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PORTLAND, OREGON'S NEWS WEEKLY. NEWS AND CULTURE FOR APRIL 29TH AND BEYOND.

Saturday, May 2nd, 2009

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CLASSIFIEDS

Romance (Theatre Vertigo)

The verdict: hilariously vicious verbal assault.

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GESUNDHEIT: Garland Lyons (center) has some sweet antihistamines.
IMAGE: Bruce Lawson

BY BEN WATERHOUSE | BWATERHOUSE AT Wweek DOT COM
[January 28th, 2009]

Talk about a mean streak—the cheeky ensemble at Theatre Vertigo really has a thing for human cruelty. In recent years they've produced plays by misanthropes like John Patrick Shanley and Don DeLillo. Sometimes, as with Shanley's *Where's My Money*, the cruelty is hilarious; at others, like last autumn's production of

Nicky Silver's *Pterodactyls*, it's almost unbearable.

In its latest effort, Vertigo turns to the meanest man in American theater: David Mamet. *Romance*, a courtroom drama set against the backdrop of a round of Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations in an unnamed American city, is about what we've come to expect from the playwright's recent works: an absurd farce of identity and self-loathing, filled with rapid, semi-nonsensical patter that is universally offensive and hysterically funny, often at the same time. The script reads as hopelessly mean-spirited, but all it takes is a director with a good sense of timing and a skilled actor or two to make it work (think Alec Baldwin in *Glengarry Glen Ross*). In this case, the director is Collin Warren, who seems to have picked up a thing or two about rhythm from writing and directing musicals, and the actor is Garland Lyons, who, in true Baldwinesque fashion, commands the total attention of the audience. He plays an unhappy, allergy-plagued, pill-popping judge, a textbook Ugly American whose incessant, naive interrogations of the other courtroom characters—the defendant (Tom Moorman), a Jewish chiropractor with violent tendencies; the prosecutor (Gary Norman), an insecure gay man; and the defense attorney (Nathan Gale), a frustrated Episcopalian suburbanite—are delivered with overwrought pronunciation and much flailing of overmedicated limbs.

[Story continues below](#)



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The judge is a blast to watch, but dealing with him drives his cohorts to viciousness, and the slurs fly with alarming speed and indiscretion. Mamet, an equal opportunity profaner, has an insult for everyone, straight and queer, Christian and Jew. At a slower pace the litany of abuse might be intolerable, but in this case, under the honorable Lyons, you can't help but guffaw.

ISSUE #35.12 • PERFORMANCE • REVIEW

Recently in "Performance"

April 29th, 2009
Freakshow (Theatre Vertigo) | These freaks are just as boring as you and I.
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April 15th, 2009
Two-Faced Bastard At YWCA (White Bird) | Chunky Move takes it to the other side. And you're not there.
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April 8th, 2009
Crazy Enough (Portland Center Stage) | Can Storm Large Solve PCS' Budget Woes?
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1 comment

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Anoukvandijk dc Stau | A little touching never hurt anybody.
0 comments

March 11th, 2009
Cascadia Composers (Fear No Music) | The geekiest gang in town, in concert.
7 comments

March 4th, 2009
The Importance Of Being Earnest (PCS) | Why so angry, Ernest?
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February 25th, 2009
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