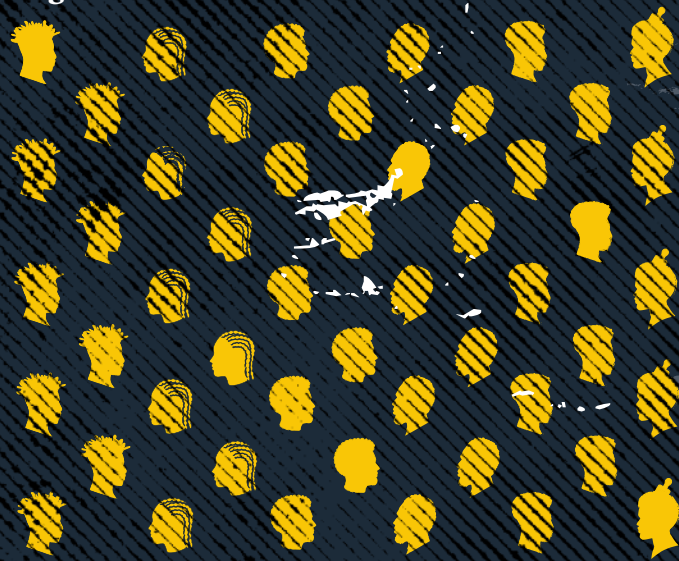


*Regional Premiere*



BY CHRISTOPHER DEMOS-BROWN

# american son

November 6 - December 11

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# ABOUT CURIOUS

## NO GUTS NO STORY

“No guts, no story” embodies the ethos of Curious Theatre Company. Established in 1997 by a vanguard Artistic Company that has since grown to 24 professional actors, designers, and directors, Curious brings the best new theatre to Denver. We produce thought-provoking plays designed to challenge ideas, stir emotions, and leave audiences thinking and talking for days.

Curious has cultivated a local and national reputation as a destination for artists and playwrights to foster and develop new work, and as a place where audiences are challenged.

Now in our third decade of bringing thought-provoking theatre to Denver, Curious Theatre Company’s rich history showcases our commitment to playwrights with gutsy things to say.

*The Secretary, 2020*



*Pass Over, 2019*

# A NOTE FROM THE PRODUCING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

On Friday, March 13, 2020, the lights went dark here at Curious. At the time, like almost everyone else in the world, none of us had any idea that it would be 18 long and unimaginable months before we would be able to gather the Curious family together again. Like many other things that we took for granted before the pandemic, our reasons to gather—opening nights, Curious New Voices, special events—now seem even more powerful and bonding than ever before. For me, my appreciation and gratitude for each and every one of you has grown immensely.

I have always believed that the real magic of live theatre is not only the actors transforming into characters, or the designers imagining and constructing entire worlds onstage, or the incredible stories that we have the honor of bringing to life on our stage; the real power of live theatre is embedded in the communion involved in the act of coming together *in person*, of witnessing *collectively*, and of engaging in a real-time *shared* experience. Nothing can come even close to replicating that, and if there is one decent thing that comes out of these past 18 months, may it be that we never, ever take that for granted again.

Thank you for keeping your faith in the work that we do here at Curious, thank you for continuing to believe in the power of live theatre, and most of all—thank you for coming back! We are all so incredibly fortunate that this Curious community has rallied alongside us at every step of the way! Although none of us knows what the future may hold, I think that now, one thing that we do all know is that we will find our way back together again. No. Matter. What.

And with that...welcome to Season 24! And to the Regional Premiere of *American Son*. I hope that you enjoy this show in a way that you haven't in a *very, very* long time!



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chip Walton'.

