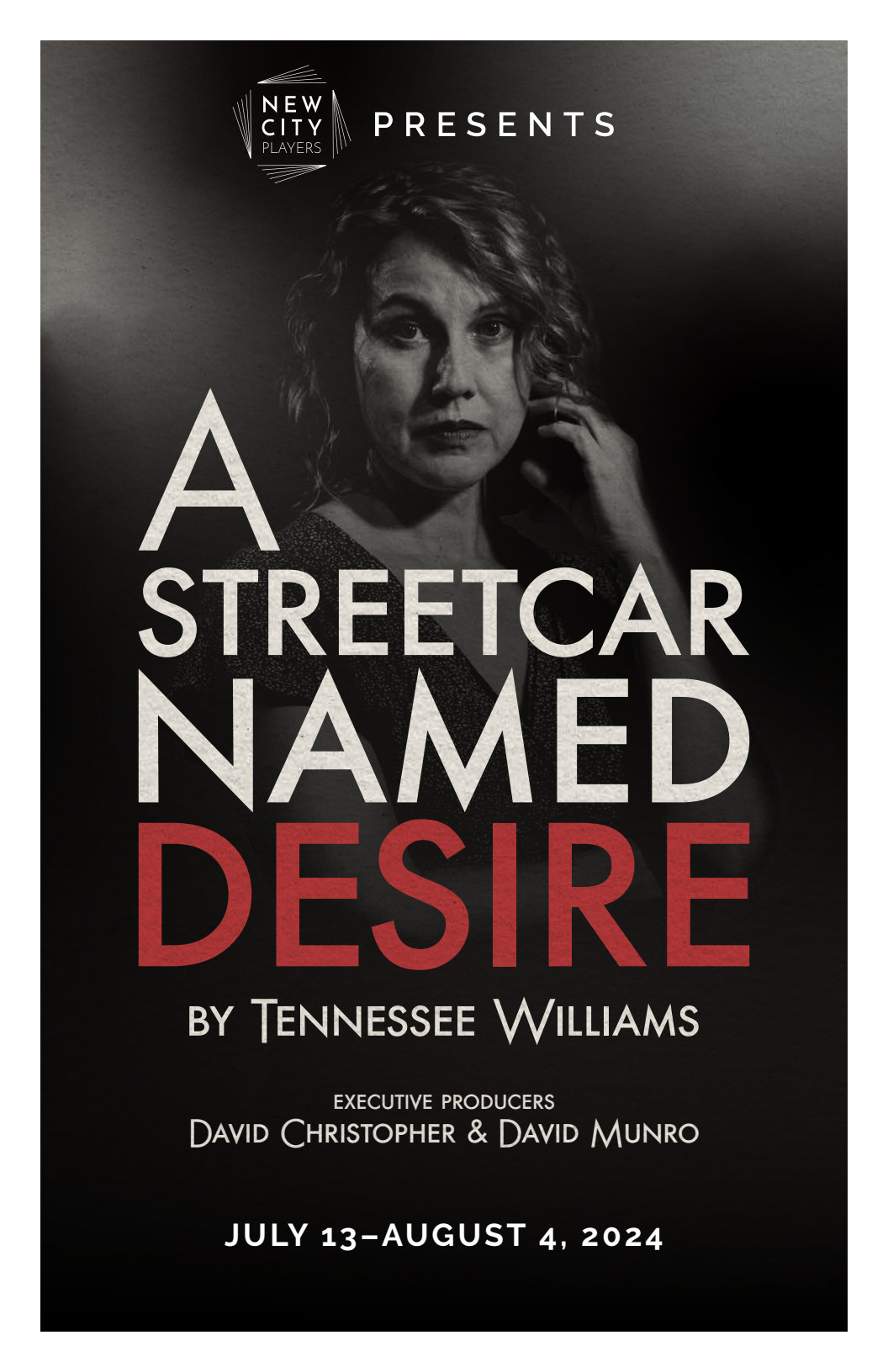




PRESENTS

A black and white portrait of a woman with wavy hair, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. Her hand is near her face, and she is wearing a dark, possibly sequined, top. The background is dark and out of focus.

A
STREETCAR
NAMED
DESIRE

BY TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

DAVID CHRISTOPHER & DAVID MUNRO

JULY 13–AUGUST 4, 2024

Dramaturg's Note

Only a mere week before the United States entered World War II in 1941, Tennessee Williams wrote to a fellow playwright, "I think there is going to be a vast hunger for life after all this death—and for light after all this eclipse. People will want to read, see, feel the living truth and they will revolt against the sing-song Mother Goose book of lies that are being fed to them."

Tennessee Williams knew intimately about the hunger a person can have. He was the son of an abusive, alcoholic, homophobic shoe salesman and a doting, deeply unhappy, religious mother - a potent combination for a gay boy growing-up in his priest-grandfather's Epsicapalian rectory. He spent his life trying to rebel against these circumstances, to survive them with grace, while finding himself in them again and again with his own addictions, abusive partners, and mental illness.

When *Streetcar* was originally produced on Broadway in 1947 (the same year in which it is set), many things could go unsaid to the audience. They would know that while meat rations had ended in 1945, sugar was still rationed until the summer of '47. They would have known how rare and significant Stanley's army rank was - the absolute expertise and the deep honor it carried. How much it spoke to his character and accomplishments. They would recognize his hypersensitivity and explosive overreactions - if they didn't see it in the men around them who returned home from the war, they certainly heard about it in the press. Though PTSD did not yet exist as a diagnosis, there was widespread anxiety around these invisible wounds; the best words they had at the time were "battle neurosis" or "psychoneurotic casualties". Williams' lover at the time of writing *Streetcar*, Pancho Rodriguez y Gonzalez, was himself a World War II veteran and abusive alcoholic, who self-described as "a casualty of war." While a 1947 audience would recognize the signs of trauma in Stanley, would they have recognized them in Blanche?

Blanche and Stanley's explosive incompatibility spoke not just to their own traumas, but to the social change rippling through postwar America. Tens of millions of service members returned home to a very different social landscape than they had left. Ten million people of color and white women had just lost wartime jobs that were not afforded to them pre-war. A booming postwar economy allowed many lower class white Americans significant upward mobility. Blanche, Stella, and Stanley all represent people in different places within these dramatically shifting social dynamics. Each one of them finds a different way to respond to their changing world. These characters want to do more than simply survive - they are desperate to live and live fully. They hunger for freedom, sensation, power, and to touch and be touched.

"All my life I have been haunted by the obsession that to desire a thing or to love a thing intensely is to place yourself in a vulnerable position, to be a possible, if not a probable, loser of what you most want." -Tennessee Williams



Ali Tallman
Dramaturg