating rapid trills and rushed chromatic figures. For instance, in Act I, Scene 1, as Blanche catches sight of herself in a mirror, she sadly remarks, “I look so old. I look so old.” Grasping the reality of her fading beauty, she then anxiously sings, “Keep hold...Keep hold of yourself, Keep hold...” Under this last, frightened comprehension, strings create a frantic, icy atmosphere by playing delicate, ponticello tremolo figures (Ex. 7).

Ex. 7: Nervous orchestration underlining Blanche’s shaky grasp of reality (Act I, Scene 1; mm. 93-95)

The image displays a musical score for Example 7. The top staff is a vocal line in 3/4 time, with lyrics: "Keep hold... Keep hold of your-self, Keep hold...". A triplet of eighth notes is marked above the second measure. The bottom staff is for strings, labeled "Str. (sul pont.)", and features a tremolo pattern of sixteenth notes across three measures.

When Stanley grabs Allan’s love letters from Blanche, essentially taking her husband away, her panicky agitation echoes in the orchestration: the first two measures of example 8 show a sixteenth-note canon at the octave, abruptly intensifying in the next two measures with identical rhythms and greater chromaticism (Ex. 8).

Ex. 8: *Orchestral narration of Blanche's panic (Act I, Scene 2; mm.308-311)*

Even though Previn decided not to include the “Varsouviana” polka in his opera, he does create a “Slow Waltz” on a similar principle. We first hear the “Waltz” when Mitch places the paper lantern over the Kowalski’s bedroom light bulb in Act I and he and Blanche begin to dance (which is what Blanche and her husband were doing just prior to his suicide.) Here, the waltz continues sweetly and innocently in a dream-like state, Blanche and Mitch humming along with the violins, until Steve shouts from the poker game, “Three bullets? Straight!” followed by the bang of Stanley’s fist on the kitchen table. There is much significance in this ending, as Allan died from a bullet wound (“three bullets”), he was not sexually “straight,” and the pounding fists musically refer to the gunshot that ends the “Varsouviana” in Blanche’s mind (Ex. 9).

Ex. 9: "Slow Waltz" (Act I, Scene 3; mm. 189-200)

The second time Previn presents the "Slow Waltz," he significantly alters its meaning to connote Allan's suicide. Blanche barely completes the unaccompanied line in Act II, "The back of his head had been blown away," when the orchestra enters with an extreme distortion of the original dance; whereas the section previously sounded dream-like, it now resembles a nightmare: the chordal bass is in D major, strings join in C major, and violins add a dissonant and eerily chromatic descant above (Ex. 10).

Ex. 10: Distorted "Slow Waltz" (Act II, Scene 2; mm. 391-394)

The nightmarish music resumes in Act III, Scene 2, just after Mitch confronts Blanche with her deceptions. She hears the Mexican flower vendor and launches into a tale of her own sexual encounters with the soldiers camped near Belle Reve, describing how "Later, the paddy wagon gathered them up like daisies." Previn undercuts this

operatic sequence with the Mexican woman’s faint cries of “Flores para los muertos” – Philip Littell’s libretto supplies the flower vendor with significantly more text than Williams’s original play in order to help convey Blanche’s madness, as analyzed in Table 1 below. The flower woman concludes the scene with a rousing *Sprechstimme* in free, recitative-like narrative over ghost-like, dissonant orchestration (Ex. 11).

Table 1: Flower Woman scene (Act III, Scene 2; mm.391-394)

Flower Woman’s Text (Littell/Previn)	Maiman’s Interpretation
Flores para los muertos. Flowers and Crowns. Flowers and Thorns.	“Crown of thorns” symbolizes the imminent sacrifice of Blanche’s sanity (just as in Jesus’s sacrifice)
Fire! Fire! Fire! There are flowers in hell. Flowers of flame, red and yellow, the lilies of sin and the roses of shame.	The “hell” of Blanche’s reality and the shame she feels for her past sins (signified by the fiery colors of passion/desire).
Buy them, Lady, wear them, for you are dead. As dead as my blackened bouquets though you were fair. You will fade and shrivel and burn and no one will care.	Blanche’s worst fears of fading beauty and abandonment.
Flores para los muertos. Into the fire. Thirsty flowers. Nothing to drink. Nothing to drink. ⁶⁹	Represents Blanche’s alcoholism and frantic search for liquor in order to dull the pain of reality.

⁶⁹ Philip Littell, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Milwaukee: G. Schirmer, 1996), 72.

