

Behind the scenes: Mamet's 'Glengarry Glen Ross' draws quite a crowd



Appearing in "Glengarry Glen Ross" are, from left, Peter Cook, Rick Martin, David Allen, Scott Estrella, Nicholas Dorr, Christopher Cooley

By **KATHI SCRIZZI DRISCOLL**
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Theater companies have famously had trouble finding enough male actors for shows, but apparently it's not an issue if you have the right show. And David Mamet's "Glengarry Glen Ross" is one of the right shows.

Director Daniel Foutneau knew there would be actor interest in the play because it had been mentioned many times in recent years. But he was surprised when 30 men tried out for seven roles. "It was very encouraging – I knew then we had made a good choice with the play... I wish the play had a bigger cast so I could have used them all."

Why was "Glengarry" such a draw?

"Two words: David Mamet," Foutneau said in an email. "The man is a genius. The Pulitzer Prize doesn't hurt, either. It was

a groundbreaking play in terms of the writing style – the staccato language, the testosterone, the profanity – it's like poetry for tough guys. Any good actor who wants a challenge likes Mamet. It's difficult material to master, but when it works, it's like jazz. Angry jazz. It's also hugely character-driven – there is a plot regarding a burglary, but it is secondary to the real story of power, ego and desperation. Actors in 'Glengarry' get to roll up their sleeves and go to battle. And it's a lot of fun."

The chance to do this play even brought two men out of "acting retirement."

For David Allen, it had been more than 25 years – when he was in college – since he'd "done any serious acting" rather than directing or teaching actors. His years of work as a professional dramaturge and a teacher taught him, he says, that "there are very few – and I mean VERY

FEW – playwrights who do everything well. And with 'Glengarry Glen Ross,' David Mamet is one of them. That's why I really wanted to do this play."

"Glengarry Glen Ross" is set at a fly-by-night real estate firm in the 1960s – though Allen admits what it has to say about capitalism in the late 20th century. In an email, Allen says the script is also "filled with fascinating, three-dimensional characters, each one unique. What Mamet does so well is create this world of men who live on their wits, who connive and plot and scheme and bully just to survive in this cutthroat environment."

With the burglary plot, the audience wants to know what will happen next, but the story is driven by the characters, and they are created by Mamet's signature language. The style that so famously replicates speech – with much profan-

ity – makes the characters "so completely believable" and delineates who they are, Allen says, noting Mamet has been called the "bard of streetwise barbarism."

Allen still prefers directing and probably won't seek an acting role anytime soon, but says he has a renewed appreciation for what actors go through from this experience and has found this opportunity "exhilarating and challenging."

Nicholas Dorr began acting at age 9 in community theater and performed professionally for many years in New York and regional theater, but he found it hard to juggle that with design and ended up favoring a professional career as a set and costume designer for theater and film. So it's been about 12 years since he's been onstage.

He had a few reasons to audition for "Glengarry." One was, he says, simply because he "thought it was a great play."

"And now, having had the chance to explore it over past few weeks, I find it to be a BRILLIANT play. An actor's dream to perform."

Another was personal: He was diagnosed five years ago with stage 3 cancer, but today is "free and clear" of the disease. "Five years ago, I wasn't sure I'd even be alive, let alone be able to speak or memorize lines. And I'll tell ya, as much as I love his dialogue, David Mamet ain't easy."

A third reason was, as a real estate agent might say, loca-



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If you go:

What: "Glengarry Glen Ross." **Written by:** David Mamet. **When:** 8 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays and 2 p.m. Sundays through April 17. **Where:** Cotuit Center for the Arts, 4404 Route 28. **Tickets:** \$20 for general admission, \$18 for seniors, \$15 for members and \$10 for students. **Reservations:** 508-428-0669.