



A Widow Begins a New Life in 2008 Premiere, *Botanic Garden*; Dukakis Directs Roman & Leaming

By [Kenneth Jones](#)
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Olympia Dukakis will direct the world premiere of Todd Logan's *Botanic Garden* starring real-life husband and wife James Leaming and Carmen Roman, major names in Chicago theatre.

The two-character play about a widow still haunted by her husband will begin preview performances Jan. 30, 2008, at The Victory Gardens Greenhouse Theater, 2257 N. Lincoln Ave., in Chicago.

The play is presented by Canamac Productions and David Fettner. Opening is Feb. 8. Performances continue through March 9.

According to production notes, "In *Botanic Garden*, Kate (Carmen Roman) faces the daunting and often humorous prospect of her first date since the death of her husband, Jake (James Leaming). Memories of her husband and their marriage force Kate to take a stark look at her present, and the choices she must make as she embarks upon the next chapter of her life."

Academy Award-winning actress Dukakis said in a statement, "Mr. Logan's play expertly captures a woman who has come to a crossroads in her life. It is very exciting for me to work with two such fine actors on this play, not only because they are so accomplished individually, but also because I feel that their personal relationship will allow us to delve even more deeply into the ideas explored in the piece. I can't wait for rehearsals to begin."

Chicago-area based playwright Todd Logan's plays include *Tops or Bottoms*, *Persistence of Vission*, *Fallout* and *The Playwright and All That Crap*, all of which have been presented in Chicago at various theatres during the past few years. He wrote the independent film "With a Family Like Mine." His humor essays have been published in The New York Times, The San Francisco Chronicle, The Boston Globe and Writer's Digest. For more information or to download his plays and films, visit www.toddlogansdesk.com.

The design team for *Botanic Garden* includes ATC company member Keith Pitts (sets), Rita Pietraszek (lights), Rachel Healy (costumes) and ATC company member Lindsay Jones (sound).

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After moving to Chicago in 1986, Carmen Roman performed opposite her future husband, American Theater Company (ATC) founding member James Leaming, in *Summer Brave*. It was the first and last time the two played love interests on stage, until now. *Botanic Garden* marks the real-life couple's return to performing together.

Roman's theatre credits include the national tour of *Angels in America*; the Off-Broadway production of *The Iphigenia Cycle* (Theater for a New Audience from The Court Theatre,

Chicago), *The Mysteries* (Classic Stage Company), *Paradise* (Gary Allen Productions); *Orpheus Descending*, *The Homage that Follows*, *Toys in the Attic*, *Medea* (all at American Theater Company), *Lost in Yonkers* (Coconut Grove, Walnut Street Theater, Philadelphia), *Sonia Flew* (The Huntington Theatre, Boston), *According to Goldman* (Philadelphia Theater Company), *Electra* (Hartford Stage Company), *Big Love* (The Wilma), *Side Man* (Steppenwolf, The Galway Festival, Galway, Ireland and The Melbourne Arts Festival, Australia) *Wit*, *Black Snow*, *Brutality of Fact*, *Christmas Carol* (The Goodman Theatre), *Master Class* (Northlight Theater and Columbia Artists Tour), *Shadowlands* (The Alliance Theater), *Fen* (Empty Space Theater), *The Falcon* (ACT, Seattle) and eight seasons at Peninsula Players in Fish Creek, WI.

In 1985, James Leaming founded the American Blues Theatre, now the American Theater Company (ATC) in Chicago. His credits include *The Foreigner*, *Caught in the Net* and *Red Herring* with the Peninsula Players. Chicago credits include *Last of the Boys* and *Midsummer Night's Dream* (Steppenwolf), *Someone Who'll Watch Over Me* (Victory Gardens), *Seagull* (Writers' Theatre), *Spinning into Butter* (The Goodman Theatre), *The Man Who Fell in Love with the Moon* with the Running With Scissors Theater Company, for which he received an After Dark Award. With ATC, his favorite acting credits include George Bailey in *It's a Wonderful Life*, *A Live Radio Play*, Lewie in *American Dead*, Yank in *The Hairy Ape*, Cathcart, Major Major and seven other roles in *Catch 22*.

For more information, call (773) 871-3000 or visit www.victorygardens.org.