

## **Manipulation à la Mamet**

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To say that David Mamet has a way with words is like saying Albert Einstein was a clever fellow. Indeed, Mamet's reputation as both playwright and screenwriter is marked not only by his keen observations of the human condition, but also by a style of dialogue that is uniquely his own.

"The way Mamet writes a scene – with all of those half sentences, unfinished thoughts and interruptions – is so real, so genuine," said René Copeland, producing director for Tennessee Repertory Theatre. "He holds a unique place in American theatre, and rightfully so."

Copeland knows a thing or two when it comes to dissecting Mamet. She directed Tennessee Rep's popular production of *Oleanna* last season and is currently directing *Speed-the-Plow*, which opened last night at TPAC's Johnson Theater.

"*Speed-the-Plow* really skewers the Hollywood mentality. It takes on some of Mamet's favorite themes – deceit, seduction and manipulation. But this is far more comedic than *Oleanna*, with all of the acerbic wit and banter you would expect from Mamet. The play focuses on the classic moral dilemma facing Hollywood producer Bobby Gould (David Alford): art versus commerce. Should he make another lowbrow action movie with his friend Charlie Fox (Jessejames Locorriere)? Or should he take a chance on a beautiful girl (Marin Miller) and her idea for the film adaptation of a spiritual novel?"

"Mamet loves to prod those who deserve to be prodded," Copeland said with a laugh. "In *Oleanna* it was the pompousness of academia. In *Speed-the-Plow* it's the seemingly limitless power of Hollywood. This play was written in 1988, but it remains absolutely relevant and accessible because the topic is so universal."

Copeland said this production represents a wonderful opportunity to reunite with Alford and Miller, who faced off in *Oleanna*.

"We're so fortunate to have David and Marin together again for another round of Mamet. There is such a level of comfort among the three of us. And yet Jessejames has fit right in. I think audiences are going to be blown away by him.

"Mamet is just incredibly challenging," she added. "It takes a lot of time to decipher the script, unlocking the rhythm and intentions behind the words. But once you get off book, it starts to come together and it's just so natural. That's the beauty of his writing – the dialogue feels so real."