



## 'Love in American Times' a merger of hearts

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LOOKING FOR LOVE — Jack Heller (J. Michael Flynn) and Scarlett Mori-Yang (Linda Park) meet through a matchmaker and develop a romantic relationship in Philip Kan Gotanda's production of "Love in American Times" at the San Jose Repertory Theatre. KEVIN BERNE IMAGES

Philip Kan Gotanda offers a modern look at the concept of matchmaking in his brilliant dark comedy, "Love in American Times," which recently opened at the San Jose Repertory Theatre. Directed by Rick Lombardo, the play touches on issues of class and race in a highly entertaining manner.

The story focuses on 70-year-old Jack Heller (J. Michael Flynn), a wealthy Caucasian businessman who is interested in dating a much younger woman. A matchmaker connects him with Scarlett Mori-Yang (Linda Park of "Star Trek: Enterprise"), a smart and beautiful 33-year-old Asian woman. Gotanda weaves in the interracial aspect in an insightful way.

While Jack is looking for a young wife, Scarlett wants to meet a well-to-do and powerful man who is successful in the business world.

The play begins with Jack and Scarlett's first date at a restaurant. The connection between the two characters is instant. The two trade a series of verbal jabs and share their darkest secrets. They discover that they have much more in common than meets the eye.

Scarlett is revealed to be an extremely driven individual who will do whatever it takes to get to the top. She is also focused on becoming a mother. On the other hand, Jack is more laidback and possesses a goofy charm. He has already made his millions and basically wants an attractive woman to escort around town.

They are both strong-willed individuals who find that they are able to connect on a deep level. It appears to be a possible merger in the making. Gotanda offers crackling dialogue that keeps the story moving quickly. Flynn and Park share excellent chemistry and their sparring is highly comical.

The second half of the play takes place on Jack's yacht with his ex-wife and children. During this trip, dark secrets are revealed that will affect everyone.

"Love in American Times" beautifully captures the relationship between two seemingly mismatched people.

Gotanda was inspired to write "Love in American Times" after attending a cocktail party with his wife and hearing about a matchmaker, he said in an interview with Karen Atree Piemme that was published in the San Jose Repertory Theatre program.

"We heard a story about a woman who lived in Silicon Valley who arranged for introductions between very wealthy white males and beautiful, accomplished Asian females, and at first we thought, 'Well, this sounds kind of fanciful.' Then later, we heard from a friend of ours who had gone on one of these dates. After I heard that I thought, 'This is rather an interesting phenomenon' and I began to think about that as a possibility for a play," he said.

For more than three decades, the playwright has served as a major influence in American theater. His latest offering is sure to continue that legacy.

*"Love in American Times" is playing through Sunday, June 5 at the San Jose Repertory, 101 Paseo de San Antonio, San Jose. Two hours, 20 minutes. Tickets cost \$35-\$69. (408) 367-7255. For information, visit [www.sjrep.com](http://www.sjrep.com) or call (408) 367-7255.*