

studio180

God of Carnage

Study Guide

2013/14

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| A. Notes for Teachers | 1 |
| B. Teacher Response Form | 2 |
| C. Introduction to the Company and the Play | 3 |
| Studio 180 Theatre..... | 3 |
| <i>God of Carnage</i> by Yasmina Reza | 4 |
| Yasmina Reza – Playwright | 5 |
| Christopher Hampton – English-Language Translator..... | 5 |
| D. Attending the Performance | 6 |
| E. Topics for Discussion and Classroom Activities | 7 |
| 1. Theatrical Presentation | 7 |
| 2. Theatre in Translation | 9 |
| 3. Satire | 11 |
| F. The Creative Team | 12 |
| Cast..... | 12 |
| Production Team..... | 12 |
| The Parts We Play | 12 |
| G. Readings for Post-Show Discussion | 17 |
| 1. The Translator on Stage: | |
| Taking the Drama out of Translating for the Theatre | 17 |
| 2. Whose Play Is It Anyway?..... | 19 |
| H. Recommended Resources | 22 |

© 2013, Studio 180 Theatre

God of Carnage Study Guide is copyright © 2013, Studio 180 Theatre, and may be reprinted, reproduced or used only with the prior written permission of Studio 180 Theatre.

All requests for reprinting, reproducing or using this Guide should be directed in writing to education@studio180theatre.com.

A. Notes for Teachers

Thank you for bringing your students to see *God of Carnage*, produced by Studio 180 Theatre and presented by David Mirvish. This Study Guide is intended to help make your class's experience as enjoyable and as memorable as possible.

Studio 180 is known for provocative shows that tackle potentially sensitive and personal topics, and we have developed the following guidelines to help you lead productive pre- and post-show sessions in which all students feel safe, respected and able to contribute openly and honestly to discussion.

- Class members should agree on a set of ground rules that will steer the discussion. Ask for student input on what those principles should be. Examples of ground rules might include a commitment to confidentiality within the classroom and to respecting others, a ban on the use of slurs and an agreement that only one person will speak at a time.
- Your class may include students from a wide variety of cultural, racial, religious and national backgrounds. Teachers and students must resist the urge to place individuals in the spotlight based on their perceived identity or point of view. Students will enter into the conversation as they feel comfortable.
- It is the moderator's role to establish as safe a setting as possible and they must take special care to ensure that students holding a majority opinion do not vilify those "on the other side" who hold a minority view. The moderator should also pose questions to the class to help keep the conversation on track.
- The point of a classroom discussion about the issues addressed in *God of Carnage* should not be to reach a class consensus. The goal should be to establish a forum for a free and respectful exchange of ideas.
- Please keep in mind that the better students are prepared prior to attending the play, the more they will get out of the experience. An awareness of what they are about to see will provide students with greater access to the ideas presented onstage. For this reason, this Study Guide is filled with background information and suggestions for classroom discussions and activities.
- Your students' experiences of the play will also be heightened by effective follow-up class discussion. We offer post-show Q&A sessions after every Wednesday matinée and Thursday evening performance to assist in the follow-up process, but it is important to note that students will continue to process their experiences long after they leave the theatre. If time permits, a follow-up discussion a few days later will likely be helpful and productive.

If you are interested in finding out about **Studio 180 IN CLASS** – our program of production- and topic-based **workshops** – please contact **Jessica** at **416-962-1800** or jessica@studio180theatre.com.

C. Introduction to the Company and the Play

Studio 180 Theatre

Inspired by the belief that people can engage more fully in the world through the experience of live performance, Studio 180 produces socially relevant theatre that provokes public discourse and promotes community engagement. Our inaugural production of *The Laramie Project* played to sold-out houses at Artword Theatre in 2003. Its success led to a 2004 remount at Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, earning two Dora Award nominations.

Since then, Studio 180 has continued to offer acclaimed productions of plays that tackle difficult issues and generate powerful audience and community responses. These are often Toronto, Canadian and/or North American premieres of large ensemble pieces that are contemporary, internationally renowned, and unlikely to be produced elsewhere –

- In 2006, we presented the Canadian premiere of British playwright Robin Soans' *The Arab-Israeli Cookbook* at the Berkeley Street Theatre Upstairs.
- In March 2008, the Canadian premiere of *Stuff Happens* by British playwright David Hare ran at the Berkeley Street Theatre Downstairs.
- In October 2008, we presented the world premiere of *Offensive Shadows*, by Toronto playwright Paul Dunn, at the Tarragon Theatre Extra Space. That year *NOW Magazine* named Studio 180 "Toronto's Best Independent Theatre Company of 2008."
- In November 2009, Mirvish Productions remounted our acclaimed production of *Stuff Happens* at Toronto's historic Royal Alexandra Theatre.
- For our 2008/09 through 2011/12 seasons, Studio 180 participated in the Berkeley Street Project Initiative, producing one show annually as part of the Canadian Stage subscription season. Productions included *Blackbird*, *The Overwhelming*, *Our Class* and *Clybourne Park*, (with *Our Class* and *Clybourne Park* each earning Dora nominations).
- In December 2010/January 2011, we co-produced *Parade* with Acting Up Stage Company earning two Dora nominations, including Outstanding Production of a Musical.
- In October 2011, we produced Larry Kramer's landmark drama *The Normal Heart* in association with Buddies in Bad Times Theatre (one Dora nomination) and, due to its overwhelming success, we remounted it in October/November 2012.
- In February 2013, we were proud to be a part of Mirvish Productions' inaugural Off-Mirvish second stage series with our remount of *Clybourne Park* at the Panasonic Theatre.
- Also in February 2013, in celebration of our company's 10-year anniversary, we staged a reading of *The Laramie Project* at the Panasonic Theatre, this time featuring over 50 Studio 180 alumni artists.

We are thrilled to once again be part of the Off-Mirvish series with our Toronto English-language premiere of *God of Carnage*. Up next, we look forward to launching our newest partnership – a five-year tenancy with The Theatre Centre – when we produce the Canadian premiere of the Olivier Award-winning *Cock* by Mike Bartlett in April 2014.

