

TIMES HERALD-RECORD

'ART' by Yasmina Reza

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Reviewed by James Cotter

Woodstock - "Art" by Yasmina Reza is a comedy about three Parisian friends who are in a dilemma over a painting one of them has purchased at an exorbitant price. The canvas is white on white with a few white lines. Is this an act of folly or fashionable display or love of abstract art? Sparks fly as the three friends reveal their inner insecurities and resentments. The blank canvas becomes three self-portraits of modern men in crisis.

The 1998 Tony Award-Winning play is being staged at the Byrdcliffe Theater as part of the 2005 Woodstock Fringe Festival. Directed by Nicola Sheara, the cast of three characters come alive as they stalk and rave about what they have meant to each other for the past 15 years and how their relationship now faces sudden collapse. The actors are dynamic and interact with excellent timing and expression.

As Serge, James Prendergast is handsome, suave and successful, confident that his newly acquired painting shows his independence and cultured taste. He is shocked when his friends are skeptical and even critical about his judgment. His friend Marc, as portrayed by Lou Trapani, is mocking and angry, his features and body language glowing with bald outrage at Serge's decision to act without asking his advice. Wallace Norman is Ivan, the aspiring peacemaker who ends up as the butt of both his friends' disdain. His long monologue about his personal pre-marital problems is a comic gem that won the opening-night audience's applause for its sustained sense of farce.

The translation by Christopher Hampton is earthy and fluent. The set by Andy Weintraub is stark and utilitarian; the costumes by Dean Powers are appropriate to each of the three different characters. Francesca Tanksley has written and performed original background music for this first-rate production.