

SATURDAY  
 AUGUST 27th

JoAnn's  
**KAJUN'S PUB**  
 presents  
**GIRL'S NIGHT  
 OUT**

8PM

Featuring  
 Performances by:  
 Deja Deja-Vue  
 Cathy Fox  
 Bootsie De Ville  
 Georgeanna Belle  
 Monalot Fontaine

Join us for an  
 evening of  
 fun & excitement!

**KAJUN'S PUB**  
 Karaoke | \$1 draft/shots | 24/7 | 2256 St. Claude Ave | www.kajunpub.com | 504-947-3735

For more information  
 please visit:  
 www.kajunpub.com

More importantly, with the actors' ages ranging from mid/late 20s to mid-30s, there is an aptness here to all these arguments about beauty and art. Generally, *Art* casts skew older; Alfred Molina was 44, Victor Garber was 48 and Alan Alda was 62 when the show opened on Broadway. Though all gave excellent performances, with a younger cast there is a certain frisson to their debate as the characters express opinions newly formed, or still being formed, before they've calcified into hardened stances. There is also the added bonus of the humor that comes when seeing these relatively youthful men so sure of themselves.

Part comedy of bad manners, part play of ideas, *Art* requires flesh'n'blood-ness to avoid smacking of late night collegiate discussions. Director Kate Kuen did a superb job of this, bringing out what warmth there is and cleanly delineating the shifting allegiances among the three men, and simply but nicely staging the work to suggest three different apartments.

As the dermatologist Serge, the purchaser of the all-white canvas, Michael Aaron Santos was naturally urbane, a whiff of the metrosexual hanging on him. Slightly passive/aggressive towards his friends, the rangy Santos had the self-satisfied assurance of one who could afford such expensive artwork. (Clearly, cosmetic surgery is the way for doctors to go these days.) Best of all, Santos conveyed a genuine love of the painting he acquired, presenting it to his friends almost as one would present a newborn child.

Richard Alexander Pomes' Marc was properly smug and supercilious, a bulwark of traditionalism against the forces of modernism, post-modernism, and, gasp, minimalism. He's the long time friend whose behavior you put up with for reasons you're not entirely sure of but with whom you're not quite willing or ready to cut ties just yet. Some might prefer a more congenial actor, such as Alda or Jimmy Murphy (from the Actor's Theatre of New Orleans' 2006 production), to offset Marc's abrasiveness; yet Pomes' somewhat innately assertive bearing, which served him so well in his Ambie Award-winning turn in The NOLA Project's *Assassins*, seems appropriate for the role.

James Bartelle, who brought delicate pathos to Southern Rep's *Norman Conquests*, imbues Yvan with a melting humanity, avoiding buffoonishness at all costs. Bartelle makes clear that Yvan is not so much indecisive or hypocritical or trying to pander to both of his friends, but that he truly sees both sides of the argument, agreeing with whomever he happens to be closer to at the moment. In his showstopper of a monolog detailing a pre-wedding tale from hell, Bartelle navigated its twists with technical precision and displayed Yvan's neuroses with an absolutely heartbreaking sincerity.

A few quibbles:

—Christopher Hampton's translation, while generally pleasing, occasionally sounds a bit stilted, or rather, as though it ought to be said with a British accent; one wishes for a

[continued on 47]



## trodding the boards

by Brian Sands  
 Email: bsnola2@hotmail.com

### Art at the New Orleans Museum of Art through August 28

After their triumphant *Midsummer Night's Dream*, The NOLA Project returns to NOMA with Yasmina Reza's *Art*, the Tony Award-winning play about how the purchase of a virtually all white painting affects the relationships among three men. With adroit story-telling skills, Reza uses this situation to hold a prism up to the ebb and flow of a



Michael Aaron Santos, Richard Alexander Pomes & James Bartelle in *Art*

friendship's dynamics and to stage a compelling debate on aesthetics and the nature of art.

Two things make this *Art* especially noteworthy aside from it being presented in a museum. First, The NOLA Project is fielding six actors, two for each role, for this production's eight performances, none of which will feature the same casting line-up.

## trodding the boards ...from 46

slightly more Americanized translation.

