

Hartford Stage, Hartford, CT  
*Hurricane Diane*, by Madeleine George. Directed by Zoë Golub-Sass.  
Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman.

**“You’re not used to hearing the word ‘no’ are you Diane?”**

Four women living in four identical homes in a four-house cul-de-sac in Red Bank, New Jersey are confronted by the great God Dionysus, reincarnated as a woman named Diane who works as a landscaper, whose intent is to save the planet Earth from self-destruction through the transformation of nature to personal “gardenng.” In this modern day comedy/drama, based on Euripides’ play *The Bacchae*, much that is unexpected takes place and when the hurricane that ultimately moves up the coast to New Jersey arrives things finally come to a head. Madeleine George’s play, on stage now at Hartford Stage, gives us the humor engendered through the situational gender switch and the message that is centuries old: Take care of the planet. The play takes its message seriously but it provides both surprises and laughter along the way.



Katya Campbell, Sharina Martin, Christina DeCicco,  
Alyse Alan Louis; Photo: T. Charles Erickson.

The women, or “*the girls*,” are an unlikely group of pals, each is so specifically who they are. Carol (played by Katya Campbell) is a confirmed cynic; Renee (Sharina Martin) is a modern romantic; Pam (Christina DeCicco) is a Mafia wife; Beth (Alyse Alan Louis) is a timid divorcee. They meet almost daily over coffee and there is always a pot of it brewing.

Brewing is a good way to describe what is happening in their lives in this play. Garden concepts are in the offing. Friendships are maturing. New relationships are occurring daily. There isn’t a moment when something new is taking place that makes the play into a fascinating exploration of human sensibilities. As the foursome expands into something greater than its parts, the new whole gives the world unanticipated hope as the great God Diane Isis recruits her disciples as dictated by the ancient gods of ancient Greece and Rome.

Diane is a mixture of disciplines. She is strong-willed and demanding, yet she can be sweet and seductive bringing her new subjects into her concepts of space and natural land-growth in their yards. She is played by Bernadette Sefic who is a mighty force as the God Dionysus. She pulls off the trans-gender nature of the character with ease and remarkable comfort when sex rears its ugly head. Sefic has monologues which seem to come directly from the Euripides

original and when her American worker's garb gives way to her ancient armor it feels as right and natural as a cup of coffee would feel to a modern-day American woman. Sefic has a wonderful voice, deep and sonorous, seductive and profound, all at the same time. We never question her remarkable successes with these well-written, indestructible women. There is an inevitability about it all. Sefic make it seem as natural as the trees Diane wants to see in the four yards she is dealing with to start her global alterations.



Bernadette Sefic; Photo: T. Charles Erickson.

Each of her seductions is different as George has written them and director Zoë Golub-Sass has staged them. Desperate for affection Beth Wann is the easiest being the neediest. Renee Shapiro-Epps is malleable as the only minority, married to a different minority, who needs to fit in. Pam Annunziata, who needs to dominate normally, finds domination to be as seductive as a dream. Carol Fleischer is skeptical and hard-nosed and reluctant to give up her individuality. Diane does what Dionysus must to have her way with all of them. Golub-Sass pulls no punches here; she lets it all hang out as it must.



Christine DeCicco, Bernadette Sefic;  
Photo: T. Charles Erickson.

The production is lovely and wonderfully workable allowing the actresses to use and involve the entire theatre in the production. The set, designed by Emma Finckel is beautiful to look at, a truly remarkable sense of these homes. An-lin Dauber's costumes easily define the women in color and design. Krista Smith's lighting is delicious moving us through sunny days and stormy nights. Joyce Ciesil's sound design is realistic and divine, bringing us into and through the hurricane brilliantly. Her original music is a highlight of the show. The romantic choreography by Lillian Mae Ramsijn brings the play to a fantastic close.

Madeleine George's play in this excellent production is a hit of the season and deserves to be a sell-out smash. Get your tickets now!

+ 06/18/2025 +

**Hurricane Diane** plays at Hartford Stage, 50 Church Street, Hartford, CT, through June 29. For information and tickets call 860-527-5151 or go to [hartfordstage.org](http://hartfordstage.org).