



Sydney Theatre Company and Goldman Sachs JBWere by arrangement with David Pugh & Dafydd Rogers present



God of Carnage

by Yasmina Reza

Translated by Christopher Hampton

Directed by Gale Edwards

Teacher Resources

Written and compiled by Jeffrey Dawson

Acknowledgements

Sydney Theatre Company would like to thank Brian Thomson, set designer for his invaluable material for these Teachers' Notes

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Sydney Theatre Company

Sydney Theatre Company, as the premier theatre company in Australia, has been a major force in Australian drama since its establishment in 1978. It was created by the New South Wales Government, following the demise of the Old Tote Theatre Company. The company presents an annual twelve-play program at its home base The Wharf, on Sydney's harbour at Walsh Bay, the nearby Sydney Theatre, which STC also manages, and as the resident theatre company of the Sydney Opera House. Current Artistic Directors, Cate Blanchett and Andrew Upton joined the Company at the beginning of 2008.

STC actively fosters relationships and collaborations with international artists and companies. Renowned directors Michael Blakemore, Max Stafford-Clark, Howard Davies, Declan Donnellan and Philip Seymour Hoffman have worked with STC in recent years and in 2009 Liv Ullman and Steven Soderbergh will direct for the Company. STC has presented productions by Complicite, Cheek by Jowl, Out-of-Joint and the National Theatre of Great Britain. In 2001 STC performed at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York with its production of *The White Devil*, returned in 2006 with its production of *Hedda Gabler* and will return again in 2009 with its production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* which will also tour to Washington.

STC has launched and fostered the theatre careers of many of Australia's internationally renowned artists including Mel Gibson, Judy Davis, Hugo Weaving, Miranda Otto, Geoffrey Rush, Toni Collette, Rose Byrne and Cate Blanchett.

In 2006 STC launched its first acting ensemble, The Actors Company, which, over three years, has performed an extraordinary range of repertoire including award-winning productions of *Mother Courage & Her Children*, *The Season at Sarsaparilla*, *The Lost Echo*, *Gallipoli* and *The Wars of the Roses*. In 2009 STC introduced its new ensemble of theatre-makers The Residents who will perform right across the full range of the Company's activities including Main Stage, Next Stage and STC Ed productions.

To access detailed information on Sydney Theatre Company, its history and productions please contact our Archivist Judith Seeff at jseeff@sydneytheatre.com.au

STC Ed

Since 1987 Sydney Theatre Company has presented productions and workshops for school audiences. Sydney Theatre Company is committed to education by programming original **productions** and **workshops** that enthuse and engage the next generation of theatre-goers. Within the STC Ed programme we produce a season of plays as well as collaborate with leading theatre-for-young-people companies across Australia.

Often a young person's first experience of theatre is facilitated by teachers. STC ensures access to all of its Main Stage productions through the **Schools Day** programme as well as producing and touring theatre specifically crafted to resonate with young people.

It's vital that students engage with work of the highest quality. Art can expand your view of the world and encourage innovative, engaged thinking and compassion. Sydney Theatre Company has an extensive on-line resource for teachers and students. Visit www.sydneytheatre.com.au/education.

We encourage teachers to subscribe to regular e-news to keep informed as well as access **heavily discounted** tickets and special offers.

For further information on STC Ed, please contact the Education Coordinator Toni Murphy at education@sydneytheatre.com.au

God Of Carnage Schoolsday

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Date:	Wed 28 Oct
Venue:	Drama Theatre, Sydney Opera House
Suitability:	Year 12
Pre-performance forum	10.30am
Lunch Break	11.15am
Performance commences	12.15pm
Performance concludes	1.40pm
Post-performance Q&A concludes	2pm (approx)

There will be no interval

Please note: latecomers may not be permitted until a suitable break in the performance

This production contains frequent strong language. Please ensure you have discussed and considered these aspects of the production in relation to your students.

We respectfully ask that you discuss theatre etiquette with your students prior to coming to the performance.

Running Late?

Please contact Front of House on 9250 1904.

Booking Queries

Please contact the STC Ed Booking line on 02 9250 1778 or education@sydneytheatre.com.au

General Education Queries

Please contact Toni Murphy, Education Coordinator on 02 9250 1795 or education@sydneytheatre.com.au

Cast and Creatives

Cast

VERONICA VALLON	Sacha Horler
MICHAEL VALLON	Russell Dykstra
ANNETTE REILLE	Helen Thomson
ALAN REILLE	Marcus Graham

Creatives

Director	Gale Edwards
Designer	Brian Thomson
Costume Designer	Julie Lynch
Lighting Designer	Trudy Dalgleish
Sound Designer	Paul Charlier
Fight Director	Scott Witt
Assistant Director	Kate Revz

Curriculum Links

God of Carnage is an invaluable text for integrated study in the Year 12 English Area of Study: Belonging, especially in its representation of family relations (compared with the characters in the set text, Shakespeare's ***As You Like It***.)

About the Play

GOD OF CARNAGE

Two eleven-year-old boys, a stick and some broken teeth are the catalyst in this tale of two families. Veronica, a writer, and Michel, a company wholesaler, are parents to Bruno. Annette, a wealth manager, and Alan, a lawyer, are parents to Ferdinand. The two couples meet to discuss the misdemeanours of their sons. The evening begins quite amicably, with apple and pear clafoutis, and the four parents intending to resolve the situation diplomatically. However, as their hopes for this begin to splinter and disillusionment sets in, the evening deteriorates from one of mild unease and discomfort, into a deluge of accusations, recriminations, jealousy and rage. There is drinking, fighting, vomiting and the destruction of some rather lovely tulips.

