

## Music Becomes Emotions: The Musical Score in Two Productions of *A Streetcar Named Desire*

### ABSTRACT

From today's perspective, Alex North's score for the 1951 film *A Streetcar Named Desire*, which was considered remarkable even at the time, can claim legendary status. The titles of the 16-track score suggest that the music focuses on the characters, the setting, main motifs, crucial events and states of mind. The film soundtrack could thus be denoted as integral to and harmonized with the dramatic action. This is not the case in the 2008 staging at the Slovene National Theatre in Maribor, where the music composed and selected by Hrvoje Crnić Boxer seems to focus on the protagonist only. The performance revolves around Blanche and could be interpreted as a psychoanalytic study of the play through her subconscious. Analysing the musical layers of these two considerably different productions of Williams' play opens new interpretative aspects of this complex theatre and film classic from the Deep South literary tradition.

**Keywords:** Tennessee Williams; *A Streetcar Named Desire*; music; film; drama

## Glasba se prelevi v čustva: Filmska oz. odrska glasba v dveh uprizoritvah *Tramvaja Poželenje*

### POVZETEK

Glasbo Alexa Northa v filmski različici *Tramvaja poželenje*, ki je že v času nastanka zbudila pozornost, lahko z današnje perspektive brez skromnosti označimo za legendarno. Iz naslovov šestnajstih pesmi filmske glasbe je mogoče razbrati, da se glasba nanaša na dramske osebe, kraj dogajanja, glavne motive, osrednje dogodke in miselna stanja; filmsko glasbo bi v tem smislu torej lahko imenovali vseobsegajočo in vseprisotno v zgodbi. Ta vidik je zelo drugačen v primeru ugledališčenja iste drame leta 2008 v SNG Maribor, kjer se zdi glasba, ki jo je skomponiral oz. izbral Hrvoje Crnić Boxer, osredinjena skoraj izključno na glavno osebo. Predstava se odvija okoli Blanche in bi jo bilo mogoče interpretirati kot psihoanalitično študijo igre skozi njeno podzavest. Analiza glasbe teh dveh zelo različnih si produkcij Williamsove drame odpira nove vidike interpretacije tega kompleksnega odrskega in filmskega dela iz literarne tradicije ameriškega globokega Juga.

**Ključne besede:** Tennessee Williams; *Tramvaj Poželenje*; glasba; film; drama

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## 1 Introduction

Alex North's score for the legendary 1951 film *A Streetcar Named Desire* (hereafter *Streetcar*) is by common acknowledgement "the first functional, dramatic jazz score for a film. Up until then, jazz had been generally used only as source music" (Lochner 2006, np). Even though the film was a success, it earned North only an Academy Award nomination, while the Oscar went to Franz Waxman and *A Place in the Sun* (*Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences* 2016).<sup>1</sup> As with several other full music scores by Alex North, this music today is celebrated by critics and audience; unbelievably, North had 14 more nominations but never made it to the top until 1986 when he was voted an honorary Academy Award for his life's work, as the first composer to receive it. The *Streetcar* musical score can, nevertheless, be considered a classic, in which it is possible to identify the major traditional roles of music in film. It thus can be seen as the antithesis of the musical strategies deployed the Slovene National Theatre (SNG) production.

The 2008 SNG Maribor production directed by Damir Zlatař Frey was not a traditional staging of this classic play; it was rather a "different world, inhabited by personal theatre mythology" (Delbianco 2008, 11). The main element of Dora Delbianco's scene design, occupying most of the stage, was a huge pile of white river sand, about 2 meters high, stretching from stage right, and gradually descending towards stage left and the front of the proscenium. This basic component of the scene "underlines the psychological states of the characters" and has the ability to transform itself from "quicksand that mercilessly gobbles up its victims" into "time sliding away as in an inexorable hour glass" (Delbianco 2008, 12). Particularly in such quantity, sand can convey numerous symbolic connotations, and the theatre ensemble made considerable use of this quality. Delbianco also reports that the decision to place the whole setting of the play inside Blanche's psyche was a conscious choice, based on an agreement between Frey and herself as dramaturge. Obviously, this important fact had crucial implications for the choice of music and sound. Consequently, this permits the interpretation of the performance through a psychoanalytical lens, as will be done in the following sections. The article considers how the manipulation of music in the film version of *Streetcar* influences the viewer's emotions, and then parallels the characteristics of the film music score to the music used in the Maribor stage production, which is intrinsically different from the former.<sup>2</sup>

## 2 Diegetic and Non-Diegetic Music

A crucial issue for the analysis and interpretation of both productions is whether the music heard by the audience is internal to the plot or whether it serves as a musical underscore beyond the internal dramatic structure. The distinction is most commonly addressed with the terms *diegetic* and *non-diegetic*. Cohen (2001), for example, understands the former as relating to music that

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<sup>1</sup> *Streetcar* received four Oscars: Best Actress (Leigh), Best Supporting Actor and Actress (Malden and Hunter) and Art Direction (Day and Hopkins). Brando, like North, was only nominated, losing to Bogart in *The African Queen* (*Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences* 2016).

