

# PROSCENIUM

## **God of Carnage**

By Yasmina Reza

Translated by Christopher Hampton

God of Carnage

Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> January to Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2018  
Compass Theatre, Ickenham

# God of Carnage

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## The Cast

### *The Novaks*

Veronica .....Izzie Cartwright

Michael.....Robert Ewen

### *The Raleighs*

Annette .....Mary-Anne Anaradoh

Alan .....Ben Morris

Directed by .....Linda Hampson

Stage Manager .....Crystal Anthony

Assisted By .....Sheila Harvey

Stage Properties.....Zena Wigram, David Pearson

Set.....Mark Brookes, Alan Glover

Lighting and Sound Operation .....Arnold Glickman

With thanks for the "clafouti" to Dani Beckett of  
The Midnight Bakery, Ealing.

Orders welcome: [a.midnight.bakery@gmail.com](mailto:a.midnight.bakery@gmail.com)

The play will run for approximately 1 hour 15 mins with no break. At the end of the play, there will be a 15 minute interval for refreshments, followed by a Question and Answer session with members of the God of Carnage company.

"There was a little incident in the life of my son. He was then about 13 or 14 and his friend was in a fight with another friend; they exchanged blows and my son's friend had his tooth broken. A few days later, I met with the mother of this boy in the street. I asked her how her son was, if he was better, because I knew they'd had to do something to the tooth – they'd had to operate or something. And she said, 'Can you imagine? The parents [of the other boy in the fight] didn't even call me.' It was suddenly, click! I thought, 'This is an incredible theme.' "

*Yasmina Reza, The Guardian, 22nd January 2012*

## Yasmina Reza

**Yasmina Reza**, (born May 1, 1959, Paris, France), was the daughter of Jewish parents who had emigrated to France. Her Iranian father was an engineer, businessman, and pianist; her mother was a violinist originally from Budapest. Reza studied at the University of Paris X, Nanterre, and at the drama school of Jacques Lecoq before working as an actress.

The first two plays she wrote, both winners of a Molière Award, were *Conversations après un enterrement* (1986; *Conversations After a Burial*), involving death and sex, and *La Traversée de l'hiver* (1989; *Winter Crossing*), about the unlikely friendship that develops between six people spending their vacation at a Swiss mountain resort.

It was *Art*, premiered in 1994, which brought Reza wide notice. The play was in production on major stages worldwide virtually continuously after its opening. Another hit, *L'Homme du hasard* (1995; *The Unexpected Man*), was a two-character play set on a train travelling from Paris to Frankfurt. Reza's next play, *Trois versions de la vie* (*Life x 3*), portrayed an awkward situation (a couple arriving a day early for a dinner party) working itself out in three different outcomes. After premiering in Vienna in October 2000, it opened the following month in Paris, with the author in the cast.

In the satiric comedy *Le Dieu du carnage* (2006; *God of Carnage*), Reza focused on two couples who meet to discuss a fight between their young sons. The play made its London debut in 2008 and the Broadway production of *God of Carnage* opened a year later. For a 2011 film version (titled *Carnage*), Reza co-wrote the screenplay with Roman Polanski, who also directed.

Her first novel *Hammerklavier* (1997), was composed of a series of vignettes

inspired by memories of her father. Reza's later novels include *Une Désolation* (1999; *Desolation*), a monologue delivered by an elderly man, and *Adam Haberberg* (2002), which centres on an unsuccessful and unhappy middle-aged writer.

In 2007 Reza wrote *L'Aube le soir ou la nuit* (*Dawn Evening or Night*), a detailed biography of Nicolas Sarkozy as he ran for president of France. Reza's other works include a French translation of Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis* for Polanski, who performed the lead role in Paris in 1988. She also wrote the screenplay for the film *Le Pique-nique de Lulu Kreutz* (2000; *Lulu Kreutz's Picnic*).