—Though Kuen has kept the setting in Paris, her actors perform, understandably, accent-free so it's a bit odd to hear them affect outrageous French (and even British) accents when speaking as other friends and family members; Bartelle, especially, seems not to want to give up the French accent he recently employed in *Twelfth Night*.

—And if the Stern Auditorium has unobstructed sight lines, its acoustics leave something to be desired, so you may want to sit towards the front.

Clocking in at 85 flawless minutes, *Art*, in these times of record-breaking prices at art auctions, still remains relevant, especially when done this well. The only question is why wasn't it done at NOMA before? And what's next? *Sunday in the Park with George*?

## The Glass Mendacity at Deutsches Haus through August 17

Seven years after debuting at True Brew, *The Glass Mendacity*, Maureen Morley and Tom Willmorth's hilarious send-up of Tennessee Williams' greatest hits, has returned in, of all places, Deutsches Haus' new location in Metairie.

And why not? Other than JPAS and Actor's Theatre of New Orleans, no other venues currently provide theatrical entertainment to the post-Katrina population boom in NOLA's neighbor to the west. And judging by the full house at a recent performance, there's an audience eager to enjoy quality theater close to their own backyards.

*Mendacity* is a mélange of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *The Glass Menagerie* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* in which Morley and Willmorth imagine Maggie the Cat hooking up with Stanley Kowalski, a Big [Mama] Amanda who's obsessed with her legions of Gentleman Callers, and a Mitch who's in love with Blanche but woos Laura Wingfield as a favor to Stanley. The more familiar you are with Williams, the more enjoyment you're likely to get from *Mendacity* but who can't appreciate a Brick played by a studly mannequin wearing pajama bottoms and an open shirt that Maggie swoons all over.

For those tired of the Tennessee Williams Festival's seriousness, here Big Mama met Big Daddy through a personal ad; Laura's glass menagerie is made of ice; Blanche attends a pajama party at the firehouse and transfers from a streetcar named "Wanton Lust" to the "#7—Bleeding Ulcer." And don't even ask how Stanley's cry of "STELLA" is worked into the proceedings.

The cast is made up of some actors new to their roles, others reprising their True Brew characters. Among the returnees, Maureen Brennan is in top form in her Ambie Award-winning role as a Blanche teetering on the edge of sanity. Emerging from her overlong sojourns in the bathroom, Brennan's plummy diction gives a wacky spin to the line, "I feel fresh enough to take on the Vienna Boys Choir."

Ann Mahoney's self-effacing Laura is even more pathetic—and funnier—than before as she ticks off a list of nicknames (Sister Gimp, Blue Cow Tits, etc.) she was called in high school. Mahoney manages the difficult task of making Laura almost aggressively mousy.

JP Delahoussaye has upped his magnetism quotient and now makes a topnotch Stanley, properly butch, slightly menacing, and hungry for the Dubois family money that he thinks he has a right to.

Jerry Lee Leighton, who can play tough guys, nicely tones it down for the soft, gay-ish Mitch; his scenes with Blanche are almost tender when they're not absurd. John "Spud" McConnell as a bigger-than-life, flatulent Big Daddy bats some of the show's best lines out of the park with perfect timing, but his polished comic sense knows which ones he can lightly toss off.

Of the newcomers, Jessie Terrebonne makes a slinky, sexy Maggie and sets off sparks with Stanley, two commoners who married into money. Becky Allen captures Big Amanda's ditheriness while also revealing her faded belle-of-the-ball qualities.

As delightful as all the actors are, one misses the guiding hand of director Carl Walker who gave the proceedings a brisk pace that is sometimes lacking here; one almost wishes some of the more repetitious bits had been cut. He also guided the cast to a consistency with the script-holding music stands; in the current production, actors didn't always seem to know whether to gesture to each other or out into the audience. And while the ad libs add to the merriment, especially McConnell's, there are a few too many fumbblings with the scripts for a group of such pros as these.

As with NOMA's Stern Auditorium, the Deutsches Haus hall was not built for theatrical endeavors, so sit towards the front if you don't want to miss any of *Mendacity*'s overripe metaphors or juicy put-downs.