<sup>2</sup> For the musical score analysis of the Maribor production, I used the unpublished video recording of the performance that took place on 14 April 2008 (see Williams 2008).

occurs within the narrative of the film, where the viewer can see the source on the screen/stage. It can be a radio, a musical instrument, a juke box or an orchestra in a concert hall. It is necessary that a character in the film can see the source of the music and, even more crucial, can hear it. In contrast, non-diegetic music is not part of the narrative, and its source is neither visible on screen nor seen or heard by the characters. Only the viewer can hear the music and associate the action or the characters with it.

Chion (1994, 71–85) defines the same phenomena with the expression *acousmatic* when referring to a sound that the audience can hear but for which they are unable to identify a source. This sound can appear in a film, but it is off-screen (invisible). He defines and illustrates the term *acousmètre* in his *The Voice in Cinema* (Chion 1999, 17–29), where he reflects upon the power of invisible sound. The opposite of *acousmatic* sound is *visualized* sound, where the source is visible. A sound can be visualized and later acousmatized or vice versa, which is a frequent mystery film technique, where the tension is raised by keeping the source of the sound a secret.

Film music emphasizes the dramatic line. Music and moving images have to be brought together into harmony within a dramatic context. One of important features of music in films is the *musical accent*. Composers need to be careful about when they introduce music to a scene. If it is brought in suddenly, it can be too obvious and can draw attention to itself and away from the action. It is best when the entry point for music has a dramatic function. The musical entrance can also be connected with meaning or with a change in the dramatic line. It can be triggered by what a character says or does, or only by the expression on his face (Burt 1994, 79–82). In the film version of *Streetcar*, there is a rich combination of both diegetic and non-diegetic sounds; there are even cases when one dissolves into the other, for example, when Blanche reveals to Stella that Belle Reve has been lost, the tension of the conversation increases. This is supported by the musical score of rather dissonant trombones in the Belle Reve Reflections theme, which – when Blanche runs into the courtyard – transforms into a train whistle. In the Maribor production, the music is almost wholly non-diegetic, to support the psychoanalytical interpretations intended by Delbianco and Frey.

### 3 Functions of Film Music

In his critical study of film music, Prendergast (1992) provides a broad variety of functions that the musical score can have in a film. These were adapted from a 1949 article by Aaron Copland in *The New York Times*. Among several that he mentions, a few are particularly relevant to this study: film music can “create a more convincing atmosphere of time and place”, “provide the underpinning for the theatrical build-up of a scene and then round it off with a sense of finality”, “serve as a kind of neutral background filler”, and “underline or create psychological refinements – the unspoken thoughts of a character or the unseen implications of a situation” (see Prendergast 1992, 213–22). These will be illustrated with the examples from *Streetcar* in the following paragraphs.

When music has the role of creating a persuasive atmosphere of time and place in a film, Prendergast (1992, 213) speaks of *musical colour*. This is immediate and flexible, since a composer can bring it in and out with relative ease. Moreover, the mood that is created can be easily understood by an average audience without particular musical knowledge. Musical colour can be achieved with a musical instrument specific for a certain time or area in the type of music and its style. The music in this role can be diegetic or non-diegetic, although the other functions selected

above seem better suited to non-diegetic music, since in these cases, the music is not part of the plot but is intended to transfer certain additional information to the viewer. A good example of creating an “atmosphere of time and place” with music in *Streetcar* is the soundtrack piece at the beginning of the film, when Blanche arrives in Elysian Fields in New Orleans. As she walks down a busy street, the viewer hears what seems to be authentic music from jazz clubs mixed with talking, laughter and the sound of glass breaking. Additionally, there are street sounds like cars braking, horns blowing and shouting. After she finds the right address and Eunice directs her to the bowling club, the setting instantly changes, most notably with the help of auditory imagery – a whistle and the sound of a ball hitting bowling pins; these sounds take effect even before the viewer can absorb the place visually. In both cases, the music and the sounds are diegetic, which means Blanche hears them too.