Ex. 11: “Flores para los muertos” (excerpt; Act III, Scene 2; mm.235-236)

No defined tempo, repeat ad libitum

Flower Woman (*rhythm and pitch ad libitum*)

Flo - res pa - ra los muer - tos. Flow - ers and Crowns.

Tpt.

Tpt. muted

Vc.
Cb.

Fl.

Fl.

Flow - ers and Crowns. Flow - ers and Thorns.

The ensuing operatic transition from Act III’s Scene 2 to Scene 3 reveals Blanche’s encroaching madness: according to stage directions, she dresses in “a particularly tawdry white satin nightgown and the rhinestone tiara” and inhabits “some other reality,” giving a wistful speech to imaginary admirers. Previn characterizes her dementia in this arioso through her repetitive, chromatic lines that frequently change meter (Ex. 12), reminding us of McClary’s previously-stated description of musical madness.

Ex. 12: Blanche's chromatic display of insanity (excerpt; Act III, Scene 3; mm.14-17)

The image displays a musical score for an excerpt from Act III, Scene 3, measures 14-17. It features a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is written in a 4/4 time signature and includes the lyrics: "But you have to be care - ful, ver - y care - ful, to dive where the deep pool is". The piano accompaniment includes parts for the Oboe (Ob.) and Contrabass (Cb.). The score shows a chromatic progression in the vocal line, reflecting the "chromatic display of insanity" mentioned in the caption. The piano accompaniment features a complex, chromatic texture with various chords and melodic lines.

Later, before Blanche's Act III departure to the asylum, she sings one of the opera's few arias, "I can smell the sea air." In it, she imagines her death and fantasizes about images of purity, including "an ocean as blue [as] my first love's eyes."⁷⁰ By invoking her "first love," she invokes the untainted, young romance she has been yearning to recapture.⁷¹ Interestingly, this aria is the most lyrical and diatonic portion of the entire opera, perhaps signifying that, in her world of illusions, Blanche has finally found "peace of mind" (Ex. 13).

⁷⁰ Littell, 83.

⁷¹ Londré, 60.

Ex. 13: "I can smell the sea air" (excerpt; Act III, Scene 4; mm.127-134)

I can smell the sea air. Ah. the sea... the

bless - ed - est thing that God cre - a - ted in the sev - en days.

BLANCHE'S MADNESS AND FEMINIST PSYCHOLOGY

While it would be difficult to argue that Blanche retains her sanity, one may dispute the manifestations and causes of her madness. One main line of reasoning presented by feminist critics connects a woman's simultaneous toleration and rejection of the restrictive sexual norms prescribed by her culture to her gradual mental decline. Jane M. Ussher asserts that women "who are archetypally feminine will be more likely to be defined as mad...conversely women who *reject* the female role are also likely to be labeled mad."⁷² Below I present my own analysis of Blanche's character following the research of psychologist Harriet E. Lerner on gender roles in modern society (Lerner's commentary is given in italics):

*Women are encouraged to be dependent and are frequently portrayed as lost and helpless without a male partner.*⁷³

The last of the traditional Southern belles, Blanche is "mothlike, sensitive, and fragile in a way that is ultimately self-destructive, [she is] portrayed as [a] romantic idealist undone by a graceless and callous age."⁷⁴ Stella echoes that idea in her remark to Stanley in Scene 8 ("You didn't know Blanche as a girl. Nobody, nobody, was tender and trusting as she was. But people like you abused her, and forced her to change") as well as Blanche's previously-discussed statement to Stella in Scene 5 in which she expresses her need to run for the shelter of a man's protection (see page 10).⁷⁵

⁷² Ussher, *Women's Madness*, 168.

⁷³ Harriet E. Lerner, "Early Origins of Envy and Devaluation of Women: Implications for Sex-Role Stereotypes," in Elizabeth Howell and Marjorie Bayes, eds., *Women and Mental Health* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 34-36.

⁷⁴ Cafagna, 121.

⁷⁵ Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, 111.

In love relationships, men are typically older than their female partner. While there is nothing unusual about a match between a thirty-five-year-old man and a twenty-three-year-old woman, the reversed situation is evaluated as eccentric if not pathological.

As stated previously, all of Blanche's partners are men much younger than her thirty years, stemming from her obsession over her teenaged husband's suicide.

Stereotyped notions of feminine sexuality tend to glorify naïveté and "innocence"; whereas for males, "experience" tends to enhance their sexual attractiveness.