Boys will be boys, but can the grown-ups be grown up enough to resolve their differences without losing sight of right and wrong? The façade of civility shatters as the God of Carnage wreaks havoc in the living room and all hell breaks loose.

About the Playwright

About Yasmina Reza

Yasmina Reza was born in 1959 in Paris and trained as an actor, starting her professional career as an actor appearing in contemporary French plays as well as in classic works by Mariveaux and Molière.

In 1987 she wrote *Conversations after a Burial*, which won the coveted Molière Award for Best Author. Her translation of Steven Berkoff's adaptation of the Franz Kafka novel *The Metamorphosis*, for performance by Roman Polanski, was nominated for the Molière Award for Best Translation in 1988. *Winter Crossing* (1990), her second play, won the 1990 Molière Award for Best Fringe Production.

Her play *Art* premiered in Berlin and opened in Paris in 1994, winning the Molière Award for Best Author, Best Play and Best Production that year. Since then, the play has been translated into 20 languages and become a critical and popular success worldwide. In 2000 Reza wrote *Life x 3*, which was first performed in English at the Lyttelton Theatre, Royal National Theatre in London in December 2000. *Le Dieu du Carnage* opened in December 2006 at the Schauspielhaus in Zurich and was first performed in English as *God of Carnage* in London in March 2008.

The fragility and solitude of man

Transients who know they are transients, with a certain panache. Like the relations of the author, daughter of a Hungarian violinist, who decided to settle in Paris when the Iron Curtain fell, and a businessman father, brilliant black sheep of a Russian Jewish family that fled Bolshevism, Yasmina still fondly recalls her cosmopolitan childhood in a comfortably off, artistic, music-loving family, open-minded about the world; her admiration for her father, especially, a pianist in his time who, late in life, took a deep interest in the mysteries of the Jewish religion, whose secret fascination he bequeathed to her.

A masculine image haunts the plays of the woman who knows so well how to talk about men, for the most famous actors, from Sean Connery to Al Pacino through Robert de Niro, dream of a part in her plays. What they like so much is that our clever designer has a wonderful way with ellipsis, those rejoinders embroidered on the thread of the essential, apparently simplistic, but in which any great actor can hint at great depths through perfectly timed, almost musical silences.

Yasmina Reza's theatre is a theatre of virtuosos; only they can portray the madman through a slightly woolly confusion, show the substance between the voids; only they can take pleasure in dreaming about those fierce, yet anodyne, words pure and hard as crystal.

Fed by the plays of Nathalie Sarraute, she too is a great embroiderer of the unsaid, the unspoken and other mute frustrations, Yasmina Reza sets out to say all through the trivial, the tragic through the comic, the serious through levity - a kind of search for the absolute. What if the hysterical and comical actress, the stuff of magnificent drama, were, in her way, a great mystic?

Fabienne Pascaud

Journalist with the weekly arts magazine *Télérama*

The Art of Translation

Yasmina Reza's work in London has been translated from French to English exclusively by Christopher Hampton since her smash hit 'Art' first opened in London's West End, in 1996. The following extracts regarding their working relationship are from Al Senter's program article "Friends Reunited" for the Theatre Royal Bath production of *God of Carnage* which opened in February this year.

It was through his agent, Peggy Ramsay that the name of Yasmina Reza first reached Christopher Hampton's ears, and it was a name that would re-surface years later on one of Hampton's regular writing trips to Paris. "'Art' was playing at a theatre around the corner from my hotel and I was strolling past the entrance one day when I noticed the title of the play and the name of the writer on the poster. I was intrigued. I remembered that Peggy had sent me Yasmina's first play, *Conversations After a Burial*. So I went to the box office and tried to buy a ticket for *Art*, but I was told that the play was sold out for the next month. However, I managed to get a return and so I saw the play. I was extremely impressed by how wise and how funny it was."

Hampton remembers the early days of their working relationship. "Even when Yasmina's command of English was not as good as it is now, it was apparent that she kept a very close eye on the translations of her work. She was very concerned that we wouldn't get away with anything and that her work was presented as closely as possible to the original production."

In any profession, interpersonal chemistry is essential for a fruitful working relationship and Hampton reports that: "We all had a very good time working on 'Art' so there seemed no reason why we couldn't continue. When we work together, I often find myself being reined back from giving the audience too good a time. I remember us watching an early preview of *Art* and Yasmina was completely taken aback by the amount of laughter there was from the audience. 'What have you done?' she wanted to know. 'Why is there all this laughter?' I had to explain that among the philistine English, modern art is generally a subject for comedy." Hampton is inclined to see Reza's plays as satires on bourgeois values, behaviour and hypocrisy. It is clear that there is undoubted humour in the plays and a humour that has successfully crossed the English Channel as well as numerous other frontiers around the world.