Studio 180 is also dedicated to fostering Canadian voices by supporting local playwrights. We are currently working with award-winning playwright Hannah Moscovitch (*The Children's Republic*, *East of Berlin*, *In This World*) on a play inspired by the tragic murder of Mississauga teenager Aqsa Parvez.

God of Carnage by Yasmina Reza

Following a violent playground altercation, Benjamin and Henry's parents are forced to confront the situation... and each other. This Tony award-winning comedy strikes at the heart of bourgeois civility, revealing the savagery beneath high society's polished facade.

Students will delight in watching as a polite meeting of casual acquaintances deteriorates into a vicious, no-holds-barred screaming match. Playwright Yasmina Reza gradually peels back the layers of pleasantries and social graces, uncovering some dark and ugly truths about human nature, relationships and marriage. The effect is akin to peeking behind a curtain to discover what really goes on with parents when their kids are at school.

Studio 180 has assembled a cast of some of Canada's finest actors to portray these colourful characters in this not-to-be-missed Toronto English-language premiere. We are pleased to be producing *God of Carnage* as part of Mirvish Productions' second Off-Mirvish series of contemporary plays (which we helped launch with our 2013 production of *Clybourne Park*).

The play has enjoyed tremendous success in productions and languages around the world. The original version was written in French by Reza in 2006, and entitled *Le Dieu du carnage*. It received its world premiere production in German at the prestigious Schauspielhaus Zürich, and premiered in French in 2008 at the Theatre Antoine, in a production directed by Reza herself.

Reza's long-time collaborator, esteemed playwright Christopher Hampton, penned the English translation of *God of Carnage*, which premiered in the UK on London's West End at the Gielgud Theatre, in 2009, earning an Olivier Award for Best Comedy. Hampton created an American version of the play for its Broadway debut the same year, which earned the 2009 Tony Award for Best Play.

In 2011, audiences saw the release of Reza's film adaptation, *Carnage*. The movie starred Jodie Foster, Kate Winslet, Christoph Waltz and John C. Reilly, and was directed by Roman Polanski with a screenplay by Yasmina Reza and Roman Polanski and English translation by Michael Katims.

WARNING: Strong language.

If you have questions or concerns about the content of the play or would like to request an electronic reading copy, please do not hesitate to contact our education department at education@studio180theatre.com or **416-962-1800**.

Yasmina Reza – Playwright

Yasmina Reza is a French playwright and novelist, based in Paris, whose works have all been multi-award-winning, critical and popular international successes, produced worldwide and translated into 35 languages. Her acclaimed plays include *Conversations After a Burial*, *The Passage of Winter*, *Art*, *The Unexpected Man*, *Life x 3*, *A Spanish Play*, *God of Carnage* and *How You Talk the Game*. In addition to her works for the stage, Reza has authored six novels: *Hammerklavier*, *Une Desolation (Desolation)*, *Adam Haberberg*, *Dans la Luge d'Arthur Schopenhauer*, *Nulle Part* and *L'Aube, le Soir ou la Nuit (Dawn, Dusk or Night)*. She has also written the screenplays *Le Pique-Nique de Lulu Kreutz*, directed by Didier Martiny; *Chicas*, which she wrote and directed; and *Carnage* (adapted from her own stage play *God of Carnage*).

As a playwright, Yasmina Reza has earned multiple Tony, Olivier and Molière awards – the highest honours for theatre in the United States, the UK and France.

Christopher Hampton – English-Language Translator

Christopher Hampton is an accomplished and renowned writer who, as well as authoring numerous original works, is considered one of the finest translator dramatists of the English-speaking world. His plays, musicals and translations have garnered three Tony Awards, two Olivier Awards, four Evening Standard Awards and the New York Theatre Critics Circle Award. Prizes for his film and television work include an Academy Award, two BAFTAs, a Writer's Guild of America Award, the Prix Italian and a Special Jury Award at the Cannes Film Festival. His plays for the Royal Court include *Treats*, *Savages*, *The Philanthropist*, *Uncle Vanya*, *Total Eclipse*, *Marya* and *When Did You Last See My Mother?* Other plays include *Embers*, *Three Sisters*, *Art*, *Sunset Boulevard*, *The Talking Cure*, *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*, *White Chameleon*, *Tales from Hollywood*, *Don Juan Comes Back from the War*, *Tales from the Vienna Woods*, *An Enemy of the People*, *The Wild Duck*, *Hedda Gabler*, *Life X 3*, *Tartuffe*, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, *The Unexpected Man*, *Conversations After a Burial* and *God of Carnage*.

His television credits include "The Ginger Tree," "Hotel du Lac," "The History Man," and "Able's Will." He has written the screenplays for *Atonement*, *Imagining Argentina*, *The Quiet American*, *The Secret Agent*, *Mary Reilly*, *Carrington*, *Total Eclipse*, *Dangerous Liaisons*, *Wolf at the Door*, *The Good Father*, *The Honorary Consul*, *Tales from the Vienna Woods* and *A Doll's House*.