Another of Copland’s functions, “the theatrical build-up of a scene” to a climax, can be identified in the scene where Stanley, Stella and Blanche are celebrating Blanche’s birthday; Mitch has failed to show up, since Stanley informed him of his findings regarding Blanche. The background symphonic music is quiet and slow while the tension in the dialogue is rising, since both women jokingly comment on Stanley’s table manners. His silence is vexing – up to the moment when Stella tells him to help her clear the table. The music ascends to a climax and stops abruptly when Stanley crashes his plate to the floor. This function thus creates an intense dramatic atmosphere; however, its effect is notable because the scene itself is dramatically effective. Prendergast also adds that it would be unreasonable to expect the music to make a weak scene stronger, or turn a badly written script into a good film just because of a strong musical score.

In the initial part of this same scene, the music can be classified as “neutral background filler”, i.e. the music used to fill the empty spots between utterances in a dialogue or running beneath the conversation. In this case the music’s function is merely to be present and is usually referred to as the underscore. Film composers traditionally use less complex musical lines, since it makes no sense for such music to interfere with the dramatic action of the plot. This example is one of many similar cases of this function of film music in *Streetcar*.

Among Copland’s functions of film music, the most relevant to the topic of this study is the music that can “underline or create psychological refinements – the unspoken thoughts of a character” (see Prendergast 1992; 216). This aspect is relevant for both Kazan’s film and the Maribor theatre production. In the latter, a considerable share of the music has this function, while in the film, this is, for example, the case when Blanche exits from the bathroom, shortly after Stanley has fetched her trunk from the train station and ransacked several drawers. She decides to try to handle the situation by playing a cool sister-in-law. The music is light and playful, reflecting her feelings, or at least the image of her feelings as she chooses to project them. When Stanley steps out of “her” part of the apartment and she draws the curtain, which also strikes the viewer as a salient visual metaphor for removing the foreign body from her immediate personal zone, she notices the disorder and realises that the intrusion has already taken place. The music suddenly moves away from harmony and sinks into a more dissonant and disharmonic tune. In fear of revealing her true self, she recovers quickly, resuming the flirtatious tone, and the music reverts to the previous joyful atmosphere. One of the most valuable contributions of this musical score is the representation of such psychological and emotional points relevant to the scenes. The music in a film can appear simultaneously with the speech and thus constitutes a third dimension of the filmed play, an addition to the images and words.

## 4 Music as a Source of Emotions in Film

Music in films is often used to involve the viewer emotionally. Identifying and rationally understanding the feelings of a character is frequently possible from the visual features of the film, while the empathetic quality, i.e. simulating the situation in which the viewer could feel these emotions, is usually provided by the musical score, or rather the combination of the two. This idea is supported by many film music composers and theoreticians. In an interview with Meryl Ayres, the composer Wes Hughes suggests that “the music’s main job is to flesh out the emotional and dramatic nuance in a film’s narrative” (2015, n.p.). Michel Chion (1994, 4) speaks about the added value with which sound enriches a given image, while George Burt (1994, 9–10) calls this quality the associative power of music, claiming that film music cannot represent something by itself – neither very concrete images nor abstract issues like, for example, a political system. It is, however, in the music’s very nature to stimulate associations. When music co-appears with the image, it is practically impossible for a viewer not to perceive them as a unified entity, and this joint perception need not always be conscious; on the contrary, the viewer is frequently unaware of the influence of music on perception. Cohen (2001, 249) agrees that film music is one of the strongest sources of emotion in film, even though it was composed with the understanding that it would not draw conscious attention. Gianetti (1999, 207) goes even a step further to claim that, since visual imagery dominates when we are watching a film, music automatically works on a subconscious level. If a viewer fails to remember the music of a certain scene but is able to recall the emotions felt while viewing it, this could be in line with Gianetti’s claim.

Chion (1994, 4) identifies two ways for film music to create a specific emotion regarding the image on the screen: *empathetic* and *anempathetic music*. In the former case, music immediately expresses the feelings that the characters and the viewers feel and absorb, while in the latter, music is indifferent to the mood of the character or the development of film and pretends not to notice it.

