

## New City Stage Company's ASYMMETRIC: An Entertaining Spy Thriller with Humor, Heart, and Principles

Written by Debra Miller Published May 23, 2012



Kevin Bergen and Kim Carson play the divorced spy couple in ASYMMETRIC. (Photo credit: Annie Such)

Intrigue, romance, morality, and dark comedy coalesce in New City Stage Company's ASYMMETRIC, a fast-paced one-act world-premiere spy thriller by award-winning playwright Mac Rogers. After seeing a twelve-minute short by the Brooklyn-based Rogers, who fused an espionage tale with the story of a failed marriage, NCSC commissioned the new full-length work to conclude its themed season on terrorism, observing the tenth anniversary of 9/11.

The audience is immediately thrust into the strange world of covert missions, counter-intelligence, and ethically-challenged government agents, as CIA operative Zack (Ross Beschler) and lapsed agent Josh (Kevin Bergen) meet in an interrogation room on the headquarters' mysterious Fifth Floor. Their assignment is to exterminate a mole who has been selling classified information to unknown enemies of the US—specifically a high-tech killer robot fueled by the DNA of its intended target. The team of Zack and Josh is assisted by master interrogator Ford (Eric Rolland), whose sadistic tactics include beating and dismemberment. The even greater

predicament is that the double agent has already been identified as Sunny (Kim Carson), Josh's ex-wife and former partner in Black Ops.

Kim Carson's Sunny is interrogated by Eric Rolland's Ford in NCSC's ASYMMETRIC. (Photo credit: Annie Such)

The play contains all the requisite ingredients of a classic spy story—some of which require a suspension of disbelief—including daring risks and secret schemes, specialized terminology and futuristic technology, an exotic locale (the action ends in Reykjavik, Iceland), and the defined heroes and villains that drive the plot to its just conclusion. It also satirizes the questionable psychology and policies of real-life national intelligence that have dominated our news over the past decade, raising some key ethical issues in the process. In a secretive world where betrayal is a regular occurrence, and the paranoia it induces affects judgment and challenges moral fiber, who can you trust, and how far would you be willing to go in the service of patriotism, in the hope of self-advancement, or in the name of love?

Russ Widdall, in his directorial debut, keeps the talented cast apace and in character through the 75-minute rollercoaster ride filled with twists and turns, surprises and reversals, sardonic laughs and moral dilemmas. Kim Carson is tough and resolute as the beautiful spy who defies her torturer, then pained and regretful as the wife who couldn't stay. Kevin Bergen, as her broken ex-husband, ranges from depressed, hung-over, and hurt, to “the smartest drunk you'll ever meet,” as he faces, in real time, the choices he must make for his country and himself. Ross Beschler's Zack is the epitome of the clueless bungling bureaucrat, in outdated clothes and oversized aviator glasses, and Eric Rolland captures the vicious psychopathy of the head interrogator, who takes too much pleasure in his ruthless occupation. Amy Chmielewski's savvy costumes and props add visual definition to the characters, and Ren Manley's impressive sound design evokes the established traditions of the espionage genre.

The amusing and thought-provoking production runs in repertory with a remount of NCSC's 2011 Fringe hit, SAVAGE/LOVE and TONGUES, on stage for five performances from May 26-June 3.

## **ASYMMETRIC**

**Written by Mac Rogers**

**Directed by Russ Widdall**

**May 17-June 10, 2012**

**New City Stage Company**

**Adrienne Theater, Second Stage**

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**[www.NewCityStage.org](http://www.NewCityStage.org)**