As this gender role asserts, Blanche must conceal her sordid sexual past in order to foster Mitch's interest. In Scene 5, Blanche confesses to Stella that Mitch "thinks I'm sort of – prim and proper, you know! I want to *deceive* him enough to make him – want me..."⁷⁶ She also says, "He hasn't got a thing but a goodnight kiss, that's all I have given him, Stella. I want his respect. And men don't want anything they get too easy."⁷⁷

In courtship and sexual relations, women stereotypically assume a passive stance and men an overly active one. Men are taught actively to pursue what they want; women are taught to make themselves pretty enough to be sought after.

True to this stereotype, Blanche incessantly primps, poses, and adorns herself with jewelry and perfumes in order to make herself attractive to the opposite sex. However, she reverses this role by overtly flirting with men and maintaining an active search for a permanent mate. In Scene 2, Blanche tells Stella: "I called him a little boy and laughed and flirted. Yes, I was flirting with your husband!"⁷⁸ In Scene 5, Blanche

⁷⁶ Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, 81.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 44.

reveals her exhaustion in searching for a husband when Stella asks if she truly wants to marry Mitch: “I want to *rest!* I want to breathe quietly again!”⁷⁹

In male-female relationships, intellectual ability and competence are frequently seen as the man’s domain. A girl’s sense of intellectual mastery and skill is progressively discouraged as she is trained to be “feminine”; she is encouraged to be smart enough to catch a man but never to outsmart him.

Blanche adopts a condescending attitude towards Stanley’s “common” intelligence throughout the drama. For example, when he begins to describe the “Napoleonic code” to her in Scene 2, she exclaims, “My, but you have an impressive judicial air!”⁸⁰ In Scene 3, Blanche comments to Stella: “I’m sorry, but I haven’t noticed the stamp of genius on Stanley’s forehead.”⁸¹ Blanche’s constant snobbery towards Stanley finally comes to a head in Scene 8, when the “master of the house” bellows to his wife and sister-in-law:

Don’t ever talk that way to me! “Pig – Polack – disgusting – vulgar – greasy!” – them kind of words have been on your tongue and your sister’s too much around here! What do you two think you are? A pair of queens? Remember what Huey Long said – “Every Man is a King!” And I am the king around here, so don’t forget it!⁸²

As we can see from the above analysis, Blanche exhibits a curious amalgamation of gender roles: at times she is the quintessential female, and at others she consistently and deliberately opposes her gendered position in society. Lawrence Kramer describes this fusion as “gender synergy,” a condition in which one person occupies “both masculine and feminine positions either simultaneously or in rhythmic succession, in

⁷⁹ Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, 81.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 107.

representation or behavior, in solitude or company, in whole...or in part (by redistributing the traits characteristic of each position).”⁸³ This confusion of gender roles facilitates Blanche’s refusal of reality, acceptance of illusion, and eventual madness.

Another related topic upon which many modern psychological texts focus is the relationship between society and the madwoman: what is identified in numerous cases as mental illness could be better defined as the actions of a troublemaker, Foucault’s Other, a disruptor of the normal social and cultural orders.⁸⁴ In *Streetcar*, Blanche DuBois is Stanley Kowalski’s troublemaker: an outsider who threatens his status quo. Janet Shibley Hyde explains that the flip side of that contention is that female madness frequently occurs when women find themselves in uncomfortable new situations.⁸⁵ Just as the “captive maid” in “From the Land of the Sky-blue Water,” Blanche had been ripped from her shelter of illusion and placed in the harsh reality of the Kowalski household.

The final clash of Blanche’s world of illusion and the society she has been desperately trying to fight occurs with her rape. Feminist theorists view rapists as the product of gender-role socialization in our culture; they underemphasize the sexual aspects of rape and instead view it as an expression of power and dominance by men over women.⁸⁶ Kramer also insists that as men are unable to escape the gender role boundaries maintained by their society, they are threatened with a metaphorical castration, manifesting itself in misogyny and sexual violence.⁸⁷ As such, gender inequality is both the cause *and* the result of rape. For men who believe that women exist

⁸³ Lawrence Kramer, *After the Lovedeath: Sexual Violence and the Making of Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 12.

⁸⁴ O’Connor, 33.

⁸⁵ Hyde, 376.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 350.