According to Gianetti (1999, 206–7), the viewers’ responses to music are influenced by pitch, volume and tempo. He suggests that high-pitched sounds usually generate feelings of tension and suspense, particularly just before the action reaches the climax, often even throughout its duration, while it is the opposite with low-pitched sounds. These can often be used to emphasize the seriousness of a scene, or they can suggest emotions like anxiety, fear, disappointment, regret or grief. The implications of volume and tempo are similar: loud sounds are forceful and threatening, accelerating music enhances tension, while quiet, slow tones slow down the action. They are weak and intimate and often suggest that the visible event is transferring onto the emotional and spiritual level of the character. This situation is frequent in the film version of *Streetcar*, since Blanche’s actions are usually in direct opposition to her thoughts and emotions. The music sometimes supports the former, sometimes the latter, while the viewer witnesses the switching between them. The lazy blues sound in the underscore often represents an antithesis to Blanche’s mind which is “swimming”, or “swirling”, and her head “buzzing”.

Gianetti (1999, 207) also speaks of a *musical motif* that accompanies specific characters, actions, situations or mind states. It appears simultaneously with the corresponding visual material, while it can also be used as foreshadowing or as an alert or warning. Cohen (2001, 258) proposes a similar idea and calls it the technique of leitmotif, where a particular musical theme is repeatedly coupled with a character or event, so that it becomes an integral part of the film through association and thus enables the symbolization of past events. In Alex North’s soundtrack, two

such notable motifs reappear almost constantly: the Varsuviana and Belle Reve reflections. The former is the polka tune, closely associated with Blanche's memory of her young husband's suicide. They were dancing to this music when, after a brief fight, he ran out of the ballroom and shot himself. Whenever this event is brought up in conversation in Blanche's presence, the musical motif appears in the background and continues until the shot when the music stops. This motif first appears at the initial meeting of Blanche and Stanley, when he asks her if she was married. It recurs in the scene when Stanley demands to see the documents regarding the loss of Belle Reve. When he picks up a bunch of love letters from Blanche's trunk, and she tosses them on the floor in an attempt to recover them, the viewer learns that these are Allen's, and Varsuviana sounds again. The next occurrences are when a young boy comes to the door to collect for *The Evening Star* newspaper and when Blanche is telling the story to Mitch on one of their dates, while also vividly and emotionally re-living it. Finally, the melody recurs towards the end of the play, when Mitch comes to break up with Blanche; this time it comes with some variation, i.e. the music does not stop after the shot but a little later, which could be symbolic of Blanche having lost another man in her life and a potential husband.

"Belle Reve Reflections" is a more dissonant motif than the Varsuviana, and it reminds Blanche of the loss of the family estate. The first time we hear this tune, it appears simultaneously with its verbalized gist: to Blanche's accusation of her sister: "I knew you'd take this attitude" and to Stella's question "About what?", Blanche replies: "The Loss". This theme by North, although called somewhat euphemistically "Belle Reve Reflections", represents not the estate itself but its loss, which symbolically recurs later in the film, and it accompanies each of Blanche's losses. It appears again when Stanley leaks the information about Stella's pregnancy to Blanche, which is in a way the loss of her sister as a confidante (which she probably never really had after she came to New Orleans) and a half-safe haven that she tried to build in Stella and Stanley's home. The arrival of the baby rounds out the family and ties it together, making Blanche the odd one out. Finally, when Mitch comes to clear up the situation about her past and eventually breaks up with her, this theme again announces a loss, that of a potential husband and thus the last chance for future happiness.

Certain other motifs or themes in the film contribute considerably to characterization. Even though the track titles suggest that the focus lies primarily in situational issues (e.g., "Stan meets Blanche", "Blanche and Mitch" and "Star and Stella"), the music still unmistakably contains elements of characterization. "Stan meets Blanche" is a slow moving, flirtatious jazz tune in a major key with a brass orchestra base and an outstanding, high-pitched trombone melody. It greatly supports the characterization of Blanche, who is teasing Stanley. "Blanche and Mitch", on the other hand is a rich, pleasant romantic tune with a rather melancholy lyrical character given to it by a minor key. The melody yields several promising harmonious waves, but it never opens into a broad major-key theme. In context, this musical representation of a beautiful love story perfectly fits the relationship between Mitch and Blanche, thus providing a flash-forward of what will later be revealed to the viewer. The only character accorded an individual theme, which is also suggested by its title, is Blanche (the track "Blanchie").