For Hampton, preserving the humour in the translation is a matter of patiently weighing each element of the text. "You have to arrange the lines in a certain way and sometimes it's simply a matter of changing the word order. Yasmina writes in a heightened language, she has a very distinctive voice and her plays could not be written by someone else. I'll often say to her that she has come up with an unusual turn of phrase and she tells me that she has invented it. So you have to find a theatrical way of expressing such invented turns of phrase and in a way that will make people laugh. It's not an easy exercise but it's certainly fun."

Al Senter is a London-based theatre journalist and interviewer on alsenter@yahoo.co.uk

For More Biographical details: See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yasmina_Reza

About the Production

Design

Reza informs us that the setting for the play is:

“A living room

No realism

Nothing superfluous.”

Then we meet the two couples - The Vallons and the Reilles - sitting down, facing one another. We need to sense right away that the place belongs to the Vallons and that the two couples have just met.

In the centre, a coffee table, covered with art books. A big bunch of tulips in a glass vase.

The play is set in Paris but the situation represented is universal. The characters have French names, the incident happens in a French park, they eat French food etc. If this production tried to locate the action in Vaucluse, for instance, a Sydney audience would immediately get a sense of who somebody is from the park they live near.

The set features an appropriate blood red rug and a squared silver back wall and minimalist red leather sofas (very Nick Scalli-esque!) and side table.

Characters

All in their forties. All the characters are unheard; nobody gives the other person the time of day. We perceive at the outset of the play that the prevailing mood is serious, friendly and tolerant between the two couples – the Vallons and the Reilles. The two couples have just met at the Vallons.

VERONICA VALLON – Veronica is the victim’s mother, a caring earth mother-type who turns into a wild-woman warrior; a writer, [specialising in Africa,] and works part-time in an art-history bookshop. She tells the other couple un Act I, “I contributed to a collection on the civilisation of Sheba, based on the excavations that were restarted at the end of the Ethiopian-Eritrean war. And I have a book coming out in January on the Darfur tragedy.” Son Bruno, the victim of the schoolyard scuffle that catalyses the play, has, Veronica informs us, “a nine-year-old sister, Camille who’s furious at her father because last night her father got rid of the hamster.”

Veronica is always right! Playwright Yasmina Reza has said, “Veronica is the character we all would like to be. She’s the one who cares deeply about the adults children are going to grow up to be. The only reason she is becoming insufferable is that she’s making a big effort to turn this into something positive, and she’s not listened to.” [*The Times*, 9/3/08]

Alan tells Veronica that “You and I have had trouble seeing eye to eye right from the start.” Veronica comes to believe “Behaving well gets you nowhere. Courtesy is a waste of time, it weakens you and undermines you.” She admits she is humourless.

MICHAEL VALLON – “I have a wholesale company, household goods.” A self-made wholesaler of domestic hardware. There is a diverse range to this man, grounded and earthy, who one minute is defending cruelty to a pet hamster [guinea pig] and next minute is conscientiously blow drying a damaged art book! Reza uses juxtaposition to compare and contrast the boys’ bullying incident with Michael letting loose his children’s pet hamster, Nibbles.

ANNETTE REILLE – “I’m in wealth management.” Son Ferdinand. Second wife of Alan. Annoys Michael with her taunts about him being “someone descended from Spartacus and John Wayne who can’t even pick up a mouse.” Becomes sick during her visit with her husband to the Vallons’. Fed up with Alan constantly being on his mobile phone, she believes “Men are so wedded to their gadgets. It belittles them. It takes away all their authority.” She challenges her husband, “Why are you letting them call my son an executioner? You come to their house to settle things and you get insulted and bullied and lectured on how to be a good citizen of the planet, our son did well to clout yours and I wipe my ass with your bill of rights!”

ALAN REILLE – a boorish lawyer; constantly taking calls on his mobile phone, dealing with a crisis, defending a pharmaceutical company that has been selling a drug that may have bad side effects; nicknames his wife “Woof-woof.” A true alpha male. Secretly proud of his bully son, later admitting Ferdinand is “a savage.” Annette is his second wife; he has another son from his first marriage.

Says about men: “Women always think you need a man, you need a father, as if they’d be any help at all. Men are a dead weight., they’re clumsy and maladjusted.”

Says about women to Veronica: “You’re part of the same category of woman [as Jane Fonda,] committed, problem solving, that’s not what we like about women, what we like about women is sensuality, wildness, hormones. Women who make a song and dance of their intuition, women who are the custodians of the world depress us, even him, poor Michael, your husband, he’s depressed.”

Direction – Gale Edwards

Reference: Bryce Hallett, "Ferocious comedy ignited by an act of youthful violence," in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Wednesday 7/10/09

"It's Albee meets Molière," Gale Edwards says. "The play isn't naturalistic and [it] feels like a Molière farce ... Great comedy has to be based on great truth, and in this production we have chosen to push the boat out. It's tremendously funny in an irreverent way and digs into our psyche."

The director of such memorable productions as *Buried Child*, *Festen* and *Jerry Springer - The Opera*, says ***God of Carnage*** has splashes of boulevard comedy and escalating strains of Albee's domestic combats and uneasy truces.

"What is the style of the piece? That is the danger. It moves into *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* territory but not in the way [Albee] plunges into the fire with great seriousness or dark despair ... Reza plays with rapiers not swords; she's swift, clever and witty, and there are times when we put the brakes on to better serve the text."

"The first impression audiences get is one of simplicity - there are four actors, two sofas and the play happens in real time," Edwards says. "The central metaphor is pretty obvious in the broader issues it touches on by looking at a small group of individuals who find conflict resolution near-impossible."

