

Portland Mercury

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February 05, 2009

A Fine *Romance*

David Mamet's maliciously funny courtroom farce.

by [Alison Hallett](#)



The Israel/Palestine conflict, homophobia, racism, anti-Semitism—not exactly what most of us are looking for in an evening at the theater, right?

But before you ditch your theater plans in favor of *Paul Blart: Mall Cop*, consider that playwright David Mamet tramples all over these topics and more in *Romance*, a frenetic courtroom farce that skitters heedlessly from legal conflicts to global ones—and it's *funny*. Mamet's script is acerbic and irreverent, and as the loopy, drug-addled judge presiding over Theatre Vertigo's production, Garland Lyons gives what'll likely be remembered as the finest comedic turn by a local actor this year.

The Judge is allergy inflicted, pill addicted, and generally indifferent to the trial unfolding in his courtroom, where a chiropractor (Tom Moorman) is charged with an unnamed crime. Not even the Defense Attorney (Nathan Gale) believes in his client's innocence, while the long-suffering Prosecutor (Gary Norman) struggles to maintain professional decorum even as his relationship with his hot young boyfriend (Ben Buckley) is fraying. It's a convoluted collection of seemingly irreconcilable conflicts, and Lyons rules the courtroom with high-handed indifference, lurching between tangents and pausing occasionally to pop another pill. Here, justice isn't just blind, it's *fucked up*.

One of the funniest bits in a very venomous script is a squabble between the Episcopalian Defense Attorney and the Jewish Defendant, who butt heads over their respective religions and trade insults that are legitimately offensive but pretty damn funny nonetheless ("Your people can't order a cheese sandwich without mentioning the Holocaust"). The catfight ends when the two hatch a harebrained scheme to bring peace to the Middle East—the one thing standing in the way of the plan's success (aside from the inanity of the plan itself) is the Judge, whose permission they need to leave the courtroom.

The script itself is all over the place, from meandering witness interrogations to domestic squabbles about pot roast—but while it's occasionally hard to discern just what Mamet is getting at, it's undeniably enjoyable spending an evening with this ensemble, watching him get there. Lyons' tremendous performance is bolstered by a predictably excellent cast,



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Romance

Theatre Vertigo at Theater! Theatre!
3430 SE Belmont
306-0870
Thurs-Sat 8 pm,
through Feb 21
\$15 (Thurs
pay-what-you will)

who, under the brisk direction of Collin Warren, breeze through Mamet's script in just under two hours.

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Chalupka!

Posted by [Mara Young](#) on February 5, 2009 at 2:36 PM | [Report this comment](#)



Too trendy, this production sucked. It was predictable, overdone, and you could smell the actors underarm deodorant; which did not suit the character played at all.

Posted by [hwygti](#) on February 11, 2009 at 1:56 AM | [Report this comment](#)

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