D. Attending the Performance

Prior to the performance, please ensure that your students are well prepared. The better prepared they are, the more they will get out of the experience. The following guidelines should help you and your students get the most out of attending *God of Carnage*:

- **Please arrive early.** When travelling in the city, whether by school bus or TTC, it is always best to leave extra time in case of traffic or transit delays. **All Wednesday matinée performances will begin promptly at 1:30PM.** To avoid disruption, **LATECOMERS will be seated at the discretion of the front of house staff, during an appropriate break in the action.**
- **All photography and recording of the performance is strictly prohibited.**
- Please impress upon your students the importance of **turning off all cell phones**, music players and other electronic devices. If students understand *why* it is important to refrain from using electronics, they will be more likely to adhere to this etiquette. **Remind students that they will be seeing people performing live** and, as a rule, if you can see and hear the actors, the actors can see and hear you. Even text messaging – with its distracting, glowing light – is **extremely disruptive** in the theatre. **Please be courteous.**
- **Content Warning:** *God of Carnage* contains some strong language. If you have concerns about content or language prior to attending the performance and wish to receive further details, please do not hesitate to contact our education department at education@studio180theatre.com or **416-962-1800**. We will be pleased to provide you with an electronic reading copy of the script.
- **Outside food and beverages are not permitted in the auditorium.** Spills are messy and noisy snacks and bottles can be extremely disruptive for performers and patrons alike. The concession stand will be open during all performances, so please take some time to discuss proper theatre etiquette with your students prior to arriving at the theatre.
- We encourage student responses and feedback. Please take the time to discuss appropriate audience responses with your students. After each Wednesday matinée and Thursday evening performance, we offer a talkback (Q&A) session because we are interested in hearing what our audiences have to say and engaging in a dialogue inspired by the play. It may be helpful for students to think of some questions prior to attending the performance. As well, if students are aware of the post-show talkback they will be better prepared to formulate questions during the performance. Following the performance, kindly take a moment to complete **Section B, Teacher Response Form**. Your feedback is valuable to us.

E. Topics for Discussion and Classroom Activities

1. Theatrical Presentation

a) ISSUE-BASED THEATRE

Studio 180 is unique in that we produce plays that speak to socially and politically relevant issues. With your class, examine the company's Vision and Mission statements.

Studio 180's Vision – The experience of live performance inspires people to engage more fully in the world

Studio 180's Mission – To produce socially relevant theatre that provokes public discourse and promotes community engagement

- i) What do these statements mean to you? Does Studio 180's Vision resonate and have meaning? How effectively do you think the company's Mission serves its Vision? How does this production of *God of Carnage* work toward fulfilling our Mission?
- ii) Why live theatre? What makes theatre an effective art form through which to explore themes, issues and human behaviour? Numerous excellent feature films, documentaries, books and articles exploring similar themes of civility, parenting and relationships, and satirizing bourgeois society, are widely available. What is unique about live theatre? Consider what is specific about your intellectual, emotional and communal responses to attending live theatre, compared to engaging in other forms of art, communication and media.

HINT: How does live theatre HUMANIZE issues and why is the humanization of social and political issues important?

- iii) Brainstorm issues that you would like to see turned into a piece of theatre. If you were going to see another play, or write a play yourself, what would you want it to be about? This question may serve as a jumping off point for **drama students** to begin their own issue-based theatre projects around stories and topics of particular relevance to them.

b) POINTS OF VIEW – CHARACTERS

One way we hope theatre will be an effective tool to explore important issues is through the portrayal of multiple perspectives or points of view.

How effective is *God of Carnage* in exploring different sides of a story? Was the play even-handed? Did you feel that a multitude of opinions and points of view were expressed? Were the characters portrayed fairly? Which characters and stories were the most memorable? Which voices remained with you longest and why? Which moments had the greatest impact? Which characters surprised you? Did the play create questions for you regarding the characters or their circumstances? Did you form an emotional attachment to any of the characters? Who did you want to see more of? Did you disagree with what some of the characters were saying? What would you ask those characters, given the opportunity?

c) POINTS OF VIEW – PLAYWRIGHT

What do you think the playwright's point of view is regarding the characters she has created? How is Yasmina Reza commenting on the characters, their relationships and society as a whole?

*HINT: During an exploration of these questions there might well be as many different answers as there are students in the class. Use this discussion to highlight the significance the audience plays at the theatre and how audience interpretation is equally as important as the author's intention. Here is a **fun activity** that illustrates this concept:*

SCULPTING

Activity goals:

- Get students out of their heads and into their bodies in a fun and creative way
- Challenge students to express themselves physically
- Enhance verbal and non-verbal communication and cooperation skills
- Explore the exciting ways in which art can have multiple meanings and interpretations for both the creator and the audience

Step by step:

1. Select one student to be the SCULPTOR and four students to be the CLAY.
2. Select a title for the sculpture (this can be designated by the teacher or offered by the class – we like to use theme-based words from the play but you can also use your imagination and come up with things like invented play or movie titles).
3. Designate a brief amount of time (10 to 30 seconds) in which the SCULPTOR may sculpt.
4. The SCULPTOR must then use the designated title to silently create a sculpture in the allotted time. This can be done with MIRRORING (the SCULPTOR positions him or herself and the CLAY must imitate precisely) or by physically positioning the CLAY.
5. Ask the SCULPTOR to describe their masterpiece and then invite class members (art critics, gallery patrons, etc.) to describe what they see.
6. The activity can be repeated in any number of configurations (e.g., in pairs, with multiple groups of three, four, five or more, etc.)

d) DESIGN

How did the design of the production affect the presentation of the piece? How effective was the **set** in defining the space? What mood or ambience was created? How did **colour, texture and space** add to the theatrical experience? How was **lighting** used to create mood or ambience? How did lighting work to define space and setting? How did the set and the lights work in combination with one another? How was **sound and music** used to affect the presentation? How were **costumes** used to define characters? How did the costume designer make use of **colour, texture and style**?

*HINT: To learn more about the role of the designers as well as other members the creative team, see **Section F. The Creative Team**. Here you will find descriptions of each team member as well as suggestions for further study and post-show activities.*

2. Theatre in Translation

God of Carnage began life as *Le Dieu du carnage* by the acclaimed French playwright Yasmina Reza. British playwright Christopher Hampton then translated the script for English-speaking audiences in London to enjoy. When the play moved to Broadway, Hampton adapted the script once more to be set in New York and appeal to American audiences. Plays, movies, books and other works of art are translated from one language to another across the world. But how often do we stop to think about what this process means?