"How, then, can communities, nations and society be expected to come together? It is ... going on between Palestine and Israel, only in microcosm."

Apart from playing hard and fierce with the comedy, Edwards and the designer Brian Thomson have sought to introduce a sobering visual note. In rehearsals the play took on a deeper resonance for the cast and creative team when they heard about the death of a Mullumbimby schoolboy, Jai Morcom, after a schoolyard fight in August.

"Here was an innocent boy who died after a violent incident," Edwards says. "It played on all our minds as we mined the layers of the play, especially as Reza questions who we are and how we live our lives. It raises complex questions. Do we have a natural inclination towards violence? How are the seeds of violence sown?"

"The 'god of carnage' is the moral argument that we can't be intrinsically good or virtuous people given the chaos and conflict in the world. So although the play looks simple, it is concerned with broad, compelling issues."

Pre-performance Questions & Activities

5 Questions for students who haven't read the play

1. *God of Carnage* plays out in real time, following an interaction between two couples discussing a playground fight between their children over an hour and a half. What other plays or films or television shows [e.g. 24] can you think of that play out in real time?
2. Research the background on artists Oskar Kokoschka (whose priceless catalogue Annette owns) and Francis Bacon. Annette is also working on a book on the Darfur tragedy. The Darfur Conflict refers to violence taking place in Darfur, Sudan, which started in February 2003 when the Sudan Liberation Army and Justice and Equality Movement took up arms, accusing the government of oppressing black Africans in favour of Arabs.
3. As one critic has said, "With Reza's characteristic wit and sharp eye for contemporary detail, the play *God of Carnage* tells of four parents who meet to discuss an issue between their two young sons and rapidly descend into childishness." Read the fabulous Australian novel *The Slap* by Christos Tsiolkas which has a similar theme,
4. A photograph of the four actors in role as the Vallons and the Reilles., features on the STC flyer for the play.. The text is written in aggressive red and black. Clip the ad for *God of Carnage* from the Amusement Section of *The Sydney Morning Herald* – or look up the STC website page for the play www.sydneytheatre.com.au/stced What can you tell about the publicity campaign for the play from this image of the play? Use the following copy to put together your own flyer for *God of Carnage* using the following text. Choose a spiky font as well.

TWO OSTENSIBLY CIVILISED MARRIED COUPLES MEET UP TO SORT OUT A PLAYGROUND FIGHT.

The son of one couple, the Reilles, has broken two of the teeth of the son of another, the Vallons. At first diplomatic niceties are observed, but as the meeting progresses and the rum flows, huge tensions emerge and 'the gloves come off', leaving more than just their liberal principles in tatters.

5. Read the reviews of the West End and Broadway productions of *God of Carnage* in Appendix A. What expectations do you have for Yasmina Reza's play in production now you have read reviews of the play?

5 Questions for students who have read the play

1. Below is an image of Brian Thomson's red and silver set for this production. He says of the set, "The setting is still Paris, although that's only in place names, newspapers etc. (The actors use) no accents and they use English versions of their names. It's basically an island with no superfluous bits and pieces - the drinks bar has been cut - all there is (is) what's needed."



Explore what the red and white motifs of the set might mean.

2. Playwright Yasmina Reza alludes to the "John Wayne virility" of Alan: Alan says he didn't come to the Vallons' place hoping for reconciliation: "When you're brought up with a kind of John Wayne-ish idea of virility, you don't want to settle this kind of problem with a lot of yakking." **John Wayne** was an American film actor who epitomised rugged masculinity and has become an enduring American icon. He is famous for his distinctive voice, walk and height. He was also known for his conservative political views and his support in the 1950s for anti-communist positions.

What does the playwright mean by this allusion?

3. Michael and Veronica's son Bruno is accused from the outset of the play of calling Alan and Annette's son Ferdinand "a snitch," which has been defined as "a thief; an informer, usually one who betrays his group, or colloquially, a fink, someone acting as an informer or decoy for the police. As a verb it means to denounce: give away information about somebody; "He told on his classmate who had cheated on the exam." Brainstorm other examples of this language of bullying.

Alan discusses the tribal nature of the recess break: "They're young, they're kids, kids have always given each other a good beating at recess. It's a law of life." Do you agree with him?

4. ***God of Carnage*** has been called "**a comedy of manners – without the manners.**" What modern examples come to mind from the comedy of manners genre: e.g. *Friends*, *Sleepless in Seattle*.
5. Make the dessert clafoutis mentioned in the play – see Appendix B. Here's the reference to it in the play: "*Clafoutis*? Is it a cake or a tart? Serious question I was just thinking – *Linzertorte*, for example, is that a tart? Veronique replies: *Clafoutis* is a cake. The pastry's not rolled out. It's mixed in with the fruit. In my view, it's only the classic tart, that's to say on a pastry base, that deserves to be called a tart."

Post-performance Questions & Activities

5 Questions for students who hadn't read the play

1. Create an oral presentation [interview or hot-seat] that demonstrates understanding and empathy for one of the characters in ***God of Carnage*: VERONICA, MICHAEL, ANNETTE or ALAN.**

In 3 minutes you will need to respond to scripted character questions and explain your character's situation and concerns as depicted in the story of the play. You will then be asked 2-3 impromptu questions. This is like a "life offstage" exercise by famed Russian acting practitioner, Konstantin Stanislavsky. You need to answer these questions based on the facts of the play and your interpretation of the character's motivation and relationships in the context of the plotline.