Yummy food that's available for purchase (pork chops, green beans and macaroni & cheese made up a recent menu) and a bar full of all sorts of German beers and other spirits make for a complete evening. As you have only two more opportunities to see this perfect summertime amusement, don't wait for any kind strangers to take you,

just head over to Deutsches Haus yourself!

## Hugging the Shoulder at the Shadowbox Theatre through August 20

In Jerrod Bogard's *Hugging the Shoulder*, Derrick kidnaps his older brother Jeremy, tosses him in the back of a car, and drives him all over the country in an attempt to wean him off his severe drug habit. Or does he?

Bogard's play does raise the timeless question of "Am I my brother's keeper?" and explores how fate sometimes places you in situations you never thought you'd wind up in.

Unfortunately, while we feel the pain of Derrick and Jeremy, I can't honestly say that I really ever cared much about them. Meandering and repetitive, Bogard's script simply never goes beyond a surface deep exploration of these scions of a dysfunctional family resulting in an unsatisfying thinness. The ending especially feels like a cheat, a *Twilight Zone* rip-off.

Director Glenn Meche, who has notched up award-winning productions of *The Glass Menagerie* and *Frozen* in recent seasons, here creates some nice images with his simple staging, notably a Pieta-like one, but not even

he can overcome the innate dullness of watching two guys watch a car race. One can only wonder what it was about this play that appealed to him.

Joe Seibert does well as Derrick, bringing out the decency of this nice guy who's devoted to his brother. But even this fine actor can spin only so many variations on the same I'm-gonna-save-you theme that the text provides.

Eli Grove, who in the past has done impressive work as a set designer (*The Madwoman of Chaillot*, *Finer Noble Gases*), is good as the manipulative, dissolute and, at times, incoherent Jeremy, but he's too laid back for a character that calls for a more spontaneous, springy, even menacing approach. This is a role that requires a young Brando or Pacino, not a member of the mumblecore set.

Liz Mills is effective as Jeremy's junkie girlfriend Christy, an ineffably sad casualty of addiction.

I wish I could be more enthusiastic about *Hugging the Shoulder* as it's nice to see local producing entities such as Crescent Theatre Collective taking chances on plays that don't come with New York or London pedigrees. But, frankly, after last year's *Blackbird*, my tolerance for plays about druggie losers has reached its limit.



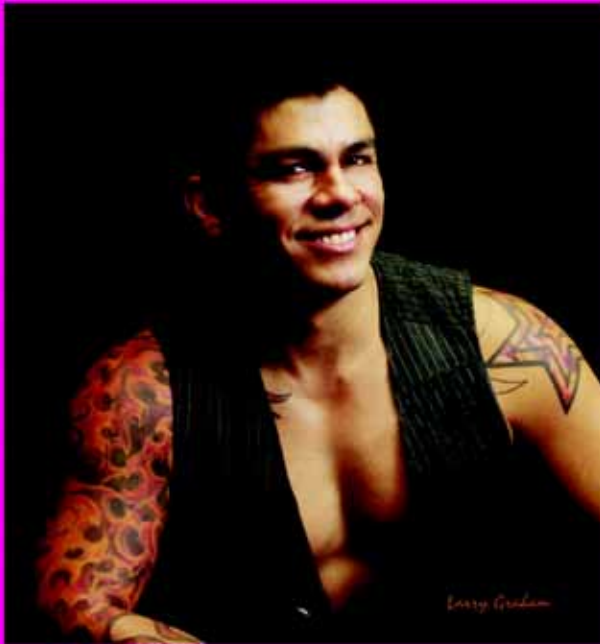
# National Second Hand Wardrobe Day

**Thurs., Aug. 25th**  
**4-9pm** *Donate an  
article of clothing,  
get a FREE Well Drink*

Decadent well before the Southern was added.

The **Lafite**  
*Lafitte In Exile*

"The shopping is still great!"



## Southern Decadence Charity Fundraiser Saturday, Aug. 27th 5pm

Southern Decadence Grand Marshals  
Misael Rubio & Tiffany Alexander



## Cooking for Decadence

Hamburgers, Hot Dogs,  
Potato Salad & Baked Beans  
\$5 benefiting NO/AIDS Task Force



901 Bourbon Street • New Orleans, LA 70116 • 504.522.8397 • Lafittes.COM