

## World premiere ‘Human Interest Story’ explores homelessness and truth in journalism

Posted on [January 20, 2020](#)



Rob Nagle and Tanya Alexander in “Human Interest Story.”

“The line between where you are now and sleeping in your car is much thinner than you think.” **The Fountain Theatre** presents the **world premiere** of a timely new play, written and directed by **Stephen Sachs** (*Arrival & Departure*, *Citizen: An American Lyric*, *Bakersfield Mist*), about homelessness, celebrity worship and the assault on American journalism. ***Human Interest Story*** opens at the Fountain on **Feb. 15**, where performances continue through April 5.

Set in the fast-moving world of new media, *Human Interest Story* chronicles the journey of newspaper columnist Andy Kramer, played by award-winning actor **Rob Nagle** (recent credits include *Apple Season* at Moving Arts and *The Judas Kiss* at Boston Court). Suddenly laid off when a corporate takeover downsizes his paper — a print publication struggling for readers in changing times — Andy fabricates a letter to his column in retaliation. The letter, from an imaginary homeless woman named “Jane Doe” who announces she will kill herself on the 4th of July because of the heartless state of the world, goes viral, and Andy is forced to hire a homeless woman (**[Tanya Alexander](#)** — *Mono/Poly* at the Odyssey and *Future Sex Inc.* at the Lounge) to stand-in as the fictitious Jane. She

becomes an overnight internet sensation and a national women's movement is ignited.

According to Sachs, the play is about how contrary and opposing impulses can hide in the same human being. "A newspaper columnist, in the course of writing a human interest story on another individual, is forced to confront truths about himself," he explains.

The cast also includes **James Harper**, previously seen at the Fountain in *The Accomplices*, as newspaper publisher Harold Cain. Playing multiple roles are **Richard Azurdia** (*My Mañana Comes* at the Fountain), **Aleisha Force** (Cleopatra in *Antony and Cleopatra* at Virginia Shakes, Maggie in *Dancing at Lughnasa* at Barnstormers Theatre), **Matt Kirkwood** (*Our Class* at Son of Semele, *The Goat or, who is Sylvia?* at the LGBT Center) and **Tarina Pouncy** (*Vendetta Chrome* at Coeurage Theatre; *Les Blancs* at Rogue Machine; and *The Old Settler* at International City Theatre, for which she garnered an NAACP award).

The creative team for *Human Interest Story* includes scenic and video designer **Matthew G. Hill**; lighting designer **Jennifer Edwards**; composer and sound designer **Peter Bayne**; costume designer **Shon LeBlanc**; video hair and makeup designer **Diahann McCrary**; and prop master **Michael Allen Angel**. The production stage manager is **Emily Lehrer**, and the assistant stage manager is **Nura Ferdowsi**. **Simon Levy**, **James Bennett** and **Deborah Culver** produce for the Fountain Theatre. Producing underwriters include **David** and **Mary Jo Volk**; **Laurel** and **Robert Silton**; **Lois Tandy**; and **Toby** and **Daniel Bernstein**. The executive producer is **Karen Kondazian**.

The story was initially inspired by the 1941 Frank Capra classic film [Meet John Doe](#).

Stephen Sachs is the co-founder and co-artistic director of the Fountain Theatre and the author of 15 plays. Recent work includes his Deaf/Hearing love story, *Arrival & Departure* ("Critic's Choice," *Los Angeles Times*); his stage adaptation of William Goldman's screenplay for *All the President's Men*, starring Bradley Whitford and Joshua Malina at L.A. City Hall; and his stage adaptation of Claudia Rankine's *Citizen: An American Lyric*, which premiered at the Fountain Theatre and was remounted by Center Theatre Group at the Kirk Douglas Theatre. His play *Bakersfield Mist* is performed worldwide. Sachs' screenplay *Sweet Nothing in my Ear*, based on his play, was made into a CBS TV movie starring Jeff Daniels and Marlee Matlin. As director, he is a two-time Ovation Award winner and was recently honored by the Los Angeles City Council for "his visionary contributions to the cultural life of Los Angeles."

The Fountain Theatre is one of the most successful intimate theaters in Los Angeles, providing a creative home for multi-ethnic theater and dance artists. The Fountain has won hundreds of awards, and Fountain projects have been seen across the U.S. and internationally. Recent highlights include all-star readings of *Ms. Smith Goes to Washington* and *All the President's Men* at Los Angeles City Hall. The Fountain's 2018 productions of *The Chosen* and *Arrival & Departure* each enjoyed months-long sold out runs and was named a Los Angeles Times "Critic's Choice." The company's recent West Coast premiere of Martyna Majok's Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Cost of Living*, was named to the Los Angeles Times' "Best of 2018" list. This season, the Southern California premiere of *Daniel's Husband* and the currently extended Los Angeles premiere of *Between Riverside and Crazy* were each named to multiple "Best of 2019" lists.