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'Act of God' at Bucks County Playhouse: Some laughs, but few hosannas



What is left to say about God? More to the point, about human beings' notions of the Supreme Being? A lot, you say? OK. Hey, it's been a major topic of discussions, arguments, and art for as long as people have had them.

An Act of God opened Saturday night at the Bucks County Playhouse, and it's exactly what the title says: a 75-minute one-act show, with the Creator as cosmic talk-show host reviewing his infinite past, present, and future. But if a lot remains to be said, *An Act of God* stops short of it. It's a glorified stand-up routine, essentially a play written by a TV joke-writer, the brilliant David Javerbaum, who won 11 of his 13 Emmys writing for *The Daily Show*, of which *An Act of God* has more than a few echoes.

All this has pluses. Javerbaum is a funny man, and there are definitely good laughs (a reference to "Noah, and his wife, Nameless," got a big one) and clever twists. The best thing here is the main guy, Harry Bouvy, who rocks his white suit and attitude, shows acting range, and delivers a mean punch line. The show's look displays the Broadway-level quality of much recent Bucks County work: The set by Reid Thompson is electric, and the lighting by Gina Scheer keeps it heaven-bright, as archangels Gabriel

(funny, blue-clad piano man Joe Kinosian, who isn't used enough) and Michael (Ashley D. Kelley, in red) assist.

Yet the overall effect is only mildly funny; each time the show threatens to get rolling, it shies away. The premise has promise: In view of the way human beings are behaving, God decides to rewrite the Ten Commandments. As the Almighty runs them down, he reminisces about creation, the first couple (Adam and Steve, hilariously; we find out the Bible isn't always exactly true), the Flood, his close bond with Abraham, and, toward the end, Jesus.

The problem is that, with only about six minutes per commandment, we're constantly stopping with one and starting the next. You can tire of that. Michael goes into the audience to take questions (and we all have them!), again promising, but it lacks follow-through. Michael, oddly, fades from the show in the middle, when it most needs an angel. He does come back, asking the big, hard ones, bringing laughs of agreement: "Why did you make so many stupid people?"

Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac makes God realize there's something wrong with him ("The combination of incompetence and immortality is a recipe for disaster") and worse. Once again, plenty of promise, ironic laughter, and good theater in there somewhere. Bouvy is great as the deific emcee who, though he doesn't give a whoop what you think, does face a dark truth. You go away thinking, yes, but one of the thoughts you're thinking is, "Why can't God and his angels give *An Act of God* wings to soar?"