

## THEATER REVIEW

**'Talk About The Passion' a tale of pain and loss**

**Review: Anaheim Hills staging lends thought, empathy and sorrow to the play's California premiere.**

by Eric Marchese, *Orange County Register*

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In a dubious yet highly successful move, a publisher cashes in on the public's intense fascination with a lurid murder case by issuing the imprisoned killer's side of the story. Naturally, the father of the murder victim is outraged.



Even if O.J. Simpson, Fred Goldman and "If I Did It" never existed, playwright Graham Farrow's "Talk About the Passion" would be no less effective, insightful or visceral.

In watching the play's California premiere at the Chance Theater, you might think "Passion" was based on recent events surrounding Simpson – except that Farrow is British, his play is from 1998, and it's been Americanized by director David Colwell and dramaturge-literary director Jonathan Josephson.

Unfolding essentially in real time over a scant 65 minutes, Farrow's drama puts one man's misery under a microscope while underscoring how violence always inevitably seems to beget violence.

The man under our scrutiny is Jason Carroway (Casey Long). After having his manuscript rejected by high-powered publisher Evelyn Ayles (Laurel Feierbach), he has come to her office for an explanation.

Evelyn soon discovers Jason's real name – Mike Miller – and identity – the father of a six-year-old boy who was abducted, sodomized and murdered by Stephen Roth. Evelyn published Roth's book, and she's been riding high ever since.

Armed with a box cutter, a gallon of gasoline and a cigarette lighter, Miller is bent on ensuring this is her judgment day. "I wanted to see what sort of person you are," he tells her, his voice quivering with emotion. "I want you to feel what I felt."

Miller proceeds to give a firsthand account of his own personal hell while leaving no question he holds her accountable. So deep is his sense of moral outrage, he's willing to kill her, noting with irony that were he to do so, a major book deal might result.

The accusing finger Miller points at "the woman who made my son's killer a celebrity" is aimed by Farrow at anyone whose publishing of a criminal account crosses the line from reportage to exploitation. Indeed, in this powerful staging, the disheveled Miller indicts the Schadenfreude of the book's readers.

Farrow gives Evelyn enough of a back-story to make her more than just the object of a father's outrage. She aborted a baby to keep her career from derailing and now regrets it, a subject of brief debate between the duo (abortion, he maintains, is a choice, unlike having one's child abducted and killed).

Thankfully, the playwright keeps this aspect of the story in check, giving the Miller character the bulk of the dialogue as he vents almost continuously.