

BWW Interview: Director Peter Allas Adds GOD OF CARNAGE to His List of Proud Productions

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by Gil Kaan

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Yasmina Reza's Tony Award-winning comedy God of Carnage plays a limited three-week engagement at the Odyssey Theatre beginning May 13th

The first Los Angeles revival of Yasmina Reza's Tony Award-winning comedy *God of Carnage* plays a limited three-week engagement at the Odyssey Theatre beginning May 13, 2022. Peter Allas directs the playwright-approved cast of Matthew Downs, Jack Esformes, Lisa LoCicero and Leilani Smith. The very busy Peter made some time to answer a few of my queries.

Thank you for taking the time for this interview, Peter!

What productions of *God of Carnage* had you seen before?

What productions had I previously seen? Only one at Seattle Rep where I have previously worked. Enjoyed it, but I felt there was something more to be done! I also had seen the film by Polanski and thought it was very good but different!

What would your three-line pitch of *God of Carnage* be?

Children learn from parents (I know, I know... it's four words.)

Did you have a long audition process? Or did you cast actors whose work you're familiar with?

HA, HA, HA! Well, you bring up an interesting and complex question. First off, I am blessed to have Michael Donovan and his associate Richie Ferris, who did all the "dirty work." We had over *TWELVE HUNDRED* submissions for this play, not counting some wonderful big-name actors that reached and showed interest in the process. The first challenge was getting approval for me as director by the playwright (which she so kindly did her homework on me and gave full support). The next step was compiling an "Executive Producers wish list" of



Peter Allas
Photo courtesy of
Foursome
Productions



Lisa LoCicero, Jack Esformes, Leilani Smith & Matthew Downs
Photo by Viktoria Chernetski, Circumpunct Studio

names and specifically theatrical trained actors in many facets. Once completed, the author Yasmina Reza, our playwright had to give her stamp of approval on casting per a contractual stipulation, which I respect since the author did create something special. It is her baby! After a long back and forth with DPS and France and continually losing availability with some actors, I knew the *KEY* to casting this play was to find "*FOUR VERY DISTINCTLY TRAINED ACTORS THAT WERE DIFFERENT.*" Not only am I pleased with the final result, but I can say our understudy team could impress in all fifty states!

What production that you've directed are you most proud? And why?

Hopefully *ALL OF THEM...* LOL! Well, my first play "American Buffalo" by David Mamet over 35 years ago back in New York City. A continually worked-with Mamet (Lakeboat: revised 2017 in San Francisco). The 2018 Off-Broadway hit revival of "Danny & The Deep Blue Sea" by John Patrick Shanley was special to me. But my most recent work Venus In Fur in San Francisco with two wonderful actors that had diametrically opposite work methods, made it challenging, and hugely rewarding.



As for the *WHY?* I grew up in Chicago, so David Mamet speaks my language! (I have won several acting awards performing his plays as well) and I have an ear for dialogue from Odetts, Pinter, Miller to Mamet, Shanley, & Sorkin! In regard to Venus In Fur, it had all the elements of my training and voice from being an athlete, DJ, magician, spirituality, Greek mythology, artistry, passion and deep deep respect for women! I wanted the audience to "laugh, think, cry, feel-uncomfortable, and be elevated!" And they *WERE!* Unfortunately, the run was cut short for many reasons, but I hope to revive it on Broadway with Mr. Ives support!

What gives you greater gratification - receiving a standing ovation for a role you mastered? Or watching off-stage as the cast you directed get their deserved applause?

Easy answer. Directing! I told my daughter Abby, I hope that she surpasses my life, and I wish the same for all my students at ZA Studio and my actors I direct! It's all about support and giving!

Your film short Sole Searching in San Francisco has made the rounds of film festivals winning a number of awards along the way. Which medium do you prefer to express your talents in?



Sole Searching In San Francisco has blessed me as a director (and my former student and co-director Eric Tippet). It came right as I was directing Speed the Plow, dealing with my mother's cancer in Miami, and a great role acting on "The Blacklist," and still teaching... and then... after that... March 12th, 2020, but we finished it a few months later and magic happened. I went against the scripts "horror" theme and shot it in a "film noir romance style twist," and I guess it struck a chord! The following year I wrote, directed and shot another film with

students in Miami (through Amy Dalli at John Casablanca) called Flashy Philly a satire about the loss of someone! Hopefully it will be released later this year! In the end, I think theatre is *MY MEDIUM*, but I look forward to a John Patrick Shanley script or a great *SPORTS STORY* to film one day!

Is there a dream show or dream cast you would love to tackle?

Yes, any job... Just work, baby, work! There are so many incredible actors out there who could easily be a part of my dream cast, some of the ones closest to my heart are Joe Mantegna, Cherry Jones (who I saw in *Doubt*) and Sam Rockwell (who I am looking forward to seeing in *American Buffalo*). Dream Productions include *The Rose Tattoo*, *Betrayal*, and *Italian-American Reconciliation* on Broadway, then shoot the movie soon, or working with fellow trained artists that has the same drive, passion, fearlessness, and determination, or as Jim Valvano would say, "Think, cry, laugh, feel" all in one day!



What's in the near future for Peter Allas?

Great question, well, let's see. On a personal level, more quiet time, family time and health focus! On a creative level, *I NEVER STOP*, so most likely a little acting. I just shot a fun guest star as a Russian bad guy (accents are my specialty) on *All Rise* by first time director Wilson Bethel, who was terrific! Look for *Speed The Plow* in San Francisco this September, and finally, and I hope my teaching business partner Rob Zimmerman (ZAstudio.online), can be lured into directing me again in a play. (I starred as Barry Champlain in the 30th anniversary production of *Talk Radio*). It is time to perform again, since my basketball career has been *LONG OVER!* LOL!!

Thank you again, Peter! I look forward to experiencing your Carnage.

For tickets to the live performances of *God of Carnage* through May 29, 2022; log onto www.Onstage411.com/Carnage