Here are some guideline questions:

- 1) State your name.
- 2) How old are you?
- 3) To which social group do you belong and what job do you hold?
- 4) Where do you usually live?
- 5) Who are your friends and who are your enemies?
- 6) How do you fit into the story of the play?
- 7) Do you consider yourself to be a good or bad person – why?
- 8) At the end of the play, what do you think people might say they know about you?

These are simple questions to 'break the ice.' You should then be able to respond to your chosen character in greater depth.

2. Comment on Reza's use of physical comedy such as slapstick, wit and other comic techniques in her suburban satire ***God of Carnage*** to express her absurdist view of life. Discuss the physicality of Helen Thomson as visiting mother/commodity broker Annette. ***God of Carnage***, like other Reza plays, has been described as "a funny tragedy." Hence the playing of it has to be deadly serious.

3. Comment on the director's decision that the actors not play in French accents with Russell Dykstra playing Michael Vallon as working-class and Marcus Graham as Alan Reille as debonair and rather British. [On Broadway the play was Americanized for stateside audiences.] The actors are not playing French stereotypes. Reza didn't want the play to be about social differences, but about people not being able to talk to one another.

4. Read the program article God of Carnage (Appendix C)
Analyse the title ***God of Carnage***. Alan, the corporate shark type, admits proudly to believing in this god. He explains, "You see Véronique, I believe in the God of Carnage. He has ruled, uninterruptedly, since the dawn of time..."

5. Explore and comment on the following representations in the play: belonging, attitudes to politics, work, conscience, material possessions, parenting, gender, education, racial prejudice and crucially – guinea pigs! Have a class debate on Annette's assertion that "An insult is also a kind of assault."

5 Questions for students who had read the play

1. **Direction:** The role of the director of a theatrical production not only includes finding the best actors for the play, creating truthful and believable performances, and building an effective ensemble, but also defining a particular vision for the text. What do you think was the vision of the director Gale Edwards and her interpretation of the play, particularly the use of physical movement within the confines of a living room? Comment on Edwards' use of the technique of *hiatus* or beat or change of intention.

Consider the following: A British critic Alice Jones in *The Independent* (27/3/08) has commented on Playwright Reza that she "has proved that she can skewer the middle classes like no other, revelling in the grotesque prejudices not only of her characters but also of the audience. Has Edwards' production met this end?"

Comment on the film sequence used in the *mise en scène* to represent children at 'play.'

2. **Set Design** – Consider the following:

Online critic Diana Simmonds on her theatre blog *Stagenoise* opines, "Between them, designer Brian Thomson and lighting designer Trudy Dalgleish have created a finely defined playing space for the quartet. Stacks of art books and elegant modern sofas and coffee table speak of social aspiration; while the back wall is both a mosaic of screens that effectively come into their own at the beginning and end of the play, and a large screen that allows a distorted shadow play extension of the actors' physical presence. It adds another element to Edwards' choreography and helps **transform** what might otherwise have been a visually static work

What mood does Brian Thomson's stark silver-squared back wall evoke from the out-set of the play in the living room of the Vallons' living room? Sketch the set and blood red minimalist furniture and rug and list some of the props, including the art books and the exquisite vase of tulips. How is the set used later to represent the vast crevices of disagreement not only between the two couples but between husbands and wives? And the entire world?

3. **Costume Design:** How has Costume Designer Julie Lynch interpreted the look of each of the main characters? Outer garments like trench coats are put on or removed like armour by Annette and Alan at different points in the play. Alan sees himself as a Neanderthal Man. (Diana Simmonds on her theatre blog *Stagenoise* says, "Costume designer Julie Lynch raises the visual ante with a clearly themed outfit for each character.")
4. How does **Lighting Designer** Trudy Dalgleish's side lighting and smoke contribute to the mood of scenes? What effect do these lighting states achieve?

5. Music/Sound Design

How does the soundscape of Sound Designer Paul Charlier evoke different moods at the beginning and end of the play? Comment on Charlier's use of French hip hop music in the mise-en-scène including samples of contemporary French television and children's voices to accompany the video footage. Phone calls play a major part in the comedy.

Useful Links For Music/Sound Design – COMPOSITION

GO TO < http://www.sibelius.com/home/index_flash.html>

music for multimedia productions - Music for multimedia productions refers to the study of music and its relationship to the various combinations of media. For example: radio, film, television, CD-ROMs, computer games, software soundtracks and slides/audio-visual productions.

This Stage 6 Music 1 topic encourages composition in one of these media. Now that you have seen the use of music as underpinning of character (for instance, the use of jungle music and cries), compose a music piece for one of the other characters in the play. Use <http://www.soundjunction.org/default.aspa> or http://www.sibelius.com/home/index_flash.html to achieve this.

Also use this site to compile a disk of the following sound effects (FX): sounds of children playing in a playground or park.

