

What's Happenin': Tuesday, September 27, through Wednesday, October 12

Written by Mike Schulz

Tuesday, 27 September 2011 06:00

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Theatre

God of Carnage

Village Theatre

Thursday, October 6, through Sunday, October 16

A living-room set. Four well-dressed characters. Conversation about careers and families and relationships. Basically a play like any other ... except for the projectile vomiting.

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Actually, even without that latter element, *God of Carnage* isn't your everyday theatrical outing, as audiences will likely discover when New Ground Theatre stages author Yasmina Reza's acclaimed work October 6 through 16. The winner of three 2009 Tony Awards including Best Play, this Americanized version of the biting French comedy may appear traditional. But as those familiar with the playwright's

rt well know, Reza is a modern-day master at exposing the frequently hilarious ugliness beneath seemingly serene façades. A

God of Carnage concerns two well-to-do couples who meet to discuss an after-school fight between their sons, one that led to the loss of a couple of teeth. Yet as the evening commences and the booze flows (along with, um, additional liquid substances), numerous other things are also lost, among them the parents' dignity, civility, and control.

What starts as a friendly chat eventually degenerates into full-out verbal warfare, and in director Derek Bertelsen's production, that warfare will be acted out by four familiar local actors: Jason Platt of New Ground's *August: Osage County*, Jackie Madunic of the Richmond Hill Barn Theatre's *Marvin's Room*, Jonathan Grafft of the Harrison Hilltop Theatre's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, and Melissa Anderson Clark of Quad City Music Guild's *The Drowsy Chaperone*.

These performers will no doubt have a ball enacting a play that the *New York Times*

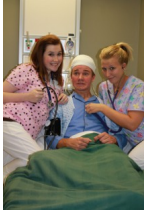
praised for "inciting the kind of laughter that comes from the gut, as involuntary as hiccups or belching." Or ... well, you know.

And on that note, I'd recommend getting to the theatre early, folks. I don't know what Bertelsen has planned for the infamous upchuck moment, but I do know that I'm immediately snagging a back-row seat, just in case.

God of Carnage will be performed in the Village of East Davenport's Village Theatre, performances are at 7:30 p.m. on Thursdays through Saturdays and 2:30 p.m. on Sundays, and tickets are available by calling (563)326-7529 or visiting NewGroundTheatre.org

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Theatre

A New Brain

Galvin Fine Arts Center

Friday, October 7, through Sunday, October 9

So who's up for *A New Brain*? I know I am. I've actually been looking forward to *A New Brain* for almost a decade now, and

Okay. Stop giggling, smart alecks. I'm not talking about a new brain for *me*. I'm talking about the stage production

A New Brain

, being performed in St. Ambrose University's Galvin Fine Arts Center October 7 through 9. And if you're a musical-comedy fan, you should be looking forward to it, too, especially if you're a fellow admirer of William Finn, the composer behind such beloved works as

Falsettos

and

The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee

Originally produced off-Broadway in 1998, *A New Brain* is a case study in turning personal turmoil into exhilarating art, as it's based on Finn's own experiences after being diagnosed with what appeared to be a fatal brain tumor. (Thankfully for Finn, and for musical comedy in general, he made a full recovery.) The show finds its similarly afflicted protagonist, songwriter Gordon Schwinn, re-evaluating his life and relationships during his hospital stay, a musical journey of self-discovery dramatized in such songs as "Craniotomy," "Really Lousy Day in the Universe," and "Poor, Unsuccessful, & Fat."

But I may have picked misleading titles there. Because in truth, *A New Brain* is a fanciful, tuneful, and glorious celebration of life, and one that critics routinely champion;

Variety

magazine, for example, wrote that "the rewards for remaining receptive to Finn's music are immense," and stated that "

A New Brain

deserves to be plucked from obscurity and produced by innovative theatre companies around the world."

With this forthcoming area presentation directed by Daniel Rairdin-Hale, helmer of St. Ambrose's recent *Oedipus Rex* and *Columbinus*, innovation will no doubt be on display in the university's latest. And given Rairdin-Hale's involvement and William Finn's exceptional wit and ear, I absolutely can't *wait* for *A New Brain*, which will

Stop giggling. I repeat: It's not a new brain for *me*. (Though, now that I think of it, one might be useful in coming up with better jokes)

are available by calling (563)333-6251 or visiting <http://Web.SAU.edu/galvin>.

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Music

The Chris Robinson Brotherhood

Rock Island Brewing Company

Monday, October 10, 8 p.m.

“Obviously, news that the Black Crowes were to go on yet another hiatus after their ‘Say Goodbye to the Bad Guys’ tour was not what most fans wanted to hear,” wrote Alex Khatchadourian in the *Santa Barbara Independent*. “Yet had we known that the Crowes’ final notes would spawn the all-American rock powerhouse known as the Chris Robinson Brotherhood, some people might have pleaded for this ‘much-needed break’ to begin much sooner.”

That’s probably all the praise that fans need to hear in advance of RIBCO’s October 10 concert with the Chris Robinson Brotherhood, which finds Black Crowes frontman Robinson jamming with the mighty talents of keyboardist (and fellow Crowes member) Adam MacDougall, guitarist Neal Casal, bassist Mark “Muddy” Dutton, and drummer George Sluppick. Yet a few more words of praise for this electrifying, California-based ensemble seem merited, and because I appear incapable of writing about bands without taking unnecessary detours into movie trivia, I thought I’d leave it to the professionals.

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Reviewing the Chris Robinson Brotherhood in *Bay Area* magazine, Dennis Cook described the group as “a rootsy, wily group of skilled players,” adding that “after 20 years in the game, Robinson is still hell-bent on innovating ... and he thrives when surrounded by guys like this who understand that safe and simple isn't the way to roll with Chris.”

Continuing his praise in the *Santa Barbara Independent*, Khatchadourian wrote that Robinson “has fashioned a troupe of musicians that undoubtedly channels classic-rock greats like Lynyrd Skynyrd, all the while serving up songs that unload a hefty amount of bluesy guitar solos with just the right amount of Southern-rock crunch.”

And covering a Chris Robinson Brotherhood set for the *Sacramento Press*, Lindol French raved about “the extended jam with all of the musicians showing off their prodigious chops” that “sent the crowd into a tizzy.”

So let's hear it for RIBCO for bringing this outstanding new rock outfit to the Quad Cities. And, for my part, let's hear it for Cook, Khatchadourian, and French for allowing me to compose a piece on Robinson's group without resorting to any mention of Kate Hudson.

Shoot. So close.

Tickets are \$15, and for more information on October 10's Chris Robinson Brotherhood concert, call (309)793-4060 or visit RIBCO.com .