Students attending Studio 180's *God of Carnage* will have the opportunity to engage in a fascinating critical analysis of what it means to translate a work of art. What is the difference between a translation, an adaptation or a version? What gets lost in translation and what is gained? Should the role of the translating dramatist be to provide a literal translation or something more? And how, in the theatre, do we translate beyond words? What is the purpose or value of setting a play in a different location, maintaining or changing popular or cultural references, depending upon the language being spoken by the characters?

These questions and more are addressed in two excellent articles included in this Study Guide in **Section G. Readings for Post-Show Discussion**. Please read one or both articles as a class and engage in a conversation. Remember that the goal of the discussion should not be to achieve consensus; rather, a multiplicity of ideas should be proposed and explored. Here are some questions to kick-start your discussion:

- i) What is each author's thesis? Do you agree or disagree with what they are saying? Why?
- ii) In translating a play from one language to another, what should be the dramatist's role? How literal should the translation be? How many liberties should the dramatist take in order to convey character attributes, emotions and desires within the new cultural and linguistic context?
- iii) How would you identify and distinguish between a translation, an adaptation and a version? What characterizes each one? As a group, try to come up with examples of each. These can include plays, books, movies, songs, video games, etc.
- iv) In her article, Dr. Geraldine Brodie introduces the idea of "visible" versus "invisible" translation. What does she mean by this and can you find examples of each from your own real-world experiences?
- v) In Brian Logan's *Guardian* article, he quotes a number of playwrights involved in the art of translating works for the stage. What are these different approaches to theatre translation and how do they compare and contrast to one another? Which approach makes the most sense to you?

POST-SHOW ACTIVITY #1

Try your hand at adapting a work of art! You will need to divide into groups so that at least one member of each group is proficient in a language other than English. Select an original text and work together to create an English-language translation that you can present to the class. The original text can be a selection from a play, screenplay, novel, comic book, song... the options are limitless. Be sure to determine whether you are creating a "translation," "adaptation," "version," or any other label you choose. Select original material that inspires you and be creative!

POST-SHOW ACTIVITY #2

The above activity can be modified to “translate” a work of art in other ways. Writer Christopher Hampton, who created the English translation of *God of Carnage*, originally wrote the play for a British audience. When the show transferred to Broadway, he adapted the script to set it in a specific neighbourhood in Brooklyn. Instead of working with two different languages, students may wish to try translating between cultures, communities, places or eras. Begin with a favourite scene from a play, movie, book or other source material and adapt the characters, setting, language and circumstances for a completely new environment. When presenting your work to the class, remember to convey WHY you chose the new setting: What does it illuminate about the themes or characters of the original?

POST-SHOW ACTIVITY #3

French students will have unique access to both the original French and English-language scripts of *God of Carnage*. Students should work independently to select a scene from the play (be sure to pick a scene that inspires you – whether it be your favourite moment, the funniest, the most emotional, the most dramatic, etc.) and examine both scripts. What do you notice about the French-English translation? What surprises you? Can you come up with any other ways of expressing certain thoughts in English?

POST-SHOW ACTIVITY #4

Drama, Film, Media and English students may be interested in viewing *Carnage*, Yasmina Reza’s own film adaptation of *God of Carnage*, and having a critical discussion about the film versus the play. Interestingly, a different writer (Michael Katims) provided the English-language translation used for Yasmina Reza and Roman Polanski’s screenplay. Why do you think Reza and Polanski sought a new translation for the film version? What similarities and differences did you notice between the two translations and what impact did those differences have? Students should also examine the ways in which a play “translates” to the screen. What can live theatre accomplish that film cannot and vice versa?

Here are some prompts to get the discussion rolling:

- Which scenes and events are shown in the film and not in the play and what impact do these have?
- Which cinematic techniques does director Polanski use and to what effect (e.g., close-ups)?
- Compare and contrast the impact on the audience between seeing the specific moment dictated by a directorial choice (in the film) versus viewing the entire picture as a whole throughout (on the stage).
- Is there a difference in *tone* between the film and the play and, if so, what impact does that have?
- Discuss the effect of your environment on the audience experience: How is it different to watch the movie (individually or in a small group) versus the communal experience at the theatre?

3. Satire

Satire is the literary art of diminishing a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking towards it attitudes of amusement, contempt or scorn. In satire, human vice or folly is attacked through irony, derision or wit. It differs from comedy in that comedy evokes laughter as an end in itself, while satire “derides”; that is, it uses laughter as a weapon, and against a butt existing outside the work itself. That butt may be an individual, or a type of person, a class, a nation, or even the whole race of man. Literary techniques include parody, irony, sarcasm and the use of caricature.

- i) Who is Yasmina Reza satirizing in *God of Carnage*? Who are the *butts* she is targeting?
- ii) What specific techniques does Reza use in her satiric exploration? (e.g., parody, caricature)?
- iii) What is the effect of the use of humour in the play to examine social class and human behaviour?

POST-SHOW ACTIVITY #5

Drama, English and Media students interested in a more in-depth exploration of contemporary satire should consider the following project:

With your class, explore other examples of satire in **television, film** or **online video clips**. Discuss what you watch and conduct a conversation about what the pieces make you think and feel. Is satire an effective tool for engaging in social and political issues? Does it get you thinking? What kinds of questions does it challenge you to ask? Can it inspire action or change?

F. The Creative Team

As a homework assignment, you might want to ask your students to write **reviews** or **responses** to *God of Carnage*. The following lists of cast and production team members may come in handy for these assignments and the below section ***The Parts We Play*** will provide some insight into how a production like ours is realized. Complete bios can be found in the show programme you will receive at the performance.