Useful Links

www.sydneytheatre.com.au/stced STC Ed website

Here you can find resources, watch video trailers, send us your feedback on the productions you have seen, e-mail our archivist for specific information you may be searching for or check the date and time of a performance.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yasmina_Reza - best biographical resource

http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,,2543294016947,00.html?from=public_rss

– Rosemary Sorensen’s comprehensive feature article on Yasmina Reza

http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2009/03/16/090316fa_fact_thurman - Life and

Letters about Yasmina Reza from prestigious American magazine.

<http://www.playbill.com/features/article/127875.html> - Tony Award winner Yasmina Reza

brings a razor wit and profound understanding of human subtleties to her *God of Carnage*

<http://www.godofcarnage.com/> - *God of Carnage* Broadway production website.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/features/yasmina-reza-on-writing-a-play-that-can-rival-Isquoartsquo-798608.html> - Yasmina Reza on Writing a Play That Can Rival *Art*

<http://www.smh.com.au/news/entertainment/arts/nothing-messy-about-this-nearperfect-nouvelle-farce-8230-exceptprojectile-vomit/2009/10/09/1255019613363.html> - Jason Blake’s review – “Nothing messy about this near-perfect nouvelle farce ... except projectile vomit” – in *The Sydney Morning Herald* Weekend Edition, 10-11/10/09

<http://www.stagenoise.com/reviewsdisplay.php?id=368> – Diana Simmonds’ review – “Petit bourgeois ha ha ha,” of Yasmina Reza’s “crowd-pleaser” play on the *Stagenoise* blogsite..

http://www.cookingsoftware.com.au/recipes/Clafoutis_Recipes.html - Fourteen different clafoutis recipes:

www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au - Here you’ll find full information about subject syllabi and past examination papers.

<http://encarta.msn.com> - Encarta Encyclopedia Article on Yasmina Reza.

APPENDIX A

GOD OF CARNAGE REVIEWS

The Guardian: God Of Carnage

Mar. 28, 2008

Michael Billington - Theatre Critic

Gielgud Theatre, London

The first night of Yasmina Reza's new play was disrupted by a power failure. At one point Cameron Mackintosh, the theatre owner, appeared to explain: "I haven't short-changed the meter." But, after a 10 minute hiatus, the show went on with the aid of a working stage light and a front-of-house spot. And, even if dramatic momentum was briefly lost, it couldn't disguise Reza's brutally comic dissection of bourgeois values.

Disruption lies at the heart of the play itself. Two ostensibly civilised couples meet to sort out a playground punch-up: the son of Alan and Annette has broken two incisors of the son of their hosts, Michael and Veronica. At first, diplomatic niceties are observed. Gradually, however, tensions emerge between and among the couples.

Alain, a cynical lawyer distractedly defending a dodgy pharmaceutical company on his mobile, irks his hosts and causes his wife to throw up. Meanwhile, Veronica, a moral crusader who has just done a book about Darfur, allows her mask to slip and exposes the hollowness of her marriage to Michel, who is a vulgar nihilist at heart.

As she proved in *Life x 3*, Reza is an expert analyst of social hypocrisy; and her play, in Christopher Hampton's witty translation, starts out as a rancidly funny account of two couples tiptoeing around their mutual dislike.

Ralph Fiennes's detached lawyer raises the roof as, tucking into his host's sweetmeat, he announces: "At least all this has given us a new recipe." And Janet McTeer's Véronique reveals where her true values lie when she laments that Tamsin Greig's Annette has spewed up all over her priceless Kokoschka catalogue.

Even Ken Stott, as the would-be pacifier Michael, turns out to a bruiser who has cruelly released his daughter's hamster into the Parisian streets. All four actors are excellent and, in Matthew Warchus's deft production, show the thin veneer of bourgeois pretence.

But, even allowing for the enforced break two-thirds of the way through a 90-minute play, nagging questions arise. You wonder how the marriage of a chic radical like Véronique to a deep-seated racist like Michel has endured as long as it has. And there is a sense of accelerated Albee about the breakdown of the pales and forts of reason under the influence of a few glasses of rum: if anything, the play is too short to be a wholly plausible metaphor for the decline of western civilisation.

But, to those who dismiss Reza as a boulevard writer, I would counter that she has the courage to tackle big themes; and this performance is full of delights.

McTeer's voice seems to sink into her boots as she reveals Veronica's real venom. Fiennes's comic indifference gradually acquires a tragic edge. Stott also exposes the cowardice behind his macho bombast and Greig, as arguably the sanest of the quartet who says of the fighting sons that "there is wrong on both sides", conveys the sickly impotence of liberalism.

Reza's commercial success is often held against her; but here, as so often, she holds the mirror up to bourgeois hypocrisy with the savage indignation of a born satirist.

Reference::<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2008/mar/26/theatre>>

The Toronto Star: God Of Carnage: A Broadway Must-See

Great teamwork, strong actors make cleverly shifting play a must-see

Apr 26, 2009

Richard Ouzounia - Theatre Critic

New York — The words "savage" and "merciless" don't normally coexist with "hilarious" and "entertaining", but that's exactly what's currently happening in Manhattan where Yasmina Reza's latest assault on our polite sensibilities called *God of Carnage* is currently playing to packed houses.

If a play ever mirrored the patterns of guerilla warfare, this one is it, starting out as a seemingly innocuous comedy about two upper middle-class couples trying to work out the problems their children had in a recent quarrel, only to end 90 minutes later in an all-out, no-holds-barred assault on the very foundations of our civilization.

