



University of North Texas College of Music

Doctoral Recital | Friday, March 3 & 5, 2023 | 7:30 & 3:00 pm | Lyric Theater

Jessica Kori Miller, soprano

A Streetcar Named Desire (1995) André Previn (1929–2019)

role of Blanche DuBois

Arias:

I Want Magic

I Can Smell the Sea Air

Stage Director: Taylor Rachel Carnes

Music Director: Stephanie Rhodes Russell

UNT Concert Orchestra

Scenic Designer: Donna Marquet

Costume Designer: Michael Robinson

Lighting Designer: John Felt

Répétiteurs: Jiyoun Oh, Sara Steele

André Previn's operatic adaptation of Tennessee Williams' Pulitzer Prize-winning play *A Streetcar Named Desire* centers around Blanche DuBois, a complex and multifaceted character who, following a personal tragedy, distances herself from reality. Blanche is a former schoolteacher from Laurel, Mississippi who travels to New Orleans to see her sister Stella after losing their family's ancestral home, Belle Reve. The opera opens with Blanche arriving at the French Quarter in search of Stella's home. Because she is ill equipped to accept her new reality, Blanche's heavy drinking, poor mental health, and haunted past become increasingly apparent as her fragile state of mind begins to slowly deteriorate. After settling in, Blanche's relationship with her sister starts to become increasingly strained as Stella's husband Stanley continues to accuse Blanche of being delusional and dishonest. He is the only one who can see Blanche for who she truly is. Blanche's story hits an all time low when she is sexually assaulted by Stanley and is ultimately committed to a mental institution after telling Stella what happened.

Blanche's role presents challenges both dramatically and vocally. It demands the ability to convey multiple layers of emotional turmoil under a flowery façade while also maintaining vocal stamina. Previn's score incorporates a variety of musical styles, including jazz, blues, and contemporary music, reflecting the opera's setting in New Orleans as well as drawing attention to Blanche's mental state as she slowly loses her sanity. For example, Blanche's tessitura remains high throughout the opera with increasing dissonance and jagged rhythmic material, revealing her heightened emotional state. The harmonic material proves itself to be an integral part of Blanche's character development as well. Previn uses leitmotifs and recurring thematic musical material throughout the opera for each character. Blanche's leitmotif is introduced in the opening bars of the opera and can be heard multiple times throughout its entirety. Each time it is heard, you may notice slight variations which continue to compound and slightly change as the story progresses. This is Previn's way of portraying Blanche's deteriorating emotional and mental state which is significant in the dramatic impact of the story's development.