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FOR INFORMATION:  
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SHOTGUN PLAYERS PRESENT

# *The Cryptogram*

BY DAVID MAMET  
DIRECTED BY PATRICK DOOLEY

**BERKELEY**— Secrets, riddles and lies. These are the tools with which David Mamet constructs one of the most elliptical and agonizing plays of his career. Concealed intentions, withheld information and emotional manipulation converge to create a tense family puzzle that will irrevocably alter the lives of three people. With what is said to be his most autobiographical of plays, Mamet takes us all back to that place where we first realized the world is a dangerous place. *The Cryptogram* previews on **Wednesday, May 9 and Thursday, May 10, opens on Friday, May 11, and runs Thursday – Sunday through June 17 at The Ashby Stage in Berkeley.**

Mamet is notorious for his short rhythmic dialogue – normally the vernacular of tough guys and no-nonsense conmen. In *The Cryptogram* he takes this signature style to another level, adding a barrage of overlapping talk and uncompleted thoughts. His characters are constantly pitted against one another, interrupted or shut down, left with little ground to stand on. The result is a world of feverish anxiety and instability. In a more familiar Mamet world of gangsters, real estate hustlers and petty thieves this might charm and entrance us. But in *The Cryptogram*, where a 10-year-old boy teeters in that tricky world between childhood and adulthood, the spectacle of watching the trusting innocence of youth be confronted by the damaged cynicism is heartbreaking.

The three characters that appear in *The Cryptogram* seem quite unlikely given Mamet's long history of hard-hitting masculine personalities. A 10-year-old boy, his mother and her old friend clearly present an invigorating challenge, one that Mamet takes on with depth and razor sharp clarity. He creates an intimate triangle of love and insecurity that keeps his charges from ever being able to create any significant intimacy. The result is both cataclysmic and mundane. It's a fascinating look into the disintegration of a family and the horrible truth of what goes on behind closed doors.

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David Mamet has spent his career with one foot in theater and one foot in film. He's the recipient of an Academy Award nomination (*The Verdict*), a Pulitzer Prize (*Glengarry Glen Ross*), and multiple TONY and OSCAR nominations for his incredible contributions, which began when he founded the Atlantic Theater Company in New York City and made a name for himself with off-Broadway productions of *American Buffalo* and *Sexual Perversity in Chicago*. *The Cryptogram*, written in 1995, is a riveting look into Mamet's own past. "Suffice it to say we are not the victims of a happy childhood," wrote his sister Lynn Mamet, also a writer. "There was a lot of violence, but the greatest violence was emotional. It was emotional terrorism."

Shotgun Players cast of *The Cryptogram* features Kevin Clarke (*The Forest War*, *The Death of Meyerhold*), Gideon Lazarus & Zehra Berkman (*Owners*). The set will be designed by Lisa Clark (*Love is a Dream House in Lorin*) with props by Chelsea Pegram, costumes by Christine Crook, light design by Ray Oppenheimer and sound design by Chris Paulina. Shotgun's artistic director Patrick Dooley will direct.

## CALENDAR LISTING

**WHAT:** Concealed intentions, withheld information and emotional manipulation converge to create a tense family puzzle that will irrevocably alter the lives of three people in one excruciating evening. With what is said to be his most autobiographical of plays, Mamet takes us all back to that place where we first realized the world is a dangerous place.

**WHEN:** *The Cryptogram* previews on Wednesday, May 9 and Thursday, May 10, opens on Friday, May 11, and runs Thursday – Sunday through June 17 at The Ashby Stage in Berkeley. All Performances are at 8PM EXCEPT for one Sunday matinee on May 27 at 5PM.

**WHERE:** The Ashby Stage, 1901 Ashby Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94703

**TICKET PRICES: Pay What You Can - \$25.** The first week of performances, May 9 - 13 are Pay-What-You-Can at the door for general seats. For May 17 – June 17, Tickets are \$17 for Thursdays, \$22 for Fridays and Sundays, and \$25 for Saturdays. Reservations for all performances are strongly advised. For every performance there will be tickets released at the door. The waiting list for these tickets begins taking names one hour before the performance.

For more information go to [www.shotgunplayers.org](http://www.shotgunplayers.org) or call 510.841.6500

For press photos, please download images from a link on our website, or contact **Liz Lisle** at [liz@shotgunplayers.org](mailto:liz@shotgunplayers.org), or (510) 841-6500 x302