

CITYPULSE READERS' CHOICE  
**BEST OF** VOTING STARTS FEB 13th  
 GREATER LANSING

search...

<a href="#">Home</a>	<a href="#">News/Opinion</a>	<a href="#">A &amp; E</a>	<a href="#">Archives</a>	<a href="#">Distribution</a>	<a href="#">Advertise</a>	<a href="#">Classifieds</a>	<a href="#">Hotels</a>
----------------------	------------------------------	---------------------------	--------------------------	------------------------------	---------------------------	-----------------------------	------------------------

## Williamston Theatre masters 'Art' of comedy

Written by **LEN KLUGE**

Wednesday, 06 February 2008

As "Cat On A Hot Tin Roof" is not about cats or roofs, neither is Williamston Theatre's production "Art" about art. Ostensibly this "Art" is about friendships — why we form them with those we do, why we work so hard to maintain them and why we're so reluctant to relinquish them. Williamston's production, however, doesn't seem to really be about that either.

The dramatic device propelling the play is simple enough. Serge (Paul Hopper) buys a 4-foot-by-5-foot, white on white painting for \$200,000. When he proudly shows it to his best friend, Mark (John Lepard) promptly evaluates it as "Shit!" These two then enlist a third friend, Yvan (Bruce Bennett), to settle the argument, but of course he immediately assumes a neutral position. From there, the friendships are tested to the limit. Will they or will they not endure?

As playwright Yasmina Reza makes no attempt to investigate what art is, neither does she examine the basis behind why these three men have become friends in the first place. What she does offer is a hit comedy of spirited repartee along the lines of an early Neil Simon, and as this cast performs it, "Art" most closely resembles young siblings fighting over non-issues.

Hopper invests himself totally in the role of Serge. At various times he is indignant, hurt, angry and forgiving. Such investment into his own absurdity not only becomes part of the joke but also the conduit for it. Hopper's character is not always likeable, but he is thoroughly developed and entirely believable. While both of his fellow actors are in some state of perpetual motion, Hopper's physical economy makes him the most powerful and interesting presence on the stage.

Lepard's Mark is the most emotionally constrained of the three. His gracefully intellectual approach achieves depth at some moments and reflects passivity at others. The overall result is an interesting, if not always fathomable, combination of earnestness and apathy.

For the show's first half, Bennett produces a lovely, understated performance the likes of which we've never seen from him before. Then, in the midst of a lengthy monologue, he reverts to the physical gesticulations and facial exaggerations that have long been the staple of his work. By relying on this technique, he demonstrates that he knows the joke instead of allowing himself to be a part of that joke. His performance becomes predictable through the end of the play.

The real star of this production is director Tony Caselli. Using Kirk Domer's simple but highly functional set, Caselli eclipses any weak moment by quickly ushering us onto the next. He has become a stage master at using time and space to his advantage.

Williamston Theatre has once again proven itself to be a valuable and developing presence in local theater. While "Art" may not be perfect, it's still pretty good art.

'Art'  
 Through Feb. 17  
 Williamston Theatre  
 122 S. Putnam, Williamston  
 8 p.m. Thursday & Friday  
 3 p.m. & 8 p.m. Saturday  
 2 p.m. Sunday  
 \$18-\$24  
 (517) 655-SHOW



(From left) Paul Hopper, John Lepard and Bruce Bennet in Williamston Theatre's production of

[Hotel](#)



[Click here](#) to re-read the Sept. 26 cover story "[Custody Battle: A Mother, A Child and Judge George Economy.](#)" Then [click here](#) to read the Nov. 28 follow-up story.



7 P.M. WEDNESDAYS ON



6

Feb.

- Sen. Gretchen Whitmer on embryonic stem cell research
- Joel Ferguson & John Truscott on Super Tuesday

[www.williamstontheatre.org](http://www.williamstontheatre.org)

[< Prev](#)      [Next >](#)

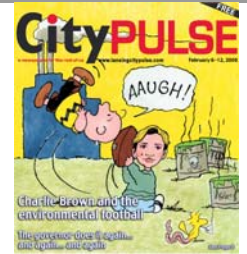
[\[ Back \]](#)

City Pulse. 2001 E. Michigan Ave. Lansing, MI 48912.  
Phone: (517)371-5600. Fax: (517)371-5800. E-mail: [citypulse@lansingcitypulse.com](mailto:citypulse@lansingcitypulse.com)  
[Contact us](#)

[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO PAST EPISODES](#)

Hear Berl every Wednesday at 5:30 p.m. on **The Jack Ebling Show** on WILS 1320-AM.

**Cover**



**Calendar**

February 2008						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	
<a href="#">+ Post New Event</a>						

**Upcoming Events**

There are no upcoming events currently scheduled.  
[View Full Calendar](#)  
[Add New Event](#)

[Real Estate Listings](#)  
Grand Ledge, Okemos,  
Holt Dewitt, Haslett &  
Lansing Area  
[www.MikeBowler.com](http://www.MikeBowler.com)



**Syndicate**

RSS	0.91
RSS	1.0
RSS	2.0
ATOM	0.3
OPML	SHARE IT!