



LOVE IN AMERICAN TIMES at SJRep stunningly staged

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(l to r) Jack (J. Michael Flynn) is captivated by Scarlett's (Linda Park) astute observation skills in San Jose Rep's world premiere of *Love in American Times*. Photo by Kevin Berne.

LOVE IN AMERICAN TIMES: Comedy. By Philip Kan Gotanda. Directed by Rick Lombardo. San Jose Repertory, 101 Paseo de San Antonio, San Jose. Two hours, 20 minutes (408) 367-7255 [begin_of_the_skype_highlighting](#) (408) 367-7255 [end_of_the_skype_highlighting](#) or www.sjrep.com. Through June 5, 2011.

Handsomely staged, a seasoned cast and clever direction are the ingredients displayed in San Jose Rep's (SJR) world premiere of Phillip Van Gotanda's *Love in American Times*. After two hours and twenty minutes (with intermission), the question lingers as to the author's primary stimuli for writing the play?

Gotanda has a deservedly laudatory reputation for championing plays that feature Asian Americans in prominent roles. Two previous world premieres staged by SJR were the 2002-2003 *The Wind Cries Many* and *Sisters Matsumoto* in 1998-1999. He is also an up-and-coming filmmaker.

The two major characters in *Love in American Times* are 70 year Jack Heller (J. Michael Flynn) a powerful, rich, egotistical tycoon who attempts to seduce the stunningly beautiful /sexy 33-year-old ambitious Machiavellian Asian American Scarlett Mori-Yang (Linda Park). Jack has pre-arranged "accidentally" to meet Scarlett in an upscale watering hole where he dominates as everyone caters to his every whim. Gotanda's words given to his characters in the 55-minute first scene are pleasure to hear as each line adds character definition. Jack and Scarlett are intellectually matched and their physical attraction ignites sparks as they "negotiate" the terms of this impending relationship. He is desirous of having a young trophy woman, not necessarily a wife, to parade about. She is determined to marry into wealth thus gaining social stature. All this plays out on Robin Sanford Robert's magnificent set that reflects the upper crust haunts of the affluent. You will be stunned with what greets Scarlett when she accepts the platonic invitation to "Wanna come up to see my. . ." visit to his apartment and even more stunned with her actions. A tentative verbal prenuptial agreement includes a promise not to contact his three grown children or his wife of 35 years and not to get pregnant. In addition, he will spend Christmas holidays with his family and she is free to use the private jet to travel with her girlfriends. She agrees.

Whereas the first act takes place in actual time, Gotanda shifts gears into a non-linear mode to start act two with “A Voice” eerily offering mundane philosophical observations and a flashback of young Scarlett scattering the ashes of her Korean father in the sea between Japan and Korea emphasizing the link between the two cultures.

Months have passed when the story resumes with Jack and his family celebrating Christmas aboard a yacht under a full moon in the Caribbean. The unexpected appearance of Scarlett leads to dramatic consequences and stunning revelations. J. Michael Flynn and Linda Park are pitch perfect in their roles even when they are directed to switch from reassured controllers of their own destinies to deeply vulnerable scarred individuals.

Five other actors are a true ensemble bringing distinctive qualities to the 19 roles they are asked to perform. They are Rosina Reynolds, Craig Marker, Arwen Anderson, Gabe Marin and Zarah Mahler.

Kedar K. Adour, MD

Courtesy of www.theatreworldinternetmagazine.com