Chip Walton  
*Producing Artistic Director*



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CURIOUS** → → →

Help support Curious's return to the stage by making a donation at [CuriousTheatre.org/donate](https://CuriousTheatre.org/donate)

# A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

*This is your country, this is your world, this is your body,  
and you must find some way to live within the all of it.*

— Ta-Nehisi Coates

When my husband was eight years old, he and his family planned a road trip to the South. In preparation he remembers a conversation he had with his father. An instructional conversation on how to engage, or rather, how not to engage with a police officer. These instructions were due to the high probability that they would get pulled over. And in fact, they did. In this play the character Kendra asks her husband, Scott, if his father ever had to tell him to “keep his hands on the wheel boy.” His response, “he never had to.” He’s white. She’s black. As the quote above shares, from author Ta-Nehisi Coates in a letter to his son entitled *Between the World and Me*, the ultimate goal for a Black man in America is survival.

*American Son* is not a condemnation of police officers. It is a play that gives us a glimpse into the fears and concerns that almost every parent of a Black male child in this country faces on a regular basis, especially in interactions with police. The fear that implicit biases or bigotry would stomp all over respect and professionalism. The fear that triggers second thoughts or questions. “Did I give my child enough information on how to survive?” “Did I tell them, and emphasize enough, if and when you are pulled over by the police, because ‘driving while Black’ is a real thing, your job is to leave that interaction alive?”

We know that police officers’ lives are often in peril as they strive to uphold safety and protect the communities that they serve. The color of your skin should not predict how police officers treat you and yet, our environment, both current and ongoing, continues to show us over and over that skin color can and does make that prediction.

Unfortunately, we have all been witnesses to the unjustified killings of Black men (and women) at the hands of White police officers (the majority of the time) who have often, not all the time, been held unaccountable. We know that in dangerous moments or even unexpected or heightened situations, they are asked to make quick, snap decisions. And like all human beings, our unconscious biases can impact the ways in which we engage with others.

With timely and timeless themes of identity, family, and racism, this play elevates the difference in experiences. The difference in expectations for one’s child based on background, upbringing, and yes, race. Also, the difference in experiences with police officers for people of different races and how perceptions, conscious and unconscious, can intensify misunderstanding and conflict.

Ask yourself, if this were my son, how would I want them to be treated? How would I want to be treated? Although this play centers on an interracial couple and their son, the title of the play challenges us to see, feel, and hear that what they are grappling with is universal in scope.



Jada Suzanne Dixon  
*AMERICAN SON* Director  
Curious Artist-in-Residence

## GO DEEPER

To learn more about *American Son*, go to our Go Deeper section on the Curious website at [CuriousTheatre.org/event/american-son](https://CuriousTheatre.org/event/american-son) or scan this QR code.



# CURIOUS THEATRE COMPANY

PRESENTS

## american son

by Christopher Demos-Brown

Directed by **Jada Suzanne Dixon**

### CAST

Kendra Ellis-Connor: **Jada Suzanne Dixon\***

Scott Connor: **Josh Robinson\***

Officer Paul Larkin: **Sean Scrutchins\***

Lieutenant John Stokes: **Abner Genece\***

### SETTING

The waiting room of a police station  
in Miami-Dade County, Florida

### SPECIAL THANKS

University of Denver

### PRODUCTION TEAM

*Associate Direction* by **Chip Walton**

*Set Design* by **Markas Henry\*\***

*Costume Design* by Elise Rosado

*Lighting Design* by **Richard Devin**

*Sound Design* by **Jason Ducat\*\***

*Stage Manager*, Lisa Prater

*Assistant Stage Manager*, Sophie Hill

*Board Operator*, Anna Monzon

*Run Crew*, Nick Luecking

*Scenic Construction*, University of Denver,

Department of Theatre—Technical Theatre Intern Program

Steven McDonald (Dept. Chair), Ally Lacey (ATD),

Andrew McGlothen (Staff Carpenter); Interns: Ashley Wagner,

Max O'Neil, Andrew Mitchell, Haley Barth

**Bold** = Curious Artistic Company Member

**The production will be performed  
without an intermission.**

The world premiere of American Son was presented at  
Barrington Stage Company, Pittsfield, MA in 2016, Julianne Boyd,  
Artistic Director and Tristan Wilson, Managing Director.