⁸⁷ Kramer, 7.

in order to serve male desires, the sex act is frequently enjoyed as the consummation of domination. It then follows that those men in their typical sexual encounters will either tend to presume their partners' consent, be indifferent to their wishes, or actively seek to impose themselves upon the women.⁸⁸ As noted above, Blanche's claims to intellectual and class superiority shatter traditional female gender role stereotypes and contribute to her Other status in the Kowalski household; so even though he cannot dominate her intellectually, Stanley must control Blanche in the only way he knows how: with sexual aggression.⁸⁹ Sexually aggressive men, like the virile Stanley Kowalski, are also more likely to endorse attitudes tolerant or supportive of rape, and Hyde asserts that such men believe that a victim wanted or deserved to be raped.⁹⁰ Stanley's comment to Blanche before the assault – "We've had this date with each other from the beginning" – confirms this feminist theory, reinforcing that Blanche, as the desire-driven Other, knew she would be dominated sexually from her first steps in his home.⁹¹

Stanley's personality also directly supports his endorsement of sexual violence by possession of "animal force." As Blanche notes in Scene 5 that Stanley is born under the astrological sign Capricorn – the goat, an archetypally sexual animal. Blanche asserts in Scene 4 that Stanley "acts like an animal, has an animal's habits," that he is an ape, that "thousands and thousands of years have passed him right by, and there he is...survivor of the stone age!"⁹² Rape is significantly more accepted in preliterate ("Stone Age") societies – those characterized by male dominance, a high degree of general violence, and

⁸⁸ Elizabeth Rapaport, "Generalizing Gender: Reason and Essence in the Legal Thought of Catharine MacKinnon," in Louise M. Antony and Charlotte E. Witt, eds., *A Mind of One's Own: Feminist Essays on Reason and Objectivity*, 2nd ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2002), 261.

⁸⁹ O'Connor, 47.

⁹⁰ Hyde, 352-3.

⁹¹ Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, 130.

⁹² Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, 72.

an ideology of male toughness, depicted by the “common,” brutal Stanley – than that of our own “civilized” culture. Blanche thus predicts her own rape as she compares her own gentility with the society of the unrefined, animal-like Stanley; as stated in Sahu’s study of Williams’s alienated characters: “the civilization of the world, brought about through centuries of cultural struggle – noble ideas, laws, poetry, music and art – is again besieged by ape-like survivors of the Stone Age.”⁹³

In *Opera in the Flesh: Sexuality in Operatic Performance*, Sam Abel asserts that just as modern culture creates gender stereotypes leading to sexual violation, so too does opera:

[It coerces] its female characters into sexual roles, then makes their eroticized bodies the victims of domination... Opera proliferates images of sexual acts used for power rather than love; in other words, it enacts rape. Even when the doomed heroine seems a willing victim, when she submits cheerfully to the violence done to her, or even becomes complicit in the aggression...she is still a victim of sexual violence.⁹⁴

Susan McClary echoes this idea with the belief that in late nineteenth-century opera female sexual power needed to be stopped “by exerting closure violently from without.”⁹⁵ Thus, Blanche – the sexualized, passionate heroine – must be raped by Stanley in order to stop what he (and opera) deems a revolt against her traditional gender role in society.

Hyde cites psychological studies that assert sexual violence does indeed lead to madness, whether in theater, opera, or the “real world.” Psychologists sometimes use the term “rape trauma syndrome” to refer to the emotional and physical effects a woman undergoes following a rape or attempted rape. Many abused women are more likely to

⁹³ Hyde, 351; and Sahu, 75.

⁹⁴ Sam Abel, *Opera in the Flesh: Sexuality in Operatic Performance* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 99.

⁹⁵ McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 100.

engage in self-injurious behavior and experience a distorted sense of reality; the “victimization creates a negative sense of the world, where little seems meaningful and where the woman herself feels weak, needy, frightened and out of control. The woman’s image of the world, and of herself, can become imbued with negative overtones.”⁹⁶ Therefore, Blanche’s complete and final removal from reality after her rape is consistent with modern scientific theories. In addition, Ussher claims that female victims of sexual violence are more likely than men to be labeled “mad,” with specific diagnoses of depression, alcohol or drug abuse, generalized anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorders, post-traumatic stress disorders, and/or multiple personality or borderline syndromes – all of which Blanche displays in one form or another.⁹⁷

Finally, whom should we believe? Blanche or Stanley? The rape victim or attacker? Women’s human rights litigator Catharine MacKinnon’s legal theories provide a telling perspective. She asserts that rape is not an event separable from the “subjective” perceptions or feelings of the people involved.⁹⁸ As argued previously in this paper, traditional gender roles press women to be subservient, subject to a man’s will and place in society. In this respect, a man’s word is regarded as more valid than a woman’s. Thus, his word can become “objectively” true due to this power: he believes that he did not commit rape, and because society legitimates his view and does not convict him, he is, in fact, correct – in the eyes of society he did not commit an act of sexual violence. According to MacKinnon, society correspondingly judges the victim’s word as “subjective.” She insists that because society tends to view women as objects for sexual

⁹⁶ Ussher, *Women’s Madness*, 266-7.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 266.