## 5 The Maribor Production of *Streetcar*

Research into the musical score of the Maribor production shows that the choice of music supports the psychoanalytic interpretation of the play that the producers favoured (see Delbianco 2008). This interpretation comes as no surprise, since the influence of psychoanalysis on the American drama was identified in numerous stage pieces even before WWI as well as in the inter-war

and post-WW2 periods. In 1950, Bryllion Fagin reported that three major plays by Tennessee Williams – *Streetcar* being one of them – “are full of typical situations in which psychopathological characters are involved” (1950, 304). The Maribor production could also be seen in the context of Felman’s understanding of the relation between literature and psychoanalysis, in which the latter is usually in a superior position: “[w]hile literature is considered as a body of *language* – to be *interpreted* – psychoanalysis is considered as a body of *knowledge*, whose competence is called upon to *interpret*” (Felman 1977, 5). Not only with reference to *Streetcar*, however; Frederic Crews’ claim from 1975 that “[p]sychoanalysis is the only psychology to have seriously altered our way of reading literature” is to a considerable degree still relevant today (see Stone 1976, 309). Apart from reflecting Blanche’s state of mind, i.e. her conscious thoughts as well as her subconscious ones, music also serves to set a boundary between the scenes; however, even in the latter function it is not completely detached from its psychological role.

One of the immediate observations regarding the musical aspect of this production is that practically all stage music is non-diegetic, which means it is not part of the dramatic action. The only exception is the piece played on poker night after Blanche and Stella return from their night out. Blanche turns on the radio, and both women face a rude objection by Stanley. The tune chosen for this scene is the single most pleasant song in the whole play: a soft male voice singing in a Slavic language (not Slovene) is accompanied by a melodious romantic blues with no electronic effects. The contrast with the half-drunk Stanley’s shouting that she switch it off is thus even more striking, possibly representing his brutal intrusion into Blanche’s vulnerable intimate world. The same tune recurs towards the end of the play when she flirts with the young newspaper boy and kisses him. In both cases, this is Blanche’s first contact with somebody new, a potential gentleman caller, representing for her the safe haven she has sought in her desperate history of failed romantic involvements. The only two moments in the play that light a spark of hope for Blanche are thus thematically connected by the same musical theme, which is pleasant and unmistakably positive. While the audience sees the first promise of happiness at the beginning of the play as believable and possible, the second one is obviously a brief spark that makes the night seem darker when it is gone. The first time this music is played it can be heard in the background throughout Mitch and Blanche’s first meeting, stopping abruptly when Stanley bursts onto the stage and throws the radio over the heap of sand. This could be seen as a sound based flash-forward: symbolically, Blanche’s romantic dream with Mitch is destroyed by Stanley.

The rest of the music in the Frey’s production is electronic. It is instrumental or a combination of instrumental and vocal. The instruments can generally be recognized, (piano/harpsichord, guitar, drums or voice), but in most cases the effect of an artificial electronic echo is strongly felt. The music thus acquires a certain quality of mystery; it sounds less realistic as well as less diegetic, since it is unnatural. The performance features seven (in most cases recurring) themes that follow Gianetti’s previously explained claim that the viewers’ responses to music are influenced by pitch, volume and tempo. The effects of music in this production mostly comply with this claim.

The director Frey decided to start with the last scene of Williams’ play. He first shows Blanche, who is led away by the doctor, and repeats this scene, with variations, at the end. This approximately 12-minute opening is accompanied by a piano theme, extremely slow moving with a strong electronic echo. The simple sequences use three high pitch tones that, in combination with unison or second accompaniment, mostly give the impression of a minor key flavour with occasional tone combinations in major key. Blanche seems to be past her most turbulent moments; her mental instability has drifted into long periods of passivity, and the music reflects

this state of her mind. The theme is repeated in the middle of Blanche's date with Mitch as she is telling him about Allen; in the background we see a naked actor, representing Blanche's young husband, with a male lover (the scene and the part of the plot that has been omitted from the film version).<sup>3</sup> It is possible to understand this musical recurrence as the fundamental event that initiated Blanche's mental decay.

A guitar theme, also considerably echoed, appears a few times as a division between the scenes, e.g. the scene when Blanche reproaches Stella that she left all the responsibility on Blanche's shoulders, and the scene of her first meeting with Stanley. The same theme reappears when Blanche is given a bus ticket back to Laurel from Stanley, when Mitch accuses her of lying and when he tells her she is not pure enough for his mother. However, in the latter two cases, the theme includes a voice – a curt female voice singing “Flores para los muertos” (Flowers for the dead), the famous utterance originally shouted by the Mexican street seller. This is a strong textual reference, offering a large variety of associations and symbolic interpretations in any production. When synchronized with the musical theme, its sinister tone is considerably intensified.

