



A Splendidly Witty *An Act of God* at Bucks County Playhouse



Ralph Malachowski on May 24, 2018

An Act of God, which recently appeared on Broadway to critical acclaim, now enjoys a spanking-new production with a cracker-jack cast at New Hope's legendary Bucks County Playhouse.

Written by David Javerbaum, winner of thirteen Emmy awards for his writing on *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, co-author of several books, and Grammy-winning songs for Steven Colbert and the Tony Awards, **An Act of God** is meat-and-potatoes for the thinking person which must be seen. The premise of **An Act of God** is God, inhabiting the body of an actor, speaks to us directly, not through any prophets, to deliver His new and improved Ten Commandments. God is aided and abetted in this mission by two of His Archangels, Gabriel and Michael. In what can be best described as ten monologues and an apotheosis, Harry Bouvy (aka God) dispatches the new commandments with style and aplomb in a tour-de-force performance. Only occasionally do we hear from Mr. Bouvy's co-stars. One co-star, Joe Kinosian as Gabriel (on keyboard), often fills in responses posed by God while peppering God's comments with musical snippets. Also onstage is Ashley D. Kelley as Michael, who takes questions from the audience as well as poses

questions which discomfit God. At one point, God smites the archangel, severing one of his (her) wings.

The fresh, sparkling production is the work of Reid Thompson, scenic designer, who has set the play in an ultramodern TV set lounge with piquant visual projections courtesy of Brad Peterson. Gina Scherr's lighting design is crisp and fresh as celery. Mr. Bouvy's God ensemble (by Michael Krass) is perfect: white suit, light blue socks matching His light-blue shirt, and tie patterned with clouds, accessorized with silver shoes. If Pope Francis had a gay makeover, this is what he would wear.

The dialogue is swift and often confrontational for the more didactic religionists, and is often intellectually demanding. Much of the dialogue allowed fresh air and sunlight into perspectives on the Old Testament. The sly innuendos and witticisms often seemed to soar past many in the audience, which did occasionally laugh at many of the artful arguments and observations.

On Broadway, veteran television actors Sean Hayes and Jim Parsons leant their appeal to playing God while burdened by long, silver robes. Mr. Bouvy, in his suit, often capered about the stage, pouring cocktails, and taking off his jacket and rolling up his shirtsleeves. Costume designer Michael Krass, while scoring a big win with God's costume (and later apotheosis at the dawn of Universe 2.0), chose to make the archangel wings insignificant. Many would have preferred pert, stylish wings, not the five-foot long affairs seen on Broadway. Instead, we saw what appeared to be feathered muffins on Michael's shoulders.

An adult entertainment, Mr. Javerbaum's ***An Act of God*** intellectually examines ego-centric prayer, wish-fulfillment, God's seemingly bipolar personality evidenced throughout the Old Testament, and God's exhortation to us to start living our own lives without recourse to Him. ***An Act of God***, at just over an hour, is a completely satisfying, intellectually and emotionally thrilling theatrical experience.

An Act of God by David Javerbaum is at the Bucks County Playhouse until June 16. On June 23, there is a one-night production of *Show boat. 42nd Street* arrives June 29-August 4. For more information visit: www.buckscountyplayhouse.org