

For Immediate Release

7 September, 2019

#STREETCARinSandy #Censorship #Fear #SexualViolence #Community

Regarding: Sandy Actor's Theatre's Production of Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*, directed by Jeffrey Puukka, running 6 – 29 September, 2019:

In response to letters of complaint from community members, on 1 September 2019, theatre leaders and representatives to the Board at Sandy Actor's Theatre interrupted rehearsals to announce that the production could not be performed with Scene 10 presented as it had been staged. (Scene 10 had been a subject of controversy in Tennessee Williams' own life; it is the scene in which the character Stanley rapes the character Blanche.) After passionate debate between representatives to the theatre's board on one side, and the acting ensemble and director of STREETCAR on the other, a compromise was formed, and the production successfully opened as scheduled, on 6 September 2019, although the tone of Scene 10 was shifted.

Prompted by the theatre's ultimatum that the content of the production be softened, the women of the cast and crew wanted to share some thoughts, authored by Lyra Butler-Denman—who plays Blanche in the Sandy Actor's Theatre production—and signed onto by the group.

“Thank you for being here. As you may be aware, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, centers on challenging themes, among them domestic abuse and sexual assault. We, the women of the cast and crew are actively choosing to participate in this play and the conversations it provokes. The painful material presented here exists on television, on the news, and more importantly, exists every day in our communities and our lives. The majority of the women you will see onstage have the lived experience of violence, sexual assault and/or rape. Some of the men on stage have been touched by it too. We are committed to the portrayal of these experiences because most of us experienced two violations: the violation of assault, and the violation of silence and denial.

We have been told to be silent, have been taught to call what happened to us something else, have been told to get over it, have been told it was our fault, been accused of “wanting it”, “asking for it”, or “liking it”, or have simply never been asked. As an ensemble cast we are consensually, collaboratively, actively, gratefully, breaking that silence. We are asking you to witness what is reality for so many of us. We are asking that you not turn away from us, not silence us. In so doing we are asking you to watch something that may be difficult. It is difficult. And painful. And tragic. And happening right now, every day, to women you know. In 1950 Tennessee Williams was asked to cut the rape from the movie version of his play, in response he wrote "*The rape of Blanche by Stanley is a pivotal, integral truth in the play, without which the play loses its meaning which is the ravishment of the tender, the sensitive, the delicate by the savage and brutal forces of modern society. It is a poetic plea for comprehension*".

We could not have said it better.”

(Lyra Butler-Denman, with the women of the cast and crew of *A Streetcar Named Desire* at Sandy Actor's Theatre, 2019.)

Follow Up: Please send your email to both: Jeffrey.Puukka@gmail.com and Jeffrey@sandyactorstheatre.org — Thank you.

Community Engagement talk-back and dialogue dates: Following the matinee performances on 8 and 22 September 2019, we are holding Talk Back and Dialogue events with Lyra Butler-Denman (Blanche), Leila Villasenor (Stella), Daniel Donlon (Stanley), and Jeffrey Puukka (director). If you have questions about the production, would like to share feedback about your experience watching it, or just want to take part and listen, simply present the ticket-stub from the performance you attended, and join us for the discussion.

Performance Dates and Information: *A Streetcar Named Desire* runs Friday and Saturday evenings at 7:30p, and Sunday afternoons at 3p until 29 September 2019.

Online information: More information. <http://jeffreypuukka.com/portfolio/a-streetcar-named-desire/>

Theatre Website & Ticket Sales: Adults are \$18, Seniors Veterans and Students are \$15, and Children are \$13. Active Duty Military in Uniform FREE!!

<http://www.sandyactorstheatre.org>