

by Rhonda Alderman and a caregiver, Emily Geddes. The manner in which the two women cope with his deteriorating mind inevitably offers parallels to Shakespeare's "King Lear," whose title character's relationship with his daughters is central and whose awareness regresses from, "Oh, let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven; keep me in temper; I would not be mad!" through four tempestuous acts to a more poignant, "I fear I am not in my perfect mind."

Andre is similarly befuddled, with moments of lucidity. "I feel as if I'm losing my leaves, one after another," the character laments. "The branches and the wind. I don't understand what's happening any more."

A play with teeth

French writer Florian Zeller staged the first production of "The Father" in 2014 and it earned "best play" awards in France and England before coming to Broadway in 2016, the year of "Hamilton."

Britain's Guardian newspaper called it "savagely honest" and described "a sinister Pinteresque edge."

'MEMORY IS ABOUT BEING ABLE TO FOLLOW A TIME LINE.'

—Edward James, lead actor in "The Father"

The Daily Telegraph made the subject accessible to anyone over 50 by beginning its review with the question, "Do you ever go into a room only to be stumped as to what you're doing there?"

The British medical journal, The Lancet, assigned a reviewer who was caring for her father with mid-stage Alzheimer's. She wrote, "Occasionally, we are reminded of the things that dementia cannot take away: the warmth of touch, smiles, laughter, and what it truly means to experience unconditional love."

On Broadway, veteran actor Frank Langella earned a best-actor Tony Award for his performance as Andre, although another play "The Humans," coincidentally featuring a character with Alzheimer's, won for best play. Langella revealed in a TV interview that more than any other of his recent roles, he took longer to recover from the stress of performing daily because of the intensity of the emotion and



PATRICK WEBB PHOTO

Things appear bleak and confused in the mind of Andre, played by Edward James, in 'The Father,' a play about dementia. Two medical personnel, played by Gigi Chadwick and Bill Ham, discuss his symptoms and treatment program.

complexity of the script.

James, a former professional actor whose directing credits in Astoria and Cannon Beach span more than a dozen years, led an Astoria production of the comedy "See How They Run" last spring. He said for his next project he wanted to tackle something "with teeth." Enthralled with the script of "The Father," he took it to fellow thespian Susi Brown, who approached AAUW leaders planning their annual theatrical fundraiser.

Since 1992, the Astoria branch of AAUW has supported women graduates of Clatsop Community College who are continuing their education at four-year institutions. Jan Horning, secretary and past president, said the group awarded scholarships totaling \$3,000 last year. "The community members who come will enjoy this while supporting AAUW," she said.



Daric Moore plays the boyfriend Pierre, who seeks to console Anne, the dementia patient's daughter, played by Rhonda Alderman, in a scene from 'The Father.'

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