



Almeria Campbell and Rod Brogan. Photo by Matthew Holler.

THE HEART IN THE HEADLINES

BY BENEDICT BURGESS

Recently divorced mother Kendra Ellis-Connor is counting minutes all alone in a police station waiting room. She is clearly

nervous - unable to sit still for long. She paces back and forth, leaving multiple panicked voicemails on her son's cellphone.

He is missing. She has gone to the police for answers. But there are

none. At least, none...yet.

Before long, more souls storm into the waiting room, including Scott Connor, Kendra's ex-husband and father of their missing son, Jamal. The dark, empty police station soon becomes a crucible for this fractured family. Kendra may have called Scott to help their son, but it is clear the issues leading to their divorce still exist, threatening to tear their family further apart.

"*American Son* is not a cheap thriller," says Director Kate

Alexander. "We can hear the people talking, arguing, feeling, reaching out with breadth and humanity."

"Kendra is unrelenting and will not take no for an answer," said Almeria Campbell who plays Kendra in FST's production. "She wants to know where Jamal is, and more importantly, if he's okay. It's any mother's story."

American Son is, no doubt, an intense ride. *Variety* hails it as a "gripping new play," while *The New*



Daniel Petzold. Photo by Matthew Holler.

York Times describes it as filled with "unrelenting tension at every level." The play's power, however, comes not from its sensational scenario, but from something far more understated: its characters and their relationships.

"It's clear in the play that Scott and Kendra love each other, but they have differences in how they wanted to raise Jamal," said Campbell. "But after a certain point, Scott and Kendra become united in finding out Jamal's whereabouts - no matter what it takes."

That trauma boils to the surface as Police Lieutenant John Stokes arrives on the scene, shedding light on the mysteries lurking in the dark and rainy night. Kendra and Scott are forced to confront not only their own relationship, but their relationship with their son and his precarious place in the world. A world in which, no matter what Kendra and Scott do, their son will never truly be safe.

"This is a play about perceptions, family, love, fear, anger and sadness," explains actor Lawrence Evans, who portrays Lt. Stokes. "It looks at a current and recurring problem, and acknowledges its complexity. It doesn't pretend to have a simple political or social solution."

By exploring these characters and how their relationships are tested under such extraordinary circumstances, *American Son* cuts through chaos to turn today's headlines into a story everyone can hear.

"If we listen carefully," says Director Kate Alexander, "we will think about things and feel things that we never have before. The play will take you there. Come with an open heart and fearsome mind." ■

Performance Checklist

- ☐ You are attending this performance in the Gompertz Theatre.
- ☐ Have you checked your show time?
- ☐ Have you made your reservation for The Green Room Café & Bar prior to your show?
- ☐ Do you have your tickets or will you be picking them up from will call?