Theatre this clever requires consummate teamwork from top to bottom and that's what we get here. Reza's writing (superbly translated from the French by Christopher Hampton) takes us along the road to hell step by step with gossamer skill. Director Matthew Warchus is able to modulate his staging from polite coffee table banter to full body-press violence and the four cast members – Jeff Daniels, Hope Davis, James Gandolfini and Marcia Gay Harden – are all the kind of courageous troupers you would like to have with you on beach at Normandy, as well as on the stage of a hit Broadway show.

One of the beauties of this play is the way the tectonic plates keep shifting. The person you may find the most contemptible as the curtain rises is the one you're likeliest to cheer as it falls. The most righteous turns out to be the most prejudiced; the wimp turns out to be the viper and so on. **Nothing or no one is what they first seem to be. That's what makes this such a constantly fascinating piece of theatre: a dialectical Rubik's cube that invisible hands keep reshaping before your eyes.** While the writing and direction command our respect, it's the acting that demands our total admiration. I urge you to run to Manhattan as soon as possible to see this show in order to savour the sheer magic of the quartet of artists joined together in this production.

It's impossible to decide who to praise first. Harden is front and centre with the risks she takes, going from tight-lipped liberalism to free-swinging anarchy as the play progresses. There's nothing more hysterical or braver than the way Harden throws herself on her opponents, or leaps up and down in anger when things don't go her way. Davis has a fascinating trajectory, running from doe-eyed subservience to projectile vomiting worthy of

a character from *The Exorcist*, while Daniels as her cell-phone-dependent husband works within a narrower margin of hysteria, but still finds enough ground to frighten us as well.

And then there's Gandolfini, spending a large part of the evening radiating that smiling benevolence we know so well from his days as Tony Soprano. But, just like the former refuse manager from New Jersey, Gandolfini's character here is capable of the most horrifying eruptions and if there's any doubt how close our civilized society is to the jungle, his Neanderthal rantings will eliminate them in a minute.

God of Carnage is that rare play which will not only surprise you and entertain you, but give you plenty to discuss for hours afterwards. Put this on the top of your "must-see" list in New York.

Reference: <http://www.thestar.com/entertainment/article/624239>

APPENDIX B

CHERRY CLAFOUTIS

INGREDIENTS (SERVES 4)

600g cherries
3/4 cup (165g) castor sugar
1/2 cup (75g) plain flour
4 eggs, at room temperature
2 egg yolks, at room temperature
2 cups (500ml) luke-warm milk
1/2 tsp vanilla extract
2 tbs Armagnac, Cognac or brandy, optional
60g unsalted butter, melted
Finely grated rind of 1 lemon

METHOD

1. Remove the stalks from cherries then, using, a cherry pitter, pit the cherries. Place the cherries on a small tray just large enough to hold them in a single layer, scatter with 1/4 cup (55g) sugar and shake to coat in sugar. Place in the freezer for 1 hour or until firm.

2. Sift remaining sugar, flour and a pinch of salt into a bowl. In a separate bowl, whisk eggs, egg yolks, milk, vanilla and Armagnac (if using) until combined. Gradually whisk egg mixture into flour mixture until smooth and combined. Cover with plastic wrap and set aside at room temperature for 30 minutes, then whisk in warm melted butter and lemon rind.

3. Preheat oven to 180°C. Grease four 1 1/2-cup (375ml) capacity (or one 6-cup capacity) shallow, ceramic or porcelain oven proof dish(es) then place in a large roasting pan. Divide frozen cherries between dish(es) and gently pour in batter. Pour boiling water into roasting pan to come one-third of the way up side of dish(es) then bake for 20-25 minutes for individual puddings or 40 minutes for a large pudding, or until just set. Serve.

NOTES & TIPS

- Cherry and olive pitters can be used interchangeably - they are available from specialist kitchen shops and make speedy work of pitting. A crude but effective alternative is to use a small, clean paper clip. Insert the clip into the cherry and use the base to hook and pull up the pit.
- Warming the milk slightly will prevent the butter from solidifying and help the ingredients to combine better.
- Other summer and early autumn fruits can be given a similar treatment. Try halved apricots, figs or plums.

APPENDIX C

GOD OF CARNAGE – Program Article

If theatre has a primitive origin, common to us all, superseding all religion, cultures and beliefs, a place where we can venerate and weave a collective spirit into being, then perhaps theatre has the unique ability to make us see who we truly are as primal human beings.

Across all cultures whether from Ancient Greece to Hindu Mysticism, one of the many unique facets that seems to transcend us all, a base animalistic if not “Neanderthal” like factor, is the need to destroy, dismember and annihilate. A need we tend to suppress but a feeling that rears its ugly head. To this effect we have all indulged in a god, a god of war, a god of brutality, a god of destruction: the god of carnage.

Ares: Greek god. a.k.a. Mars to the Romans. The god of bloodlust and slaughter is brother to Athena and son to Zeus and Hera. Abhorred by the gods and more so by his father who declared (as per The Iliad): “I hate you more than any of the gods on Olympus; your only dreams are those of destruction, war and combat”.

Anhur: Egyptian god. The son of Ra (or Sun God) was in charge of hunting and slaying the enemies of his solar-deity father.

Agrona: Celtic god. She is the god of strife and slaughter. The river Aeron in Wales is named after her and literally means “carnage”.

