

## ATC comedy has bite

Tony Award winning play is hilarious

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courtesy of Tim Fuller/Arizona Theatre Company

### God of Carnage

Bob Sorenson, left, Joey Parsons and Benjamin Evett take out their frustrations on a vase filled with tulips in Arizona Theatre Company's God of Carnage.

As a rule, I don't give many performances a standing ovation. Most are received as kind gestures from an audience filled with the relatives of the people on stage, who usually possess more enthusiasm than talent.

But "God of Carnage," a biting comedy being produced by Arizona Theatre Company, moved me to get out of my seat and salute the play's quartet of animated actors. What can I say? I liked it. I really liked it.

Winner of the 2009 Tony Award for Best Play, "God of Carnage" examines what happens when people stop being politically correct and voice what they're really thinking.

The story centers around two couples – Annette and Alan (played by Joey Parsons and Benjamin Evett), whose son hit a classmate with a stick, and Veronica and Michael (played by Amy Resnick and Bob Sorenson), whose son was at the receiving end of that stick.

As the play opens on scenic designer Kent Dorsey's expansive and exquisite living room, the two couples are seated and discussing the altercation that drew them together that day.

Both are annoyingly sweet. Why? Because neither wants to rock the boat regarding their sons' situation. Annette and Alan are just grateful that Veronica and Michael are not bringing suit against their son's violent behavior. Veronica and Michael are trying to motivate Annette and Alan to address their son's behavior with their son to get to the heart of the matter so that the boy will not strike another child.

As the story evolves, so does its characters. Masks of civility are lifted and their true characters emerge. Their evolution is captured during the production, which runs uninterrupted by an intermission for the full 90 minutes.

That's because it would be impossible to recapture the momentum being built as the characters collide – often literally – after taking a break.

"God of Carnage" is one neat package. It starts with an insightful and witty script by playwright Yasmina Reza, and benefits from sharp direction by director Rick Lombardo. The pacing is perfect. Start 'em off smooth, then build, build, build, with a few moments of calm that allow audience members to catch their breath.

The cast is spot-on perfect. Each gets their moment in the spotlight, and each plays well off the others. No one steals the show – that is a group effort that succeeds on all levels.

Disclaimers for the show warn about its adult language and situations. Both exist, but they're nothing most of us haven't seen or heard on cable. Don't let that dissuade you unless you're very sensitive about four-letter words.

I found myself laughing despite having spent a hard day at the office. I went into the theater exhausted and came out invigorated.

Not a bad night's work indeed.

"God of Carnage" runs through Nov. 12 at the Temple of Music and Art in downtown Tucson. You can purchase tickets at [www.arizonatheatre.org](http://www.arizonatheatre.org) or by calling the box office at 622-2823.