Cast

| | |
|-----------------|----------|
| John Bourgeois | Alan |
| Linda Kash | Annette |
| Tony Nappo | Michael |
| Sarah Orenstein | Veronica |

Production Team

| | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Joel Greenberg | Director |
| Mark McGrinder | Associate Director |
| Andrea Schurman | Stage Manager |
| Laura Baxter | Assistant Stage Manager |
| Chris Prideaux | Production Manager |
| John Thompson | Set & Costume Design |
| Kimberly Purtell | Lighting Design |
| Michael Laird | Sound Design |
| Vanessa Janiszewski | Head of Props |

The Parts We Play

The above-listed roles may be familiar to you – but what exactly does each member of the creative team *do*? The role of the actor is of course the most obvious since the actors are the people you actually see onstage. But what other people contribute to the creation of a play? Who is present in the rehearsal hall? What goes on behind the scenes during the show? And what happens before rehearsals even begin? The following job descriptions will begin to answer these questions and, we hope, provoke a series of new questions to which students can seek answers.

The Actors

The work of an actor begins long before they appear on stage. A major part of any actor’s job involves working to *get* a job. This involves the audition process whereby the actor is given material to prepare (either one or two monologues of their choice or a section of the script from the specific play) that the actor presents to the director. In some cases, a director may hold a “callback” audition, in which case the actor returns for a second round, often involving performing the material with other actors being considered for the play.

To cast *God of Carnage*, Joel the director and Mark the associate director held auditions whereby actors were asked to read in groups of four, because in this play the relationships and dynamics between the characters are so crucial.

Before rehearsals begin, it is the actor’s job to learn as much as possible about the play and their character. This individual preparation process is different for every actor, but can involve re-reading the script for information and “clues” and doing extended research on the subject matter, time period, source material or historical background of the play.

Once in the rehearsal hall, actors typically rehearse eight hours a day, six days a week. For *God of Carnage* we had three weeks of rehearsal in the rehearsal hall. We then moved into “tech week,” which involves rehearsal in the actual theatre with the incorporation of sets, lighting, sound and costumes. In the case of *God of Carnage*, our tech period only constituted several days, rather than a full week, prior to our first preview performance.

We had three “previews.” These are performances for a paying audience and serve as a sort of trial run for the company. During previews, critics are not permitted to attend and write about the show (unless they are granted special permission) and the company may still rehearse between performances. It is a time for trial and error in front of an audience, and changes can still be made to just about every element of the production. For a comedy such as *God of Carnage*, this preview period can be crucial for the actors to navigate their relationship with the audience. While the relationship with the audience is, of course, essential to every play, comedies require particular attention and practice because audience responses tend to be especially present and audible. This takes some getting used to for performers who have become accustomed to rehearsing without the audience for weeks.

After “Opening Night” the production is set. There are no more rehearsals and final artistic choices are in place. Actors usually perform the show eight times a week – six evening performances and two matinées, as is the case with *God of Carnage*.

The Director

The director is responsible for the creative vision of the production. They must coordinate with every member of the artistic, technical and administrative teams to achieve that vision. They work closely with the designers to ensure the look of the production is coherent and serves the play; guide the actors towards realizing the truth of their characters and circumstances; and, together with the actors, are responsible for establishing the physical reality of the piece.

The director’s job ends on Opening Night. Once the show is “open,” they can no longer call the actors into a rehearsal or request changes to the sets or costumes, etc. At this point in the process, the leadership shifts from the director to the stage manager.

The Stage Manager (SM)

If an SM is doing their job well, you will hardly know they are there – but everything, from the first day of rehearsal to the moment the final set piece is loaded onto the truck to take into storage, will run with the greatest of ease. Most often, their job officially begins a week prior to the first rehearsal during “prep week” when they make sure the script, rehearsal studio and personnel are ready for day one. Some key stage management duties in the rehearsal hall include organizing, communicating and keeping track of the daily schedule; maintaining the “prompt script,” which is a record of all the blocking, sound, lighting and other technical cues; making sure the actors are getting all of their lines right; and organizing any props, set or costume pieces (in the rehearsal hall usually “rehearsal props” and “rehearsal costumes” are used before the real ones are available).

Once the show is open, the SM is the leader of the ship. They make sure everyone arrives on time and stays on track, maintaining responsibility for solving every problem from a flubbed line or burnt out light bulb to a complete power outage, fire alarm or show cancellation. It is the SM that calls the shots.

They also “call the show” while sitting in a booth (at the Panasonic Theatre you can find this located at the very back of the house way up behind the balcony) with technicians who push the buttons for every sound, lighting and special effect cue – when the SM tells them to. The SM

must simultaneously keep an eye on everything happening both on and off stage, making sure that every member of the cast and crew is staying on track.

The Assistant Stage Manager (ASM)

As the name suggests, the ASM essentially assists the SM. They offer support to the SM during rehearsals, often taking responsibility for things like props, rehearsal costume pieces and keeping the rehearsal hall in order. They may also have the task of helping the actors learn their lines during times when their scenes are not being rehearsed. Once the company moves from the hall into the theatre, the ASM maintains control of the backstage area during the run of the show. Some common ASM duties include organizing and controlling the backstage traffic during the show; ensuring actors are in place to make their entrances onto the stage; taking responsibility for props and costumes (if there is not an independent wardrobe person or dresser); being in charge of “pre-sets” (all the props, sets and costumes that must be in place at the beginning of the play); daily laundry and occasional dry cleaning (again, if there is not a separate wardrobe person); and assisting with costume quick-changes and prop hand-offs. The ASM remains in constant communication with the SM in the booth through a headset so that, together, the stage management team can address any issues that arise (e.g., broken set pieces or props, a sick actor, disruptive audience members). In some larger theatres such as the Panasonic, which are run by IATSE union crews, the ASM’s responsibilities are more limited during production, since all backstage technical elements (props, microphones, sets, costumes, etc.) are handled by the IATSE crew.

The Production Manager (PM)

The Production Manager oversees all elements of the production. They are usually a mid-career to senior-level professional with considerable technical theatre experience and, frequently, experience as an SM. The PM undertakes a balancing act – making sure the show stays on budget while ensuring that all designers and technicians have the resources and support they require. The PM supervises the progress of the designers, technicians and other staff members, keeping everyone on schedule so that sets, props, costumes, lights, special effects and all other physical components of the show are ready for opening night. They are a behind-the-scenes person and, like the SM, will appear to be invisible or non-existent to the audience, even though they have been working around the clock since long before rehearsals even began.