Kali: Hindu god. She is associated as the god of death and destruction and the ultimate figure of annihilation. Through this role, she is also seen as the redeemer of the universe, and thus the patron for time and change.

Aesma Daeva: Persian god. A ruthless and immoral god of war seeks wrath and revenge. He chases the souls of the deceased as they rise to heaven.

Hachiman: Japanese god. Shinto god of war, guardian of the Minamoto clan of samurai, is symbolised by a vortex or whirlpool with three heads. Hachiman became one of the most important gods after the establishment of the Shogun regime from 1192 to 1867, second only to Amaterasu (the sun goddess).

Tumatauenga: Maori god. The god of war and destruction is also the ancestor of humankind. His exploits taught mankind how to harness the resources of the natural world. The body of the first warrior to fall into battle is usually offered up to Tumatauenga.

MALICE AND MAYHEM

Perched on The Wharf balcony enjoying the midday sun, Marcus Graham describes Yasmina Reza's God of Carnage as "everyone's favourite play at the moment". And it seems he may be right.



With three 2009 Tony Awards, including Best New Play, a 2009 Laurence Olivier Award for Best New Comedy and previous casts featuring Ralph Fiennes and James Gandolfini, it's clear Yasmina Reza's latest comedy has struck a chord with theatre audiences the world over. Sydney audiences are now getting their chance to experience this biting satire in October with Gale Edwards' Sydney premiere production playing in the Drama Theatre.

Marcus stars alongside Helen Thomson, Russell Dykstra and Sacha Horler as two couples that sit down for a mature discussion after an incident involving

their children in the playground. What starts out as an attempt at conciliation and resolution, rapidly descends into a chaotic battle as the lounge room becomes the front line for a clash of egos. The increasingly outrageous and self-serving behaviour of the characters is what initially attracted Marcus to *God of Carnage*.

"The play speaks to where we are right now as a society," he muses. "I thought it was hilarious how despicable every character was. It speaks of our fickle nature - how we change our allegiances for a piece of cake, or a glass of rum. *God of Carnage* is very modern in that sense."

Marcus describes Yasmina Reza's ability to tap into the "underlying violent competitiveness of our nature" as integral to the success of the script. "Yasmina really exposes this idea that we are all actually more interested in ourselves and what we want for ourselves more than anything else. In this play the characters only tolerate each other in order to get what they want."

"The characters are very funny in a black way. It's a modern comedy of manners in some respects. The veneer of hospitality is stripped away and you watch them disintegrate and their true selves emerge," he says.

Marcus plays Alan, wife to Annette (Helen Thomson) and father to the stick-brandishing child that has broken two of Michael (Russell Dykstra) and Veronica's (Sacha Horler) child's teeth. Alan is a high-flying corporate lawyer who is constantly distracted by an impending disaster for the pharmaceutical company who's interests he is trying to protect. Marcus sees Alan as the epitome of lawyers in his generation - successful and charming on the surface but "increasingly soulless the further you dig".

"My grandfather was a barrister last century and the value system is completely different now," says Marcus. "Lawyers in my grandfather's time were more interested in honour and justice which is the complete antithesis to Alan in this play. Here you have a lawyer trying to protect a \$150 million profit of a product that is going to dreadfully harm people. His strategy is keep the money, stay out of trouble, sell people the drugs, get on with your life and be successful. I guess that's the plinth of the play, these characters reveal the modern psyche. Alan represents who we are and the world we are living in. People recognise that in the play, which goes a long way to explaining its popularity."

The children in *God of Carnage* are absent, yet the consequences of their actions is the catalyst for a searing portrayal of the modern parent, where characters seem to swing from over-parenting to ignoring their child. Recent events in Australia, such as two fathers being arrested and charged for brawling at their young son's football match, and the success of

Christos Tsiolkas' *The Slap* suggests the play is tackling a contemporary zeitgeist. "In a modern society parents sometimes see their kids as an expression of themselves so therefore they are being represented by that child", says Marcus. "Any attack on your child is an attack on you so the whole situation becomes a battle of egos."

"The way our children behave can really reflect back on us as adults. The characters in the play are submerged in this world; they are not trying to change the world. There is no moral dilemma for them. The moral dilemma is with the children and who is going to pay for what and who is going to take the blame. My character, Alan spends most of his time in the play not even interested. He doesn't even like his child - he thinks he's a monster. But what do his child's actions say about him? Is his aggression in the boardroom the same as the aggression played out in the playground - just different rules?"

After completing Sydney and Melbourne seasons of *Pericles* with Bell Shakespeare, Marcus says he is delighted to be jumping back into the rehearsal room at Sydney Theatre Company. "I love working with Gale. We have worked together a number of times before - the last thing we did was *Jerry Springer the Opera*. I'm very much looking forward to working with Sacha, Helen and Russell as well. They are such wonderful actors, I think they'll really bring the black comedy of the play to life."

"I really do love working for STC and I always have," Marcus admits. "The audiences are great to play to - they are intelligent, warm and discerning. Though I have managed to spend the whole year at the Opera House - first with *Jerry Springer*, then *Pericles* and now *God of Carnage*. I should move in!"

LAURA SCRIVANO

God of Carnage is now playing at the Drama Theatre, Sydney Opera House. For bookings call (02) 9250 1777 or visit sydneytheatre.com.au/carnage

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