Powerful and distressing music appears when Stanley mentions Blanche's husband in front of her for the first time. It is a loud and fast electronic harpsichord theme that is soon joined by a rapid, almost howling falsetto. This sound implies what must be going on in Blanche's mind, the representation of the turbulent labyrinth of her thoughts. The theme reappears after a stylized violent conversation among the members of the poker gang – we only see their heads in spotlights on a completely blackened background. This fits into the concept of the play as a representation of Blanche's mind, which reacts strongly to any form of behavioural intensity.

Two more musical divisions between the scenes are introduced with a slightly lighter but still loud and determined harpsichord theme in the rhythm of a waltz. With this, Crnić lightens the atmosphere – possibly also in Blanche's subconscious – to prepare the field for the diegetic romantic song of her first meeting with Mitch. This scene ends violently with the half-drunk Stanley destroying the radio and Stella retreating to the upstairs flat with Eunice. Stanley's famous shout for his wife (“Stellaaaaa!”) is followed by what is potentially the strongest and the most disturbing musical theme, composed of sinister electronically deformed low male voices – this is also the most frequently recurring theme, as will be seen later – in the middle of which Stella runs down the sandy slope back to her husband. The stage darkens while the music remains and slowly fades as Blanche attacks Stella the next morning with the reproach for returning to Stanley. After Blanche's monologue about Stanley (“He acts like an animal, has an animal's habits! [...]”), during which he returns and overhears at least part of it, the same theme re-emerges. During this interlude, a dozen white birch trees are lowered onto the sandy slope, and the image of Allen reappears among them. Blanche runs to him – again allowing the interpretation that this is a desperate internal cry for help – but he detaches himself from her and leaves. The stunning visual image of a forest of birches is rich with connotations: apart from being a visualisation of the main character's name (Blanche Dubois in French means “white from the woods”), the bare branches suggest autumn and decay, and together with the image of a forest itself, which in literature often has a secretive and macabre undertone, also has psychoanalytic associations with the hidden parts of one's mind. This perplexing visual scene is intensified with music and is just the beginning of Blanche's sad fall. From that point on, every blow she receives in the developing plot is accompanied with this musical theme: Stanley asking her about Shaw,

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3 The censorship issue in connection to the 1951 film is dealt with in detail by A. Davison (2009, 64).



Stella asking her to stop drinking, Blanche's distressing suspicion that Stella knows something (about her previous life) and is, therefore, acting strangely. Significantly, this theme also recurs after Mitch kisses Blanche and the relationship seems to be going the right way, but the director can obviously not allow the audience to be pleasantly deceived and share one of the infrequent moments of Blanche's "magic". The concluding visual image, which comes after a strong, loud drum interlude accompanying the rape, is that of a sand heap covered in poppies and Blanche wandering among them. Two headlights turn on behind her, representing a silent reminder of a streetcar. Pezdir (2008, 17) sees these as implying a deadly encounter with the unmanageable and unexpected mechanism of *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

## 6 Conclusion

With its charisma as well as its time-tested power and influence, Kazan's 1951 film version of *Streetcar* acquired an entry ticket to the prestigious club of films that represent milestones not only in the world of film but also in the general cultural universe. The soundtrack by Alex North is what today can be declared a classic music score, so its benchmark status in this analysis is plausible: to provide a criterion against which this considerably less traditional Maribor production could be measured or commented. Despite a strong musical part, the prevailing images in the Maribor production are visual: a brown massive wooden wall that is lifted and lowered at the beginning and at the end, a red cloth covering the stage that disappears in front of the viewer's eyes sliding into the orchestra pit, white sand, white birches, red poppies, and intense colours for the clothes of the characters, particularly Blanche; all this is difficult to overcome. Music thus seems like a side effect, merely one layer of the play, overshadowed by the visual. Even though this statement might seem to denigrate the score, it complies with the thesis of this article: music from beneath the surface that gives the impression of being all-encompassing is more than appropriate for the psychoanalytical interpretation of the production. Frey's choice not to stage a classic performance of this challenging and eternally relevant text was probably sound, since it is an almost futile task to try to re-create earlier stagings, including the 1951 film classic with Vivien Leigh and Marlon Brando.

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### **Films and Theatre Productions**

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