

GOD, NO. . .

By Chip Fortier
Generic Theatre
For tickets 441-2160

Hello, I'm Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large.

A persistent respiratory infection prevented my seeing this intriguing and promising drama by Chip Fortier sooner. It is the first work of the new plays Dog Days Festival for 2009. It sets a high standard for the two remaining productions performing in July. Call the above number for information.

Fortier subtitles his drama *The Life and Death of Madalyn Murray O'Hair*. Known as the most hated woman in America, she became a leading voice and spokeswoman for the atheist movement in the sixties. Her sons and grand daughter worked closely with her. The playwright devotes much of the play to the quite often stormy relationships among this, shall we say, non-traditional family who worked for and against each other in varying degrees. There is it seems to me more detail about their daily doings than necessary and it comes at the expense of [getting to know](#) O'Hair. The result is a kinder, gentler Madalyn than I remember her being in reality. She articulated her ideas with clarity and often with an offensive aggressiveness that alienated even some of her fellow atheists. She took credit for accomplishments, such as having prayer outlawed in public schools, that were not hers alone. She was fearless of all authority and quite an effective, [albeit abrasive](#) speaker as I recall. She took wicked delight in filing frivolous lawsuits to attract attention. Fortier gives hints of these aspects of her behavior but one misses seeing her in full out action,.

Shelia Walters has many believable scenes. However, she lacks the firebrand facets of "O'Hair when they are needed.. Author Fortier has given her lots of coarse words that were common in O'Hair's vocabulary but they somehow never crackle with the intensity of the hotheaded egoist that this driven zealot possessed. Walters is at her best in the sweet grandmother moments which she manages to blend with a satiric undertone that is quite effective. I was sitting on the front row and had great trouble hearing a lot of what she said. So did the people around me and she was only six feet or so away from us. In her most tender moments I don't think Madalyn ever spoke that softly.

Nicholas Thornburg's fast moving direction seems very right. He helps to weave together the many (too many) short scenes into a smooth unit of action. One character plays are difficult to write to state the obvious. To create the illusion of dialogue the solo actor must often times repeat what the unseen character is saying. It's a device that becomes tedious if over used.

The one woman show about Emily Dickenson works better in this respect.

"God, No..." holds your interest but never generates the intellectual, thought provoking activity or emotional gut reactions that is inherent in this material . People giggled nervously at times but I think there is more potential power and diversity to be found in this highly energized, complex lady.

Two Kabuki like stage hands moved the scenic pieces with alacrity and with choreographed [gracefulness](#). They were a show unto themselves.

This is Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large and I'll see you at the next opening.