⁹⁸ Rachel Zuckert, “MacKinnon’s Critique of Objectivity,” in Louise M. Antony and Charlotte E. Witt, eds., *A Mind of One’s Own: Feminist Essays on Reason and Objectivity*, 2nd ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2002), 280.

use by men, a woman's word does not have credibility, and is "merely subjective."⁹⁹ Despite the "facts," Blanche, as victim, still feels violated, and sees the "facts" only through the distortion of her own feelings or subjective perceptions. She retreats into her world of illusions when Stanley confronts her with the truth of her past, and because she has embellished and glossed over *those* facts, no one is compelled to believe her new story regarding the rape. Her forced institutionalization follows, society once again confining the "Other" so not to contaminate the status quo. Williams reinforces this concept when Stella confesses to Eunice at the beginning of Scene 11: "I couldn't believe her story and go on living with Stanley"¹⁰⁰; Blanche's own sister glossing over the truth to take Eunice's advice: "Don't ever believe it. Life has got to go on. No matter what happens, you've got to keep on going."¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Zuckert, 280.

¹⁰⁰ Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, 133.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

CONCLUSION

Both the play and opera versions of *A Streetcar Named Desire* depict Blanche's terrifying plunge into madness as she submits to desire, a passion "so incendiary that it consumes the self."¹⁰² Kramer maintains that this passion is particularly exhibited by opera because it requires "the undoing of...whatever person is invested with the greatest charge of desire."¹⁰³ Stanley's violent sexual behavior reinforces a social pattern that enforces certain gender roles – roles to which Allan, the soldiers near Belle Reve, and Mitch contribute. Through both prose and music, Tennessee Williams and André Previn explore Blanche's mental ruin and her desire to escape the confines of reality.

Despite this undoing, Blanche is not completely defeated, and to the very end refuses to relinquish the struggle for her fantastical sense of self: Stanley can rape her physically and mentally, but he cannot terminate her personal search for identity.¹⁰⁴ Blanche maintains her lady-like façade when the Doctor comes to escort her to the asylum, allowing herself to see him as the protector upon whom she, as the Southern belle, has been conditioned to rely.¹⁰⁵ Doomed by her sordid and destructive life, Blanche's fervent struggle for intimacy finally comes to an end. Previn ends his opera with the "Desire" motive after the protagonist presents her famous line: "Whoever you are, I have always depended on the kindness of strangers."¹⁰⁶ Blanche now recognizes that her future now contains only the strangers she has tried to escape her entire adult life.

¹⁰² Frank Rich, "Danner and Quinn in a New *Streetcar*," in George W. Crandell, ed., *The Critical Response to Tennessee Williams* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996), 60.

¹⁰³ Kramer, 57-58.

¹⁰⁴ Zeineddine, 120.

¹⁰⁵ Londré, 61.

¹⁰⁶ Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, 142.

Although Blanche has passionately attempted to defer the impact of reality with her illusions, she must, in the end, face the music.

APPENDIX

MUSICAL COMPARISONS BETWEEN WILLIAMS'S AND PREVIN'S MUSIC
FROM A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

EVENT	SCENE (PLAY)	WILLIAMS'S MUSIC AND DIRECTIONS/TEXT	SCENE (OPERA)	PREVIN'S MUSIC AND DIRECTIONS/TEXT
Opening of work	Scene One	Blue Piano (“A <i>corresponding air is evoked by the music of Negro entertainers in a barroom around the corner. In this part of New Orleans you are practically always just around the corner, or a few doors down the street, from a tinny piano being played by the infatuated fluency of brown fingers. This 'Blue Piano' expresses the spirit of the life which goes on here.</i> ”) ¹⁰⁷	Act I, Prelude	Desire (mm. 1-2, 5-6, 8-9; “ <i>Brass instruments bend the pitch each time this figure occurs.</i> ”) ¹⁰⁸
Blanche's first entrance			Act I, Scene 1	Desire (mm. 18-22; “ <i>Blanche appears.</i> ”)
Eunice asks Blanche about Belle Reve			Act I, Scene 1	Desire (mm. 72-73; “ <i>...there is a long, awkward silence...</i> ”)
Blanche searches the Kowalski apartment for alcohol			Act I, Scene 1	Desire (mm. 78-79, mm. 82-83, m. 85; “ <i>Blanche looks around, spies liquor in a cabinet, pours herself a drink, puts liquor back.</i> ”)

¹⁰⁷ Quoted from Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

¹⁰⁸ Quoted from André Previn, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Milwaukee: G. Schirmer, 1999).