The Set Designer

The work of the set designer is the first thing that catches the eye of the audience. Before you even find your seat, you view the set (or at least the set for the beginning of the play) – this establishes the mood of the show and gives you clues as to what you will soon experience.

Most of the set designer’s work happens long before rehearsals begin. They work closely with both the script and the director to determine what the physical reality of the production will be. Then, within the confines of a designated budget, they must balance available resources with the needs of the production. The set designer must take into account questions like, *Where does the play take place? Is it a literal or abstract space? How many locations are indicated in the script? What essential physical components are there (e.g., a functioning door, stairs, a trap door in the floor, a window, trees, etc.)? How can the themes of the play be physically and/or symbolically represented?*

Once the designer and director agree upon a design concept, the designer will create sketches and a three-dimensional model (called a maquette) that is presented to the company on the first day of rehearsal. They will then supervise the crew that builds the set, ensuring that their vision is fully realized.

The Costume Designer

As the title suggests, the costume designer is responsible for everything the actors wear on stage. Depending upon the needs of the play and factors such as budget, they may design costumes that are built explicitly for the show, or they may rent or purchase clothes (as is the case for *God of Carnage*) to create the desired look.

Like the set designer, the costume designer relies on both the script and the director's vision to come up with their designs. In many cases, set and costumes may be designed by the same person. This is the case for *God of Carnage* (as has been the case for several Studio 180 productions that John Thompson has worked on). This helps achieve a unified aesthetic. When set and costumes are designed by two different people, the designers commonly work closely together to coordinate their ideas.

Prior to the start of rehearsals, the costume designer must have a great deal of their work accomplished so that the actors can incorporate the physical realities of their characters into their performances. On day one of rehearsal, the costume designer will typically present costume sketches of each character, to which the company may refer throughout the rehearsal process. As rehearsals progress, the designer will supervise "fittings" during which the actors try on their costumes and have everything altered accordingly.

The costume designer will participate throughout the tech rehearsal period, making adjustments until everything is just so. The smallest costume detail can have a great impact on the actor. The shoes an actor wears will heavily influence the way the character walks and moves around the stage; the choice of fabric will determine how warm or cool an actor will feel; costume pieces from historical periods such as corsets and hats will significantly impact posture and carriage and will influence character choices. Every pocket, accessory, wig and pair of glasses can be a transformative element for a character, and the designer selects everything with care and precision.

The Lighting Designer

Far more subtle to the inexperienced eye than sets and costumes is the lighting design of a play. Still, lighting is a crucial component of any production. The lighting designer creates the mood and sets the tone of the piece. The lighting can indicate whether the characters are indoors or outdoors, whether it is day or night, hot or cold, sunny or cloudy. Through lighting, a designer can put us in a forest, behind a window, under the sea.

Like the other designers, the lighting designer pays close attention to the script and to the director's vision. They watch rehearsals early on in the process to get a feel for the play and to gain an understanding of what the lighting requirements will be. They must then work within their assigned budget to determine which lighting instruments they will use, precisely where each instrument will be placed, what colours they will use and how each instrument will work together to create the desired effect of each lighting configuration or "cue."

Once all the lights are hung and focused in the theatre, the lighting designer demonstrates each of their lighting states to the director and makes appropriate changes until the desired effect is achieved. Next, the actors are brought into the theatre to go through their blocking on the set, in costume, with the lights. The designer can make final adjustments and the actors in turn can adjust blocking to make full use of the lights provided.

The Sound Designer

Mood and ambience are similarly created in the theatre through the creative use of sound. A sound designer's job may involve creating sound effects (like street traffic, a doorbell or the ambient sound of crickets), selecting or even composing music, or creating soundscapes or vocal recordings. Some sound cues may be obvious from the script, such as the requirement of a ringing telephone. Others are born from the designer's imagination and enhance the production by contributing to the mood, feel, suspense, intensity or rhythm of the piece.

POST-SHOW ACTIVITY #6

Have each student select one member of the company of *God of Carnage* and write a report on how their role contributed to the overall production. For example, a report on the set and costume designer John Thompson might include a description of the set and costumes and a specific analysis of how they contributed to the student's experience of the play. Was the set realistic or abstract? What feelings did the design evoke? How did the costumes contribute to your understanding of each character?

POST-SHOW ACTIVITY #7

Assign the following research project: Each student selects one member of a production or theatre's creative team. Roles can include those not listed for *God of Carnage* such as Dramaturge, Choreographer or Fight Director. Have students contact professionals at theatres throughout the city and interview them about the roles they play and the various elements of their jobs. Have students present their findings so the class may compare how roles differ from theatre to theatre and show to show. Of course we will be happy to put students in touch with some of our own artists and technicians, but their research need not be limited to Studio 180. It will be fun for students to present their findings from a broad range of Canadian theatres according to budget, location and mandate.

G. Readings for Post-Show Discussion

1. The Translator on Stage: Taking the Drama out of Translating for the Theatre

By DR. GERALDINE BRODIE
University College London
School of European Languages, Culture and Society

Translation is all around us, although sometimes we forget to notice. If you live in an international city like Toronto or London, you are probably used to climbing onto a bus and hearing many different languages spoken by the other passengers. All those people will engage in some way in translation, whether asking the driver for directions or gossiping about the latest Hollywood romance. But even those of us who live in French or English use translation on a daily basis, perhaps when reading the ingredients on a chocolate bar, or watching the news from another country. We are provided with information in our own language, and sometimes in the original language too, but we almost never know who has performed the translation, although we rely on their judgement and expertise. We probably do not think about the decisions that had to be made, or the compromises needed (for example, to fit a manageable number of words onto the wrapper or the screen). This phenomenon is known as 'the translator's invisibility'. What does it tell us about the way we relate to other cultures and languages?

Theatre is a good place to explore the visibility, or invisibility, of translation as both aspects can often be found side-by-side.