Source: [www.britannica.com/biography/Yasmina-Reza](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Yasmina-Reza)

## When Instinct Takes Over: The Theatre of Yasmina Reza

French playwright Yasmina Reza has described her plays as “theatre of nerves.” In a 2012 interview with *The Guardian*, she explained: “What motivates me most is writing about people who are well brought up and yet, underneath that veneer, they break down. Their nerves break down. It's when you hold yourself well until you just can't any more, until your instinct takes over. It's physiological.”

The caustic and often hilarious social commentary of Reza's plays has led to international success. *Art*, written in 1994 and translated two years later, won an unprecedented hat-trick of awards: the Molière in Paris, the Olivier in London, and the Tony in New York. That play pits three friends against each other as they debate the merits of an expensive — and entirely white — painting that one of them has bought. *God of Carnage*, written in 2006 and translated two years later, won her the Olivier and the Tony again.

When *God of Carnage* won the 2009 Tony award for Best Play, Reza shared the award with her “dearest Christopher” — Christopher Hampton, the English translator of most of her plays. Hampton is a tremendously successful writer in his own right, and the author of several plays including his stage adaptation of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, which later became the Oscar-winning screenplay for the film *Dangerous Liaisons*. Aside from Reza, Hampton has also translated esteemed playwrights such as Molière and Chekhov. “Translation,” he told *France* magazine, “uses different muscles than those you use when writing your own plays. I sometimes say it's like going to the gym. I like to work with the language.

I like to find the best ways of expressing what the author wanted to say.”

Hampton first translated both *Art* and *God of Carnage* into British English for the London stage and then, with the help of the original Broadway casts, created versions in North American vernacular. For *God of Carnage*, he went one step further, transporting the action of the play from Paris to Brooklyn [*Director’s Note: For this production we have used the text from the Broadway version of the play, and enjoyed relocating the Brooklyn locations into suitable places in London*].

During the first days of rehearsal in New York, he explained to France magazine, “we put in all the local references, so the flower shop at Mouton-Duvernet becomes a Korean deli. Instead of Parc Montsouris, we have Brooklyn’s Cobble Hill Park and Walt Whitman Park. Instead of the Métro, there is the el, and so on.” The core of Reza’s play translates easily to other locations — whether in Paris or London, New York or Calgary, we recognize the ridiculous spectacle of adults behaving badly.

*Source: Zach Moull and Shari Wattling, Programme Notes,  
Theatre Calgary, March/April 2013*

## The Art of Translation

“I don’t trust him at all! No, I adore him, he’s a great friend, but I’m not blindly trusting. I remember the first time we met, he had translated *Art* into English and I called him up and said, ‘I received your first draft.’ He said, ‘What do you mean, my first draft? It’s the play. It’s the translation. It’s not a draft.’ I said, ‘Yes it is. There’s work to be done.’ Up to that point, Christopher had only translated dead people. This was the first time he’d had someone alive, on the phone to him. We reworked and reworked it and I know I was annoying him and he was saying to people, ‘she’s giving me such a hard time and she barely speaks English!’ Now my English is much better.”

*Yasmina Reza on Christopher Hampton  
(from The Guardian)*

“Yasmina is very exacting. With *Art*, she didn’t really speak English. But she speaks it now. I told her that she taught herself English to make my life a misery!”

*Christopher Hampton on Yasmina Reza  
(from The Los Angeles Times)*

# Who's Who on the Novaks' Coffee Table

**Francis Bacon (1909 – 1992)**, an Irish painter, is known for his disturbing and subversive images of terror. For example, his “screaming Pope” paintings distort and disfigure a famous Renaissance portrait of Pope Innocent X.

**Oscar Kokoschka (1886 – 1980)**, an Austrian painter and writer, was one of the foremost expressionists of the 20th century. His portraits are famed for laying bare the inner lives of their subjects. A multi-talented artist, Kokoschka wrote poems, plays, and other literature, and also designed sets for theatre and opera.

