

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### STELLAR CAST ANNOUNCED FOR ASBURY PARK THEATER COMPANY'S UPCOMING DRAMA, *AMERICAN SON* AT JERSEY SHORE ARTS CENTER IN APRIL

*APTCo presents the Broadway play, American Son as its next production to shine a light on the racial divide in the United States that rose to the forefront over the past couple of years.*

**ASBURY PARK, N.J. (March 22, 2023)** – After the success of the two shows *Green Day's American Idiot* and *Million Dollar Quartet*, [Asbury Park Theater Company \(APTCo\)](#) is thrilled to announce that their next production will be the gripping and timely drama, *American Son* by Christopher Demos-Brown. The show will run for three performances only at The Palaia Theater inside Jersey Shore Arts Center in the neighboring town of Ocean Grove.

“We are thrilled to be presenting our next show in this beautiful space, a perfect setting for an intimate play. By hosting us, Jersey Shore Arts Center is helping us to achieve our goal of bringing professional level theater to Asbury Park and the surrounding area,” said [William Whitefield](#), Producing Artistic Director of [APTCo](#). “JSAC has parking, is located right alongside of hip the downtown area of Asbury Park, and is just a short walk to the shops and restaurants of Ocean Grove.”

APTCo's mission to create powerful, invigorating and transformative professional theater that inspires, celebrates and enriches the community is truly being realized with this production. *American Son* is a four person drama that depicts an estranged bi-racial couple who must confront their feelings about race and bias after their son is detained by the local police following a traffic stop. The play ran on Broadway in 2018 and featured Kerry Washington and Steven Pasquale as the estranged couple. The play was later filmed for TV and was Emmy-nominated for Outstanding Television Movie in 2020.

“We have been wanting to produce *American Son* for a couple of years now,” says Bob Angelini, APTCo's Managing Director. “The subject matter is very important. The themes in the play go beyond race and racism. While the play is not based on an actual event, it shows us in a real scenario how difficult it is to navigate our way through a heated racial climate.” Angelini, who also directs the production is a retired police officer himself. “It's important to keep the conversation alive,” he says. “Everyone deserves to be heard and this play allows that discussion to take place.”

Heading the cast as Kendra Ellis-Connor is local actress Natalie Hayes-Scott. No stranger to the New Jersey theater scene, she has appeared in several shows with Dunbar Repertory Company, Algonquin Arts Theatre, Spring Lake Theatre and Axelrod Performing Arts Center in such

shows as *A Chorus Line*, *Little Shop of Horrors* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*, among others. She is also a theater teacher and choreographer having just staged the hit musical *Once On This Island* for Phoenix Productions. Christopher Verdi, an actor with several local credits, will take on the role of Scott Connor. Verdi is a graduate of Atlantic Theatre Company's School of Drama in NYC. He was seen in the leading role of Joshua in NENA's production of *Corpus Christi* and their production of *The Laramie Project*. At Algonquin Arts Theatre, he played the role of Tom in Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*.

Garwood's Garrett Forrestal will play the role of Officer Paul Larkin. He was last seen as Jerry Lee Lewis in APTCo's *Million Dollar Quartet* and as Kenickie in *Grease* at Axelrod. Also a drama teacher, he is a graduate of University of Michigan's Musical Theater Department. Rounding out the cast as Lieutenant John Stokes is Darrell Lawrence Willis, Sr. of Howell. He is the Founder and Producing Artistic Director for Dunbar Repertory Company and holds a B.A. in Theater Arts from Susquehanna University and a M.A. in Theater Studies from Montclair State University. He has produced, directed and acted in over 100 plays and musicals during his 52 year theatrical career.

"Clearly we are so proud of the amazing cast that has been assembled to perform in this play," says Whitefield. "We pride ourselves on doing professional level theater, and so much of that depends on the talent involved." Whitefield, also a professional actor, director, singer and composer has written the incidental piano music that will underscore the play which he will perform live during the show. "Music is such a big part of what we do at APTCo," he says. "A play as delicate as this one deserves a live score."

APTCo is proud to recognize PNC Private Bank as their 2023 Season Platinum Sponsor and Manasquan Bank as a Bronze Sponsor for *American Son*. "We truly want to thank these fine institutions who value the arts for their generosity," says Bob Angelini. "We are so lucky to have the support of these businesses in our community."

*American Son* will be performed on Friday, April 28 at 8pm, Saturday April 29 at 8pm and Sunday April 30 at 3pm at The Palatia Theater located inside the Jersey Shore Arts Center, 66. S. Main Street, Ocean Grove, NJ. All tickets are \$35. Doors will open 30 minutes prior to the start of the show.

To learn more about Asbury Park Theater Company, *American Son* and to purchase tickets for this show, visit [www.asburyparktheatercompany.org](http://www.asburyparktheatercompany.org).



*Pictured above from L to R: Christopher Verdi, Darrell Lawrence Willis, Sr. and Natalie Hayes-Scott rehearsing a scene from Asbury Park Theater Company's upcoming production of American Son. (photo by William Whitefield)*