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**Tennessee Williams Festival St. Louis Announces
'A Streetcar Named Desire' as the 2018 Main Stage Production**

Tim Ocel to direct the production set for May 10-19 at the Grandel Theatre

ST. LOUIS (Feb. 23, 2018) – Sophia Brown and Nick Narcisi will create the tempestuous relationship between renowned characters Blanche DuBois and Stanley Kowalski in "A Streetcar Named Desire," the main stage production of the third annual Tennessee Williams Festival St. Louis, May 10-19, at the Grandel Theatre. Tim Ocel will direct the production for this year's Festival titled, "Tennessee Williams: The French Quarter Years."

The French Quarter-themed Festival will also include a one-man show, two panel discussions, a staged reading and a Stella Shouting Contest. The Festival will open with "Streetcar" at 7:30 p.m. on Thurs., May 10, at the Grandel Theatre. Festivities will kick-off at 5:30 p.m. with a traditional brass band, New Orleans-inspired parade through Grand Center led by Harvey Lockhart and the Point of View Jazz Ensemble from Healing Arts Center. The parade is open to the public.

A unique feature to this production of "Streetcar" is that it will reflect Williams' original stage direction in terms of the lead characters' ages. As noted in the original, Blanche is 30 and Stella, 25; productions typically portray Blanche in her mid-forties. "Streetcar" will also feature an original score by local pianist and composer Henry Palkes, whose solo and ensemble performances include concerts throughout the United States, most notably at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center. Palkes, the affiliate keyboard artist for the St. Louis Symphony since 1992, is currently performing with the First National Tour of "An American in Paris."

"Streetcar" performances are scheduled Thurs. through Sun., May 10-13; and Wed. and Thurs., May 16-17; and Sat., May 19. The Stella Shouting Contest will follow the May 13 performance. In addition, there will be no performance on Fri., May 18, as

the Festival will join St. Louisans in celebrating the 100th anniversary of the St. Louis Municipal Opera Theatre.

The Wed., May 16, performance will be audio described by Mind's Eye Radio for the visually impaired. Tickets to Festival events will be available March 1 at MetroTix.com. Visit www.twstl.org, or call 314-517-5253, for additional event information.

"After the exhilarating response to some of our shows these last two seasons of the Festival, it's evident that our community has a hunger for Tennessee Williams' work," said Carrie Houk, founder and artistic director of the Tennessee Williams Festival St. Louis. "'Streetcar' is one of the most critically acclaimed and beloved plays in the history of American theater and we're excited to be able to showcase it in the newly renovated Grandel Theatre. I think it's important for generations to come, to know how much our city meant to Tennessee Williams and how much of it is reflected in his work. He's an important part of our cultural landscape, both here in St. Louis and beyond."

Other highlights included in this year's Festival include:

- Jacob Storms, the 2017 United Solo "Best One-Man Show" award winner, will present "Tennessee Rising," Fri. through Sun., May 11-13, at the .Zack Theatre. Conceived, written and performed by Storms, the production sheds light on the legendary playwright. Talkbacks with Storms will follow the performances on Friday and Saturday.
- Two one-hour panels – "Tennessee Williams: The French Quarter Years" and "A Streetcar Named Desire" – will be presented at 10 a.m. and 11 a.m. on Sat., May 12, respectively, on the "Streetcar" set at the Grandel. The panels will be moderated by noted Tennessee Williams scholars David Kaplan and Henry Schvey.
- "Interior: Panic," Williams' stunning one-act precursor to "A Streetcar Named Desire," will be performed with scripts-in-hand under the direction of Tom Mitchell, Head of the Department of Theatre at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. The staged reading is set for 11 a.m. on Sat., May 19, on the "Streetcar" set at the Grandel Theatre.

Regarded as one of the finest plays of the 20th century and Williams' greatest, "Streetcar," which debuted in 1947, is the story of a troubled former schoolteacher, Blanche DuBois, after she leaves a small town in Mississippi and moves in with her sister (Stella) and her husband (Stanley) in New Orleans. With her flirtatious Southern-belle attitude, Blanche upends the precarious relationship between her sister and brother-in-law, leading to even greater conflict during her brief stay. Recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for Drama (1948), the original Broadway cast included Jessica Tandy, Marlon Brando, Karl Malden and Kim Hunter. Two years later, Laurence Olivier directed the London premiere starring Vivien Leigh and Bonar Colleano. In 1951, the movie "A Streetcar

Named Desire” won four Academy Awards with the reprisal cast of Brando, Hunter, Leigh and Malden. Opera, ballet and TV adaptations of the play are continuously produced worldwide.

In addition to Sophia Brown, who is making her second Festival appearance, and Nick Narcisi, the St. Louis cast will include Lana Dvorak (Stella), Spencer Sickmann (Mitch), Amy Loui (Eunice), Isaiah Di Lorenzo (Steve), Jesse Munoz (Pablo), Jacob Flekier, Thomasina Clarke, David Wassilak, Maggie Winiger, and Isabel Pastrana. Narcisi, of Milwaukee, Wis., performs regularly throughout the Midwest, most recently with the Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Montana Shakespeare in the Parks and the Great River Shakespeare Festival.

“Tennessee Williams was a brilliant playwright – one of the Masters of the American Theater, and what is significant about him and ‘Streetcar’ is that he truly understood Blanche, Stella, Stanley and Mitch, and had the imagination to walk in their shoes, and to write the truth about them,” said Ocel. “Like every great play, ‘Streetcar’ stirs us to think and empathize, leading us to some very thought-provoking questions about tension, desire and our basic human instincts about life itself.”

Ocel’s previous local work includes productions at New Jewish Theatre (“Old Wicked Songs” and “Speed-the-plow”), Shakespeare Festival St. Louis (“Henry IV”), Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Union Avenue Opera and Metro Theatre Company. Ocel is an adjunct professor for Webster University’s Conservatory of Theatre Arts.

In addition to Palkes, the creative team includes Sean Savoie (Lighting), Michele Siler (Costumes), Amanda Werre (Sound) and James Wolk (Set Design).

Leadership support for the Tennessee Williams Festival St. Louis is generously provided by Nancy and Ken Kranzberg and Mary Strauss. The Festival is also funded in part by the Missouri Arts Council and the Missouri Humanities Council.

About the Tennessee Williams Festival St. Louis

Since its inception three years ago, the Tennessee Williams Festival St. Louis has embraced the work of the legendary playwright, poet and artist, whose works include multiple Pulitzer Prizes such as “The Glass Menagerie,” “Cat on a Hot Tin Roof,” “Suddenly Last Summer,” “Camino Real,” and “A Streetcar Named Desire,” to name just a few. Williams’ work reflects the nearly 20 years his family lived in St. Louis, and his creations range from the famed classics, to adaptations for film and opera, to dozens of newly discovered plays and writings that have been continuously, documented performed and studied around the world. The Festival, founded by St. Louisan Carrie Houk, has attracted thousands to the variety of readings, panel discussions, concerts, art exhibitions, productions and playwright contests that make up the annual event. For more information, please visit www.twstl.org, or email info@twstl.org.

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