



Timely and powerful new play coming to St. Jacobs Country Playhouse this April

Wednesday, February 22, 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – As Drayton Entertainment prepares for the launch of its 2023 Season, it is ratcheting up the tension with *American Son* – a smart and utterly engrossing drama that explores the inherent challenges of raising children in a society grappling with race and identity.

This topical, thoughtful, and timely play is poised to be a landmark production in the award-winning theatre organization’s storied history when it takes centre stage at the **St. Jacobs Country Playhouse** from **April 5 to April 23**.

“We’re committed to bringing diverse voices and perspectives to our audience, and *American Son* is a story that we all desperately need to hear,” says **Alex Mustakas**, Artistic Director of Drayton Entertainment. “It grabs you from the very beginning, and doesn’t let go.”

Winner of both the distinguished Laurents/Hatcher Award and the New York Times *Critics’ Pick*, this play explores a nation’s racial divide through the eyes of parents grappling with their worst fears.

The play unfolds in real time, beginning when Kendra Ellis-Connor arrives at a Miami police station at 4 a.m. looking for information about her missing son. Over the next 90 minutes, this thought-provoking study of the human experience boldly and bravely explores the maternal, marital, and societal pressures that are defining our world in this very moment.

American Son will be directed by **Jordan Laffrenier**, who has held many theatre development roles including the high profile musicals *Amélie* and *Paradise Square* on Broadway and *Sousatska* in Toronto. Laffrenier is also the current Associate Artistic Director at Canadian Stage.

Laffrenier will be joined by Set Designer **Douglas Paraschuk**, Costumer Designer **Jenine Kroeplin**, and Lighting Designer **Raha Javanfar**, along with Stage Manager **Paul Pembleton** and Assistant Stage Manager **Nadene Riehl**.

In her Drayton Entertainment debut, **Oyin Oladejo** will play Kendra Ellis-Connor, the mother of the missing teen. Oladejo has appeared in numerous theatre productions including *Hamlet* with Shakespeare Theatre Company in Washington D.C., *Tartuffe*, *Eurydice*, *Happy Place*, *Spoon River*, *A Doll's House*, and *Noises Off* with Souleppper Theatre, *The Father* with Coalmine Theatre, and *In This World* with Roseneath Theatre, which earned her a Dora Award. Oladejo can also be seen on the small screen as bridge officer Joann Owosekun on CBS's *Star Trek: Discovery*.

Mike Shara will appear as father, ex-husband, and current FBI agent Scott Connor. Shara was most recently seen in Drayton Entertainment's 2018 production of *The Rainmaker*. Elsewhere, Shara has appeared in numerous seasons at both the Stratford Festival and Shaw Festival, and has had recurring roles on *Murdoch Mysteries*, *Little Mosque on the Prairie*, and *Queer as Folk*.

Wade Bogert-O'Brien will tackle the role of rookie night-shift police officer Paul Larkin in his Drayton Entertainment debut. Bogert-O'Brien has appeared on stage at London's Grand Theatre, the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, Studio 180/Mirvish Productions and numerous seasons at the Shaw Festival. He has also appeared on screen in *Lock And Key*, *Anne with an E*, and *Workin' Moms*.

After appearing as Hoke in last season's hit play *Driving Miss Daisy*, **Cassel Miles** returns to Drayton Entertainment as the tough, no-nonsense career police officer Lieutenant John Stokes. Miles has also appeared in the US Tour of *Fosse* and in the Mirvish productions of *Crazy For You* and *Adventures of a Black Girl In Search Of God*. Miles was nominated for a Dora for his performance of *Angels in America* at Canadian Stage.

American Son is written by **Christopher Demos-Brown**, a respected Miami-based trial lawyer and accomplished playwright. He drew on his legal and literary expertise after reading Ta-Nehisi Coates' celebrated book "Between the World and Me".

American Son is proudly sponsored by **Strassburger Windows & Doors** and **St. Jacobs Furniture House**. The Media Sponsors are **Wave.FM 94.7**, **CityNews 570**, and the **Waterloo Region Record**.

American Son runs **April 5** through **April 23** at the **St. Jacobs Country Playhouse**. Regular performance tickets are \$55 for adults, \$34 for youth under 20 years of age and \$45 for groups of 20 or more and select Discount Dates. HST is applicable to all ticket prices. Tickets may be purchased in person at any Drayton Entertainment Box Office, by calling the Box Office at **519-747-7788** or toll free at **1-855-drayton (372-9866)**, or online at www.draytonentertainment.com.

-30-

For more information please contact:
Samareh Jones, Marketing & Development Associate
(519) 621-5511 ext. 256
samareh@draytonentertainment.com