EVENT	SCENE (PLAY)	WILLIAMS'S MUSIC AND DIRECTIONS/TEXT	SCENE (OPERA)	PREVIN'S MUSIC AND DIRECTIONS/TEXT
Blanche looks in the mirror			Act I, Scene 1	Orchestral narration (mm. 93-95: "Keep hold...Keep hold of yourself, Keep hold...")
Blanche embraces Stella			Act I, Scene 1	Desire (mm. 109-110)
Blanche informs Stella of Belle Reve's loss	Scene One	Blue Piano (" <i>The music of the 'blue piano' grows louder.</i> ")	Act I, Scene 1	Vulgar (mm. 356-360: "Death after death / all of those deaths!"; 428-434: "The old grim reaper put up his tent on our doorstep...")
Stanley meets Blanche	Scene One	"Varsouviana" (Stanley: "You were married once, weren't you?" [<i>"The music of the polka rises up, faint in the distance.</i> "])		
Opening of scene	Scene Two	Blue Piano (" <i>Stanley enters the kitchen from outside, leaving the door open on the perpetual 'blue piano' around the corner.</i> ")		
Stella informs Stanley of the loss of Belle Reve while Blanche is in the bath	Scene Two	Song One: "From the land of sky blue water" ("Blanche: [<i>singing in the bathroom</i>]")		
Blanche flirts with Stanley			Act I, Scene 2	Desire (mm. 252-253)
Stanley grabs Allan's love letters from Blanche			Act I, Scene 2	Orchestral narration (mm. 308-311: "Love letters. Give those back! ...Don't touch them!")

EVENT	SCENE (PLAY)	WILLIAMS'S MUSIC AND DIRECTIONS/TEXT	SCENE (OPERA)	PREVIN'S MUSIC AND DIRECTIONS/TEXT
Blanche gives Belle Reve's mortgage papers to Stanley			Act I, Scene 2	Desire (mm. 377-378)
Stanley announces Stella's pregnancy to Blanche	Scene Two	Blue Piano (<i>"Blanche opens her eyes. The 'blue piano' sounds louder."</i>)		
Blanche and Stella talk in the bedroom during the poker game	Scene Three	Radio: Rhumba music (<i>"Rhumba music comes over the radio...Stanley jumps up and, crossing to the radio, turns it off."</i>)		
Mitch places the paper lantern over the bedroom light bulb and he and Blanche "waltz" to the radio	Scene Three	Radio: "Wien, Wien, nur du allein" (<i>"She turns the knobs on the radio and it begins to play 'Wien, Wien, nur du allein.' Blanche waltzes to the music with romantic gestures...Stanley stalks fiercely through the portieres into the bedroom. He crosses to the small white radio and snatches it off the table. With a shouted oath, he tosses the instrument out the window."</i>)	Act I, Scene 3	Slow Waltz (mm. 189-200: "Turn on the light now! Look! We've made enchantment!")
Stanley hits Stella and his friends leave after holding him under the shower	Scene Three	Blue Piano (<i>"The Negro entertainers play 'Paper Doll' slow and blue."</i>)		