Original Broadway Production produced by Jeffrey Richards;  
Simpson Street; Rebecca Gold; Will Trice; Stephen C. Byrd; Alia  
Jones-Harvey; Nnamdi Asomugha; Domnick LaRuffa, Jr. & Co.;  
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and Stage Managers in the United States.

\*\*Member of United Scenic Artists



# BIOS



**Jada Suzanne Dixon** (Director, Kendra Ellis-Connor) Known as an actress who has performed across multiple stages in Colorado, Jada is also an early career director who began her journey with assistant/associate directing with the Athena Project's Plays in Progress series and *Skeleton Crew*, *Gloria*, and *Appropriate* at Curious. Jada made her directorial debut with *Fairfield* at Miners Alley Playhouse. Additionally, she has directed *Bloomsday* at BETC, was a co-creator on *CO2020* at BETC, and will direct *Stick Fly* for Arvada Center's 2021/2022 repertory theatre season. Acting credits include: *The Cake*, *Detroit 67'*, *White Guy on the Bus*, *Marcus; or the Secret of Sweet*, *In the Red and Brown Water*, *House with No Walls* (Curious Theatre Company); *The Firestorm* (Local Lab); *Metamorphoses*, *The Color Purple*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Crumbs from the Table of Joy* (Aurora Fox Arts Center); *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (The Edge Theatre Company); *Doubt* (Off-Square Theatre Company).

Jada is a two-time recipient of the True West Award, a proud member of AEA, and a 2021 commissioned playwright for StageOne Family Theatre's program "Theatre for Everywhere." Jada is an artistic company member with Curious Theatre Company and an Associate Artist with Local Lab Theatre. [jadasuzannedixon.com](http://jadasuzannedixon.com)



**Josh Robinson** (Scott Connor) Acting credits include: *Hillary and Clinton*, *Maple and Vine*, *Opus*, *Curse of the Starving Class*, *Aphrodisiac*, *Take Me Out*, and *The Long Christmas Ride Home* (Curious); *Treasure Island*, *Richard III*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *King Lear*, *Taming of the Shrew*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Julius Caesar* (Colorado Shakespeare Festival); *All the Way*, *Picnic*, and *Slabtown* (Denver Center); *Small Mouth Sounds*, *Murder on the Orient*

*Express*, *The Foreigner*, *Waiting for Godot*, *Bus Stop*, *Tartuffe*, *The Lion In Winter*, *The Second Tosca*, and *The Man Who Came to Dinner* (Arvada Center); *The 39 Steps* (Theatreworks); and *Macbeth* (Listen Productions). Josh is a graduate of Oberlin College and the Yale School of Drama, and the 2010 Denver Post Ovation recipient for Best Year by an Actor.



**Sean Scrutchins** (Officer Paul Larkin) Sean Scrutchins is a teaching artist in Denver. He works as a theatre instructor for The Colorado Shakespeare Festival: Education Program, and The Denver Center for the Performing Arts. He received his MFA in Theatre Performance from the University of Southern Mississippi. Sean last appeared with Curious in *Appropriate*. Some previous acting roles include *9 Circles*, *The Whipping Man*, *Dust* (Curious); *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Odyssey*, *Richard III*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (Colorado Shakespeare Festival); *Tartuffe*, *Bus Stop*, *Waiting For Godot* (Arvada Center); *1984* (Benchmark). He won the 2012 Henry Award for Best Actor for his work in *9 Circles* and the 2014 Henry Award for Best Ensemble for his work in *The Whipping Man*.