In theatre, translation tends to be visible, because the name of the original dramatist and the name of the writer who has created the English playtext are usually clearly and prominently displayed. We are left in no doubt that the play started life in a form different from that which we will see on stage, and that, in a way, it has been doubly created: by the original dramatist, and by the English-speaking playwright whose name is now attached. Many other individuals will work on the production, and they will be credited in the theatre programme; some of them may also be trailed in the publicity, perhaps an actor or the director, but they will not be as closely associated with the name of the play itself. In theatre, we are presented with the name of an individual who gives the original dramatist a voice.

Nevertheless, theatre translation can also be invisible. This is partly because the term 'translation' often does not appear; translated plays are frequently presented as 'adaptations' or 'versions'. Furthermore, there is a wealth of additional vocabulary used to identify a play that has been translated: 'free adaptation', 'based on', 'English text by', 'a remix of', 'a modern take on', 'revised by', are all recent attempts to describe translation in the theatre. Some might argue that such terminology distances the process from 'translation proper', extending that objection to adaptations and versions. Nevertheless, all these terms imply a transfer, a movement, a carrying across of material from one text to another. We can see that a process has taken place, but that process is only very dimly lit.

There is another feature of theatre translation that potentially adds to the invisibility of the process: collaboration. The very nature of theatre, with its multitude of participants, from actors to directors to designers to sound engineers, is collaborative, and translation is no exception to that rule. These specialists combine to transmit a unified impression of the play to the audience. Each contributor is an expert in their own field but, sitting in the audience, we find it difficult, or even impossible, to identify who did what, and to attribute our reaction to any one individual.

So it should be, in theatre. However, that can result in the audience losing sight of the amount of work and expertise involved. This is particularly so in the case of the 'literal translator', the theatre practitioner who makes the first-step translation from the original language from which the named writer creates the staged production. Sometimes, the literal and staged translations are the work of one writer, if that writer is well-acquainted with the original language.

Christopher Hampton, for example, is an accomplished French-English translator. On other occasions, the literal translator and the named writer are different individuals, although this may not be evident from the production credits (sometimes the literal translator is not mentioned at all). Where is translation in such a process, and should it be more visible?

Theatre is about interpretation – a synonym of translation. Many people are involved in expressing the play to the audience. Furthermore, during rehearsal, the director, the actors, perhaps also the set designer or the lighting director, may influence the words of the play, and there will usually be many rewrites, cuts or even additions. Therefore, if you buy the playtext at the theatre, it will often vary from what is on stage, usually carrying a notice to that effect. This applies to all theatre, whether or not it is translated. What we are seeing is the product of a group of people, all with specialist skills and their own story to tell. What we take away from the theatre depends on ourselves.

In that way, theatre resembles translation in general. It can be expressed in so many different ways, and by so many different people, but it is based on a core text. Whether the production is described as a translation, a version or a remix, it is important that the translation process, including the literal translator, should be included in the credits so that the act of translation itself is more visible, reminding us that we are participating in a slice of experience from outside our own lives. We should remember that translation can have a significant effect on our understanding of the world around us; that when we use translation we are relying on the expertise and judgement of the interpreter. What we hear is the translator's version of the original, and not the original itself. That doesn't have to be a drama, but it would help if it were visible. ❖

Interested in learning more about issues of translation in theatre? Here is a bibliography provided by Dr. Geraldine Brodie:

Aaltonen, Sirkku. 2000. *Time-sharing on Stage: Drama Translation in Theatre and Society* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters)

Anderman, Gunilla. 2006. *Europe on Stage: Translation and Theatre* (London: Oberon Books)

Brodie, Geraldine. 2012. 'Theatre Translation for Performance: Conflict of Interests, Conflict of Cultures', in *Words, Images and Performances in Translation* ed. by Brigid Maher and Rita Wilson (London: Continuum) pp. 63-81

Johnston, David (ed.). 1996. *Stages of Translation* (Bath: Absolute Classics)

Venuti, Lawrence. 1995. *The Translator's Invisibility* (London: Routledge)

2. *Whose Play Is It Anyway?*

By BRIAN LOGAN

The Guardian

March 12, 2003

We're all familiar with Ibsen, Molière, Lorca and Chekhov; less so with Crimp, Bolt, Halliwell and Gems. But we couldn't have the former group without the latter. For Crimp and co are translators, that band of writers without whom the great works of global drama would never find their way to the British stage. It's not an eye-catching line of work: "The best translators," says their éminence grise, the playwright Christopher Hampton, "remain as invisible as possible." And yet it is a practice that has an indelible effect on how we perceive the best in what world theatre has to offer.

Our appreciation of Chekhov, for example, may vary considerably from one translation to the next. In one oft-quoted line from his National Theatre *Ivanov* last year, playwright David Harrower made the Chekhovian atmosphere seem thoroughly modern: "I'm so bored," said one character, "I want to take a run at a wall." Quite another Chekhov emerges from the Penguin Classics version: "It's so frightfully boring that I'd simply like to run off and bang my head on a wall. And Lord have mercy on us all!" Whereas David Hare, in his Almeida translation, emphasised the character's hunger, not his boredom: "I'd eat the carpet, I'd eat the paintings on the wall."

The central problem, says veteran translator Ranjit Bolt, is that "theoretically there is no such thing as translation. Translating a French word will never get its full implications across to the English – it's an impossibility." Given this conundrum, does the translator opt, like Martin Crimp, to be "responsible to the language of the original", or, like Bolt, does he try to be "as charming or as amusing as possible, while remaining true only to the spirit of the original text?"

That question has been sharpened by the recent controversial eclipse of the academic-translator by the playwright-translator. Hampton, whose new translation of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* opens at the Playhouse in London this month, was first invited to "translate" a play (*Uncle Vanya*) when resident dramatist at the Royal Court in the early 1970s. "At that time," he says, "it was rare for playwrights to do that. Instead, there were standard academic versions of classic plays, which people would perform. But now people think it's better to get someone who can write dialogue, rather than someone who can speak the language."