**Tsuguharu Foujita (1886 – 1968)**, a Japanese painter and printmaker, lived in Paris for many years and was a friend of artists such as Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse. Foujita worked with thin lines on porcelain-like white backgrounds, a delicate style influenced by Japanese traditions. He is best known for his paintings of nude women and cats.

**Peoples of the Tundra: Northern Siberians in the Post-Communist Transition (2002)**, by **John P. Ziker**, is a scholarly book about the native Dolgan and Nganasan peoples of Russia's arctic.

## Mobile Phones - How Connected Are We?

- There are 7 billion people on earth. Approximately 6 billion own a mobile phone. This is probably more people worldwide than own a toothbrush.
- 91% of all mobile phone users have their phone within reach 24/7.
- It takes 26 hours for the average person to report a lost wallet. It takes 68 minutes for them to report a lost phone.
- There are more mobile phones on the planet than there are televisions.
- It takes 90 minutes for the average person to respond to an email. It takes 90 seconds for the average person to respond to a text message.
- Nomophobia is the fear of being separated from one's mobile phone. In a recent study in the UK, 66% of those surveyed admitted to a fear of being apart from their phone.
- The average person checks their mobile phone 34 times per day.

# Comedy of Manners

*God of Carnage* has been frequently described as a “comedy of manners without the manners.” Comedy of manners is a genre of play that satirizes the conduct and affectations of a particular social class or group. Typically, these plays ridicule the pretensions of characters (usually upper or middle class), and highlight their inability to live up to their own social standards. In so doing, comedies of this type poke fun at the manners and behaviour of the audience itself.

The origins of this genre are found in the writings of the ancient Greek playwright Menander (c. 342-291 BC), who became known for his portrayal of realistic characters in comedic situations. It was during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that the comedy of manners truly flourished. French playwright Molière took aim at the hypocrisy of society in such plays as *The School for Wives*, *The Misanthrope* and *Tartuffe*. In England, the follies and foibles of the aristocracy were lampooned in popular Restoration comedies such as William Wycherley's *The Country Wife*, William Congreve's *The Way of the World* and later 18th century plays *She Stoops to Conquer*, by Oliver Goldsmith, and *The School for Scandal*, by Richard Brinsley Sheridan.

The techniques of this genre continued into the late 19th and early 20th century with playwrights such as Oscar Wilde (*The Importance of Being Earnest*), Noël Coward (*Hay Fever*) and George Bernard Shaw (*Pygmalion*). In fact, throughout the last century, the comedy of manners tradition has continued on our stages and expanded to our television sets and our movie theatres. One need only look at re-runs of *Seinfeld* or *Friends* to see the silliness of our manners, our social standards and our contemporary society reflected back at us, confirming the old adage, “the more things change, the more they stay the same.”

*Source: Programme Notes, Theatre Calgary, March/April 2013*

## **Our Next Production**

# **Top Girls**

**By Caryl Churchill**

Marlene celebrates her promotion to head of a recruitment agency by inviting five women from history to dinner at a restaurant. As the play progresses we compare their achievements and struggles with those of Marlene, her family and friends.

Moving, amusing and provocative, the play is as relevant now as when it was written in the early 1980s.

Directed by Crystal Anthony

25<sup>th</sup> April to 28<sup>th</sup> April 2018  
7:45 pm, Compass Theatre, Ickenham  
Box Office : 01895 250 615

## **About Proscenium**

Proscenium was founded in 1924. Since then, the aim of this experienced group has been to present classic and contemporary plays to as wide an audience as possible. Since 1990, performances have taken place at the Harrow Arts Centre and, more recently, at the Compass Theatre, Ickenham.

The company meets three times a week in Harrow for rehearsals, so that four plays are presented in each season. Social, fund raising activities and play readings take place throughout the year.

Secretary : Ben Morris  
Chair : David Pearson

Contact us at [www.proscenium.org.uk](http://www.proscenium.org.uk)