**Abner Genece** (Lieutenant John Stokes) last appeared in *Water By The Spoonful* at Curious Theatre Company, and has performed and directed in a variety of projects, including Curious New Voices. Other credits: *Tartuffe*, *Waiting For Godot* (Jean Cocteau Repertory); *Twelfth Night* (Will Geer Theatrum); *The Bluest Eye* (Moxie Theatre); *Measure For Measure*, *Around the World in 80 Days* (Theatreworks); *Arabian Nights* (Aurora Fox Arts Center); *Sense and Sensibility*, *The Electric Baby*, *All My Sons*, *The Diary of Anne Frank* (Arvada Center). Abner developed and co-wrote *Elephant* (Benchmark Theatre); For Jayden.

# BIO

**Richard Devin** (Lighting Design) has designed lighting for many Curious productions during the last 18 years. Dick also worked with the Colorado Shakespeare Festival for 17 years as Producing Artistic Director, and 26 years as lighting designer. He has designed lighting for more than 250 productions at 35 of America's regional theatres, as well as designing Off-Broadway and in Hong Kong, Tokyo and Cairo. He was Managing Director and Lighting Designer with Massachusetts' Williamstown Theatre Festival for eight years and is past president of the United States Institute for Theatre Technology. Dick taught for 40 years in the Theatre Departments of Temple University, The University of Washington and The University of Colorado. He received his BA in Drama from the University of Northern Iowa and an MFA from the Yale School of Drama. He is a Member of the United Scenic Artists of America and is honored to be a Fellow of the College of Fellows of the American Theatre.

**Shay Dite** (Props Design) is a freelance theater designer and technician local to Fort Collins, CO. She graduated from Colorado State University in costume and scenic design and has traveled throughout the states for several years pursuing work on live performance. She recently finished her second season with Central City Opera as the assistant prop master and is the set designer for Central City Opera's Education Program of *Frida Kahlo and the Bravest Girl in the World*. Shay is thrilled to be part of her first production with Curious as the Prop Master for *American Son*.

**Jason Ducat** (Sound Design) has designed many shows at Curious including *Pass Over, Gloria, The Humans, Your Best One, Detroit '67, Appropriate, The Luckiest People, Venus in Fur, Good People, The Brothers Size, and Maple and Vine*. Jason worked as a resident sound designer at Denver Center Theatre Company where he designed *Glengarry Glen Ross, When Tang Met Laika, The House of the Spirits, Lord of the Flies, Shadowlands, Reckless, Superior Donuts, Heartbreak House, and Othello*. Other designs include *Henry IV, The Tempest,*

*I Hate Hamlet, Macbeth and Richard II* (Colorado Shakespeare Festival); *Marat/Sade, The Winter's Tale* (Purdue University); *Lab Coats on Clouds* (Prague Quadrennial); *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (Elemental Theatre Company); *Sideways Stories from Wayside School* (Hope Summer Repertory Theatre); and *Tribulation and the Demolition Squad* (Chicago Dance Crash). Jason received his MFA in sound design from Purdue University.

**Markas Henry** (Scenic Design) designed scenery for *Sanctions, The Humans, The Intelligent Homosexual's Guide..., Appropriate*, the three-part *Elliot Plays, Lucky Me, All The Rage, The Whipping Man* (Colorado Theatre Guild Henry Award), *After The Revolution, God of Carnage, Maple and Vine, and Opus*; as well as costumes for *White Guy on the Bus, The Whipping Man, Time Stands Still, Dead Man's Cell Phone, and Mall\*Mart*. His selected regional credits include Theatre Aspen, Opera Colorado, Colorado Shakespeare Festival, and BETC. Broadway credits include *Thoroughly Modern Millie* (Tony Award), *The Life* (Tony nomination) and *Beauty and the Beast* (Tony Award). His film work includes *Elf* and *Leading Ladies*, and he was Costume Producer for Britney Spears' 2001 and 2004 US and World tours. Markas is an Associate Professor of Theatre at the University of Colorado Boulder.