Pam Gems has just adapted Lorca's *Yerma* for the Manchester Royal Exchange. "In the old days," she says, "translators translated because they spoke Norwegian or Russian or whatever. And they burrowed away and tried to translate correctly. But of course what they produced was not drama. It was faithful and boring and C-R-A-P. It completely denied the notion that dramatic skills have any value. There was a terrible row back in the 80s when translators realised that dramatists were being asked to do versions of famous plays, and this meant they were losing their livelihoods. But it's always seemed to me that the solution is obvious. You get, as I do, a translator to give you as literal a translation as possible. You as the dramatist then put your mark on it, and that means that the audience get the best that you and the translator, together, can give them."

It sounds convincing – and sure enough, most world classics now arrive on the British stage newly "adapted from a literal translation" by another high-profile name. But many are sceptical of this process. "You feel a little bit in the dark somehow if you use somebody else's words," says Bolt. "If there's a middle man, you feel a little bit uncomfortable. What was that really? How was that line really written?"

For Kevin Halliwell, the cult of “from a literal translation” seems as skewed against faithful translation as the academics’ monopoly was against drama. Halliwell, a professional translator in the European parliament, won the Gate Theatre’s translation award for his version of *Witness*, a Swedish play about the art of translation. “When people work from a literal translation,” he says, “what they tend to do is take a straightforward translation, then work on that until it’s been turned into something else.” Audiences, he argues, are being insulated from the original.

But how closely should translation seek to replicate the original? Well, very, according to Hampton, whose recent successes include Yasmina Reza’s *Art*, and who seldom works from literal translations (although he has done so for his new version of *Three Sisters*). He says that he tries “rather rigidly to reproduce whatever it is that I imagine the playwright wants to say.” Halliwell aims for an “equivalent effect. You want to produce the same effect on the English-speaking audience as the play would have had on its native audience.”

Bolt’s priorities, however, are different: “The road,” he says, “is open to taking a certain amount of liberty.” His specialism is the work of Molière, whom he admires, but whose work wasn’t designed to entertain 21st-century British audiences. “My process is to familiarise myself with the original, then to depart from it,” he says. “You have to cut lines – and you can also add. If I think, ‘There’s a good laugh here and Molière hasn’t got it,’ then I’ll put an extra couplet in.” In his 2002 National Theatre translation of Molière’s *Tartuffe*, for instance, Elmire said to the rapacious Tartuffe, “And now you’re rushing to the sweet/ before you’ve had the soup and meat,” a line that earned much laughter and praise in almost every review. “I’m true to Molière, but I don’t think that means I have to produce a text that an A-level French student could use as a crib,” Bolt concludes. “If you’re true to the letter, you straitjacket yourself. You wouldn’t get a good show.”

Fine for Molière, perhaps – but Bolt’s philosophy can’t easily be applied to modern prose drama. “If the author was around,” he admits, “there’d be trouble.” Translators of modern writing are more mindful of their role as conduits, sublimated to the intentions of the original playwright. But even translators of modern drama differ on fundamental issues. “The tone has to be recognisably that of the original author,” says Halliwell, “but the sentences have to sound as if they would come out of an English-speaker’s mouth.” And yet when Crimp translated Bernard Marie-Koltès’s 1988 play *Roberto Zucco*, he says that, “the director was quite keen that the play be seen as a French artifact. So we made a decision to retain the markers in the language like ‘madame’ or ‘monsieur’. We weren’t trying to create an imitation English play.”

Perhaps the only thing translators agree on is the job’s perks. “If you’re a playwright, it never does any harm to work on a classical play, a play that’s lasted,” says Gems. “Because you learn. It’s very instructive.” Crimp agrees, adding: “It’s like a linguistic work-out. It breaks some of your habits, and it pushes you towards areas of vocabulary that might not be on your usual menu.” He took up translating when in a state of uncertainty about his own work, and found that it helped cure his writer’s block. “Creating alongside another text is a way of recharging my batteries.”

Philippe Le Moine runs the National Theatre Studio’s translation arm, Channels, which encourages scores of upcoming British playwrights to try their hand at translating. Its popularity, he says, reflects the fact that “more and more people are interested in what’s happening outside Britain.” But its success – its alumni include Gregory Burke, David Greig and Mark Ravenhill – is predicated on the now established fact that translators don’t have to speak the original language.

Le Moine acknowledges there is a problem: a schism between the academic and theatre worlds. “Translators feel spurned, and ask us: ‘Why do we work with playwrights who don’t speak the language, when there are trained professional translators who could do the work themselves?’” Le Moine cites commercial pressure – “theatres need to have something sellable” – and asks translators to meet the theatre half way: “They’re not in contact with what they need to do: to translate for particular types of performance and staging. These are specific skills. There’s a big divide and the two sides don’t understand each other very well. It’s something we’re trying to remedy.” ❖

H. Recommended Resources

PLAYS

Le Dieu du carnage

By Yasmina Reza

Art

By Yasmina Reza

BOOKS

Satire and Dissent. Amber Day, 2011, Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Time-sharing on Stage: Drama Translation in Theatre and Society. Aaltonen, Sirkku Aaltonen, 2000, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Europe on Stage: Translation and Theatre. Gunilla Anderman, 2006, London: Oberon Books.

Words, Images and Performances in Translation. Brigid Maher and Rita Wilson (eds.), 2011, London: Continuum.

Stages of Translation. David Johnston (ed.), 1996, Bath: Absolute Classics.

The Translator's Invisibility. Lawrence Venuti, 1995, London: Routledge.

FILMS

Carnage

Directed by Roman Polanski, 2011

Screenplay by Yasmina Reza

Yasmina Reza's own film adaptation of *God of Carnage*, the DVD is widely available and easily accessible for rent or purchase for the purpose of class screening. Please see section **E.2** of this Study Guide for suggested classroom activities and discussion points regarding ***Theatre in Translation***.