

http://www.centraljersey.com/time_off/playing-god-harry-bouvy-is-taking-on-the-role-of/article_4b33e09e-593c-11e8-8554-1bbf221cffcf.html



May 17, 2018

Playing God: Harry Bouvy is taking on the role of the Man Upstairs at Bucks County Playhouse



Harry Bouvy is playing the title role in "An Act of God" at Bucks County Playhouse.

By Anthony Stoeckert

Human beings have been praying to God for thousands of years and now Bucks County Playhouse is giving the Almighty a chance to let us know what's on his mind.

David Javerbaum's comedy "An Act of God" sees the title character (played by Harry Bouvy) return to Earth to offer an updated version of the Ten Commandments. He is joined by two archangels: Michael (Ashley D. Kelley) and Gabriel (Joe Kinosian).

Over the course of the show, God shares insights into omniscience, which doesn't mean he knows everything; it means he's *capable* of knowing everything, but he chooses what he wants to know. For example, in the '80s, he decided to stay ignorant as to who shot JR until the episode of "Dallas" aired. "When it turned out to be his mistress/sister-in-law, that was a bit of a letdown I thought," God says. "'The Sixth Sense,' though, that I did not see coming."

He also talks about celebrities (he understands them, they're his chosen people) and sports (when backup wide receivers point to him after scoring a touchdown, that cheapens his brand). "I only, on extremely rare occasions, influence the outcome of sporting events, to affect the spread," God says.

"An Act of God" has had two limited Broadway runs, one starring Jim Parsons in 2015, the other with Sean Hayes in 2016, and it's now headed to the Bucks County Playhouse in New Hope, Pennsylvania, May 18 through June 16.

Bouvy got the part because of his prior work with Tracy Brigden, who's directing "An Act of God." They had worked together on a staging of Christopher Durang's "Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike" at City Theater Company in Pittsburgh. Bouvy played Vanya, a character who late in the play has a long, five-page monologue. That made him a good fit for God, who spends most of the show talking to the audience.

"I'm sort of familiar with the art form itself, of standing and talking for a good hour and 15 minutes," Bouvy says. "Although this is not actually a one-man show, and I think it's important for people to know that. There are two other people who play the archangels Gabriel and Michael in the play. I will not be alone the whole time, which actually I'm very relieved about."

Bouvy says part of taking on the role is getting used to Javerbaum's idea of God, who like any main character, comes to realizations about himself.

"But there are many times in the play where I do have to be very, I would say, what we would think of traditionally God-like, delivering proclamations and putting curses on people, that kind of thing," Bouvy says.

The Bible says man was created in God's image and Bouvy says the play follows that idea.

"He has faults; He has problems; He has desires and wishes and dreams of his own," Bouvy says. "That's part of the play that I think is really interesting, it's not just one series of jokes — which I kind of worried that it was — that it was more or less a standup routine, but it's not."

He suggests audiences come to the show with an open mind and allow themselves to laugh at this human idea of who God is. And like a traditional play, "An Act of God" has an emotional payoff.

"He realizes things about himself in the end, which is what I think most good theater and good drama does," Bouvy says. "People leave changed; the audience leaves changed and the characters leave changed. If the character is the same at the end of a play as they are at the beginning of the play, then what has really happened? We want to see characters who have a problem of some kind — in the theater — and we want to see how they solve that problem."

Bouvy says portraying God as a human being will allow the audience to relate to the character.

"We all have problems that we need to work out in our lives. We all have regrets about our lives; things we wish that we hadn't done that maybe we're trying to make amends for," he says. "That's what God is going through in the play."

Like a lot of people, God's instinct isn't it to face His problems, but to deal with them with humor.

"After a while, those jokes don't work anymore," Bouvy says. "You can't laugh about them; eventually you have to face your problems. So in that way, I absolutely relate to it."

Bouvy adds the play isn't making fun of God or faith.

"What we're actually doing is recognizing some of the inconsistencies of the very human idea of who God is," he says.

One idea of the play is taking Bible stories and various religions and highlighting how they all work together, in a humorous way. As Bouvy talks about that, he starts to say it's possible someone of faith could be offended by "An Act of God," but he changes that thought.

"I'd rather modify that by saying a person of faith, who has no sense of humor, might be offended by certain things in the play."

"An Act of God" will be performed at Bucks County Playhouse, 70 S. Main St., New Hope, Pennsylvania, May 18 through June 16. Tickets cost \$40-\$75; www.buckscountyplyhouse.org; 215-862-2121.