EVENT	SCENE (PLAY)	WILLIAMS'S MUSIC AND DIRECTIONS/TEXT	SCENE (OPERA)	PREVIN'S MUSIC AND DIRECTIONS/TEXT
Stanley calls Eunice to speak with Stella	Scene Three	Blue Piano (<i>"Dissonant brass and piano sounds as the rooms dim out to darkness...The 'blue piano' plays for a brief interval."</i>)		
Stella descends the stairs to Stanley	Scene Three	<i>"The low-tone clarinet moans."</i>	Act I, Scene 3	Moan (mm. 296-297: Alto Saxophone, English Horn, Celesta)
Stanley returns home following Blanche's tirade to Stella on his animal-like behavior	Scene Four	Blue Piano and Honkey Tonk (<i>"As the lights fade away, with a lingering brightness on their embrace, the music of the 'blue piano' and trumpet and drums is heard."</i>)		
Stanley enters (after Blanche states her wish to marry Mitch)	Scene Five	Honkey Tonk (<i>"There are joyous calls from above. Trumpet and drums are heard from around the corner."</i>)	Act II, Scene 1	Desire variation (mm. 167-169: <i>"Stella shakes free of him, walks off coolly. Stanley, bewildered, looks after her, then back towards the apartment, thinking of Blanche and her effect on his and Stella's lives."</i>)
Stella leaves with Stanley and Blanche wallows in a self-pitying, drunken daze	Scene Five	Blue Piano (<i>"The music from the Four Deuces is slow and blue."</i>)	Act II, Scene 1	Blanche's arietta: "Soft people" (mm. 173-217)
Blanche seduces the young paper collector	Scene Five	Blue Piano (<i>"In the ensuing pause, the 'blue piano' is heard. It continues through the rest of this scene and the opening of the next."</i>)	Act II, Scene 1	Desire (throughout mm. 264-322)

EVENT	SCENE (PLAY)	WILLIAMS'S MUSIC AND DIRECTIONS/TEXT	SCENE (OPERA)	PREVIN'S MUSIC AND DIRECTIONS/TEXT
Blanche tells Mitch the story of Allan's suicide	Scene Six	<p>"Varsouviana" ("[<i>Polka music sounds, in a minor key faint with distance.</i>] We danced the Varsouviana! Suddenly in the middle of the dance the boy I had married broke away from me and ran out of the casino. A few moments later – a shot! [<i>The polka stops abruptly. Blanche rises stiffly. Then the polka resumes in a major key... Mitch gets up awkwardly and moves toward her a little. The polka music increases... He kisses her forehead and her eyes and finally her lips. The polka tune fades out.</i>]")</p>	Act II, Scene 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulgar (mm. 341-344: "I couldn't help him, and I couldn't help myself...") • Distorted Slow Waltz (mm. 391-394: "The back of his head had been blown away.") • Vulgar (mm. 413-414: "I know... I saw... You disgust me!")
Blanche is in the bath while Stanley tells Stella about her sister's shady past	Scene Seven	Song Two: "Paper Moon" ("Blanche is singing in the bathroom a saccharine popular ballad which is used contrapuntally with Stanley's speech.")	Act III, Scene 1	Desire (mm. 64-65, mm. 103-105, mm. 202-205)
Blanche realizes Stanley has revealed her sexual indiscretions to Stella	Scene Seven	Blue Piano ("She stares fearfully at Stella, who pretends to busy at the table. The distant piano goes into a hectic breakdown.")	Act III, Scene 1	Desire (mm. 202-205, mm. 208-209)

EVENT	SCENE (PLAY)	WILLIAMS'S MUSIC AND DIRECTIONS/TEXT	SCENE (OPERA)	PREVIN'S MUSIC AND DIRECTIONS/TEXT
Blanche waits for Mitch on her birthday			Act III, Scene 1	Orchestral narration (throughout mm. 215-247: "What time is it?")
Stanley comforts Stella			Act III, Scene 1	Moan (mm. 332-336: Stanley, Alto Saxophone)
Stanley yells at the women to "put them in their place"	Scene Eight	Honkey Tonk or Blue Piano (<i>"The Negro entertainers around the corner are heard."</i>)		
Stanley gives Blanche a bus ticket to Laurel	Scene Eight	"Varsouviana" (<i>"The Varsouviana music steals up softly and continues playing."</i>)	Act III, Scene 1	Orchestral narration (mm. 425-430: "...it's a...Ticket! Back to Laurel!")
Opening of scene	Scene Nine	"Varsouviana" (<i>"On the table beside the chair is a bottle of liquor and a glass. The rapid, feverish polka tune, the 'Varsouviana,' is heard. The music is in her mind; she is drinking to escape it and the sense of disaster closing in on her, and she seems to whisper the words of the song."</i>)		

