

LA STAGE

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LAURA NIEMI, LOREN LAZERINE AND JOE SIKORA IN *KILLER JOE* PHOTO: KRISTIN KANAN

LOST ANGELS FIND A VOICE

Lost Angels Theatre Company is one of the newest members to join LA Stage Alliance. Artistic Director Laura Niemi founded the company to create collaborative work among artists that entertains and educates through story telling. "Everything that stems from this company has to do with finding great new stories. It comes down to a voice that I have not heard before that captures my attention."

Lost Angels' outreach program brings work from writers behind prison walls to connect the public with writers

who have no way of telling their story. "The prison systems in the United States (particularly California) are flooded with inmates that have been convicted of crimes behind the use of drugs and alcohol. After the Three Strikes Rule passed, it became clear to me that our society's method of rehabilitation involves 'putting people away' at whatever cost, rather than helping these people repair their lives. Fear is instilled in the public, building an 'us vs. them' mentality, and we are led to believe that we are better off with these offenders gone. But where? These are people who might have taken the wrong road, made one f***ed-up decision costing them their lives. This company is determined to give them a voice."

Their newest production, *Killer Joe* by Tracy Letts, opens Sat., March 19 at the Gardner Stages. This will mark its West Coast premiere, having been produced in Chicago, England and off-Broadway with Scott Glenn. Niemi recounts, "I saw *BUG* Off-Broadway this past summer and it was so riveting I had to sit completely solitary to wrap my brain around what was so exciting to me about this writer. He floored me. I had never heard a voice so raw from a playwright. I knew then and there that I would do whatever it took to make sure Los Angeles theatregoers would be taken by the jugular as I had been. That is what led me to produce Letts' first published play, the joltingly dark *Killer Joe*. His ability to find the worst in humans, put it on stage, and sprinkle humor through the violence is what makes *Killer Joe* such a powerful story." Lost Angels' production is directed by Scott Cummins (*The Pagans*, Road Theatre) with Paul Dillon as Killer Joe Cooper (*Heart of a Dog*, Lillian Theatre).

Killer Joe opens Mar. 19; plays Fri.-Sat., 8pm; Sun., 7pm; ends Apr. 17
Tickets: Fri. \$23.50, Sat. \$25, Sun. \$20 (previews Mar. 11-12, \$20)
The Gardner Stages, 1501 Gardner St., Hollywood
866-811-4111 or www.LostAngelsTheatre.com