**Lisa Prater** (Stage Manager) is Curious' Production Manager and resident Stage Manager. Recent work with Curious includes stage management for *Hillary & Clinton, Admissions*, and several digital CNV festivals. Some favorite credits include show management with *Meow Wolf, Letters from Freedom Summer* (SM, KC Rep), *King Lear* (ASM, Kansas City Actors Theatre), and *The Burning Fiery Furnace* (SM, Central City Opera). She is a 3-time KCACTF award winner in Stage Management and an International Association of Venue Manager's Young Professional Scholar (2017). She has an MFA in Stage Management from the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

# BIOS

**Elise Rosado** (Costume Design) is an up and coming costume and lighting designer in the Denver Metro Area. She has most recently costume coordinated for the Colorado Shakespeare Festival's OP production of *Pericles* as well as costume design for *A Soldier's Tale* with the Boulder Philharmonic. *American Son* is Elise's first production at Curious. As an artist, Elise produces work in a variety of digital and analogue mediums and has been featured in Boxcar Gallery. Elise is a CU Boulder December 2020 graduate with a degree in technical theatre. She is currently working as a costume designer on Curious' production of *Refuge*.

**Sophie Hill** (Assistant Stage Manager) is a graduate of Kalamazoo College, where she studied English and Theater Arts. Her acting credits include Viola in *Twelfth Night*, Hannah in *The Spitfire Grill*, and Annie Cannon in *Silent Sky*, and she was most recently seen as Portia in New Native Theatre's reading of *Death of a Chief*. In addition to acting, Sophie is an experienced stage carpenter and theatrical technician, and is thrilled to ASM for *American Son*. This is Sophie's first production with Curious Theatre Company.

**Chip Walton** (Producing Artistic Director) co-founded Curious Theatre Company in 1997 and has served as Producing Artistic Director for the entire history of the organization. Named Denver's "2005 Theatre Person of the Year," he has directed more than fifty shows for Curious over the past 24 years and his work has garnered more than 100 local and national awards. In 2008, Curious was honored with the Mayor's Award for Excellence in the Arts. Chip has served as the President and Vice President of the National New Play Network, a network of professional, non-profit theatres across the country dedicated to the development and production of new plays for the American theatre. Chip was also selected in the inaugural class of the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation Livingston Fellows, recognizing exceptional non-profit leaders with significant potential for contribution, change and leadership in Colorado's nonprofit sector; additionally, he served on the Board of Directors of the

Bonfils-Stanton Foundation as their first Community Trustee. Chip has participated in the Visiting Professionals program at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center, as well as serving on the Leadership Group for Imagine 2020: Creating a Future for Denver's Culture. He has directed in the National New Play Network Showcase of New Plays, the Kennedy Center's MFA Playwriting Festival in Washington, D.C., and accepted a National Theatre Company Award in New York for Curious from the prestigious American Theatre Wing. Most recently, Chip was honored to serve as a 2017 Aspen Ideas Festival Speaker.

**The University of Denver's Technical Theatre Internship Program** provides students with paid opportunities to work with professional companies and designers in a supportive setting that prepares them for the entertainment industry. During the build process, students are engaged full-time in the construction shop with working professionals, and then experience the challenges of moving the show elements to a professional venue, working with the theatre company's team to install and present the show. Previous TTIP projects include *Saints of Failure* with Generator Theatre, *Full Monty* and *Matilda* for Parker Arts, *Reunion* for NYC-based Creative Endeavor, *Il Trittico* and *The Magic Flute* for Lamont Opera Theatre, as well as projects for The Athena Project and Phamaly.

**Actors' Equity Association** ("AEA" or "Actors' Equity"), founded in 1913, represents more than 49,000 actors and stage managers in the United States. Equity seeks to advance, promote and foster the art of live theatre as an essential component of our society. Equity negotiates wages and working conditions, providing a wide range of benefits, including health and pension plans. AEA is a member of the AFL-CIO, and is affiliated with FIA, an international organization of performing arts unions. The Equity emblem is our mark of excellence. [www.actorsequity.org](http://www.actorsequity.org)



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