EVENT	SCENE (PLAY)	WILLIAMS'S MUSIC AND DIRECTIONS/TEXT	SCENE (OPERA)	PREVIN'S MUSIC AND DIRECTIONS/TEXT
Mitch confronts Blanche about her past	Scene Nine	"Varsouviana" ([<i>"She touches her forehead vaguely. The polka tune starts up again.</i>] ...That – music again...The 'Varsouviana'! The polka tune they were playing when Allan – Wait! [<i>A distant revolver shot is heard. Blanche seems relieved.</i>] There now, the shot! It always stops after that. [<i>The polka music dies out again.</i>] Yes, now it's stopped.	Act III, Scene 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desire variation (mm. 45-46: "It's dark in here.") • Orchestral narration (mm. 69-74: "This one...the one with that paper thing on it.") • Blanche's aria: "I want magic!" (mm. 88-141) • Orchestral narration (throughout mm.142-224)
Mexican flower vendor offers her wares as Blanche explains her past to Mitch	Scene Nine	"Varsouviana" (<i>"The polka tune fades in."</i>)	Act III, Scene 2	Flower Woman (underneath mm. 157-202: "...Flores para los muertos...")
Blanche orders Mitch to leave	Scene Nine	Blue Piano (<i>"The distant piano is slow and blue."</i>)	Act III, Scene 2	Orchestral narration (mm. 225-232: "Get out of here quick...")
Blanche hallucinates during the Flower Woman's interlude			Act III, Scene 2	Flower Woman (mm. 235-246: " <i>Blanche's long night has begun, her mind obsessed by the Flower Woman's cries</i> "; see table 1)
Blanche hallucinates a conversation with imaginary admirers			Act III, Scene 3	Blanche's arietta: "How about taking a swim" (mm. 1-24: " <i>As if to a group of admirers. An air of unreality.</i> ")

EVENT	SCENE (PLAY)	WILLIAMS'S MUSIC AND DIRECTIONS/TEXT	SCENE (OPERA)	PREVIN'S MUSIC AND DIRECTIONS/TEXT
Stanley returns from the hospital	Scene Ten	Honkey Tonk (“ <i>As he rounds the corner the honkey-tonk music is heard. It continues softly throughout the scene.</i> ”)		
Rape scene	Scene Ten	Honkey Tonk (“ <i>He picks up her inert figure and carries her to the bed. The hot trumpet and drums from the Four Deuces sound loudly.</i> ”)	Act III, Scene 3 and Interlude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desire variation (mm. 192-196) • Teasing (mm. 25-28: Flute, Trumpet; 29-32: Clarinet, Flute; 33-40: Alto Saxophone; 41-44: Trumpet, Alto Saxophone) • Desire (mm. 56-57) • Teasing (mm. 58-59: Strings) • Desire (mm. 61-62, 83-84, 86-88)
Blanche comes out of the bathroom after washing her hair	Scene Eleven	“Varsouviana” (“ <i>The ‘Varsouviana’ rises audibly as Blanche enters the bedroom.</i> ”)	Act III, Scene 4	Distorted Slow Waltz variation (mm. 74-77)
Blanche describes her death at sea to Eunice and Stella	Scene Eleven	Chimes (“ <i>[The cathedral bells chime] Those cathedral bells – they’re the only clean thing in the Quarter... [The cathedral chimes are heard] ...into an ocean as blue as [Chimes again] my first lover’s eyes!</i> ”)	Act III, Scene 4	Blanche’s aria: “I can smell the sea air” (mm. 127-180: “ <i>Blanche, already somewhere else</i> ”)
Eunice announces the Doctor and Matron	Scene Eleven	“Varsouviana” (“ <i>She looks fearfully from one to the other and then to the portieres. The ‘Varsouviana’ faintly plays.</i> ”)		

EVENT	SCENE (PLAY)	WILLIAMS'S MUSIC AND DIRECTIONS/TEXT	SCENE (OPERA)	PREVIN'S MUSIC AND DIRECTIONS/TEXT
Blanche meets the Doctor	Scene Eleven	“Varsouviana” (“You are not the gentleman I was expecting... [The ‘Varsouviana’ is playing distantly...Lurid reflections appear on the walls in odd, sinuous shapes. The ‘Varsouviana’ is filtered into a weird distortion, accompanied by the cries and noises of the jungle.]”)		Distorted Slow Waltz variation (mm. 227-231)
Stanley comforts Stella	Scene Eleven	Blue Piano (“The luxurious sobbing, the sensual murmur fade away under the swelling music of the ‘blue piano’ and the muted trumpet.”]	Act III, Scene 4	Moan variation (270-274: Alto Saxophone)
Blanche’s exit and closing of work			Act III, Scene 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funeral dirge (throughout mm. 289-315) • “Whoever” motive (throughout mm. 293-317: traded between Trumpet and Blanche) • Desire (mm. 318-319)

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