

YASMINA REZA

art

TRANSLATION BY
CHRISTOPHER HAMPTON

PRESENTED BY ARRANGEMENT WITH
DAVID PUGH AND SEAN CONNERY



AUCKLAND
THEATRE
COMPANY

LOOKS TO LIVE FOR



The C70 Cabriolet. From \$96,900 plus on road costs. GST, sun, sky and admiring looks included.

VOLVO
for life

from the producer

On behalf of us all at Auckland Theatre Company, it is my privilege to welcome you to the first production of the Volvo WILD CHILD Season, ART.

Not so long ago, blood-pressure levels and voices were raised in reaction to a prophylactic-wrapped religious icon on prominent display at the national museum. For some, this was a tasteless offence, for others, legitimate 'art'. Yasmina Reza's phenomenally successful work, translated for the English stage by Christopher Hampton, personalises a debate made all the more complex because its subject defies definition. One man's 'art' can be another man's outrage, even when the two are the closest of friends. ART recognises that the eye of the beholder is attached not to the head but the heart. Critical detachment and attempts at objectivity conceal emotions, activated and engaged in spite of themselves and what is revealed is less about 'art' than about us. Here, the point is ingeniously made because the canvas in question, to some, is seemingly blank. That it can generate an evening of truth, tears and laughter is testament to the sublime writing, a beguiling painting and the power of art. Given this, no play seems more appropriate to begin the new millennium.

We welcome tonight's cast and crew, particularly Peter Elliott making his ATC debut. As ever, we gratefully acknowledge the ongoing support of Creative New Zealand and the Auckland City Council and applaud our Corporate Partners, whose vital contribution enhances the business of art and we hope, the art of business.

As Auckland Theatre Company enters its eighth season we thank you for your past patronage and look forward to sharing with you the year of WILD CHILD. Go well, Go wild!

Simon Prast

PRODUCER



VOLVO

What is art? In the case of the first production from the Auckland Theatre Company in 2000, a controversial art purchase is the catalyst for an impassioned debate on friendship, loyalty and values.

For Volvo, art is clearly defined. It means clean lines, pure and simple geometries. Coincidentally it is these very qualities that cause consternation in the play.

1999 was a spectacular year for Volvo in New Zealand with record sales. We capped off the year with the announcement of our sponsorship of the Auckland Theatre Company. This year we are aiming to bring the artistry of Volvo to an even wider audience.

We look forward to an exciting WILD CHILD Season from the Auckland Theatre Company with a record-setting eight productions.

Volvo's new season of vehicles appeal more than ever to the individual and the trend-setter. The renaissance in style has been led by Englishman Peter Horbury, who came to Volvo from Jaguar and Aston Martin. The aim of his design team is to create a style that is powerful yet curvaceous.

Of course, the new range retains the advanced safety and lifestyle features that Volvo is renowned for.

I invite you to enjoy ART and, of course, look out for the new Volvos.



John Snaith
GENERAL MANAGER
Scandinavian Vehicle
Distributors

When we were planning the décor for our a la carte restaurant Circa, 18 months ago, we were, in effect, presented with a blank canvas.

However instead of leaving the white walls as they were, we commissioned three artworks for the restaurant. We wanted big bold paintings that brought life and drama into the environment. Diners at the restaurant find them hard to miss.

Our guests prefer somewhere that's welcoming and authentic. They don't want imitation and pretence, but something real. Guests discover that true hospitality is an art form.

Join us for a drink or meal after the show. Our award-winning restaurant, Circa, is a place to meet, relax and enjoy outstanding cuisine from our award-winning British chef Iain Joyce.

Sit back and enjoy ART. And the next time you're in our neighbourhood, pop in and view three canvases that are bursting with life.



John Clarke
GENERAL MANAGER
Rydges Hotel Auckland

 **RYDGES**
AUCKLAND

art



YASMINA REZA Author

Yasmina began work as an actress, appearing in several new plays as well as Molière and Marivaux. In 1987 she wrote CONVERSATIONS AFTER A BURIAL, which was directed by Patrice Kerbrat and won the Molière Award for Best Author, SACD New Talent Award, the Johnson Foundation Award, and was subsequently performed across Europe and in South America. Following this she translated Kafka's METAMORPHOSIS for Roman Polanski and was nominated for a Molière Award for Best translation. Her second play, THE UNEXPECTED MAN, enjoyed successful productions in London's West End, France, Scandinavia and Germany. In 1995, ART premiered in Paris and went on to win the Molière Award for Best Author. Since then it has been produced worldwide and translated into twenty languages. The London production received the 1996/97 Olivier Award and Evening Standard Award. The Broadway production received the 1998 Tony Award for Best Play, the 1998 New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Play, as well as the Outer Critics Circle, Drama Desk and Drama League nominations for Best Play. Screenwriting credits include SEE YOU TOMORROW, starring Jeanne Moreau and directed by Didier Martiny. With LULU KREUTZ'S PICNIC, she has written her first original screenplay. The movie, directed in French by Didier Martiny, stars Philippe Noiret and Carole Bouquet. In September 1997, her first novel, HAMMERKLAVIER, was published in France to great critical acclaim.

art for art's sake

The Cinderella story of Yasmina Reza's play and a simple white painting

When Yasmina Reza's comedy ART opened in London, few predicted the theatrical phenomenon it would become. With a cast of just three, it was ostensibly a debate about abstract art written by a French playwright well known at home, but yet to make waves abroad. Theatre-goers flocked to see a heavyweight cast (Tom Courtenay, Albert Finney and Ken Stott) playing three men whose friendship is jeopardised when one buys a minimalist all-white painting for 200,000 francs, which the second finds impossible to comprehend, forcing the third to step in as mediator.

On the surface, ART is about the conflict between cultural pretension and philistinism, with the subjectivity of taste springing up now and again. Ultimately it is a study of friendship. With wit and ingenuity, ART examines the feelings underlying the closest friendships, questioning if they can survive honesty.

Translated into 15 languages, ART has played in more than 50 theatres worldwide, collecting accolades along the way.

Many writers would have been overwhelmed by such success. Not Yasmina Reza. In figure-hugging leather jacket and tight black jeans, her brown eyes sparkling beneath unruly curls, Reza is more leading lady than neurotic playwright. Sitting in the salon of her favourite Parisian hotel, the Lutetia, in St-Germain-des-Près, she has the confidence of one used to holding court.

She began her career as an actress, establishing herself as an important author when she won a Molière, a French theatre award, for her first work, CONVERSATIONS AFTER A BURIAL, written when she was 27. Successful plays followed, but it was ART that established her. "It was natural that I'd achieve recognition beyond France," she says. "I was born here, but my father is half Russian, half Romanian, my mother, Romanian: I never felt typically French."

Her inspiration was found outside French literature: Scott Fitzgerald, Chekhov, Dostoevski, and the works of such modern playwrights as Pinter ("His short phrases, his silences have influenced me"). As well as plays, she has notched up a novel and a couple of screenplays,

one made into a film starring Jeanne Moreau and directed by Reza's husband, Didier Martiny, with whom she has two children.

Reza is the first to admit that ART'S journey to the international stage is like a modern-day CINDERELLA. The unlikely fairy godmother was Sean Connery's French wife, Micheline, who had seen the play in Paris and remembered an experience years before, when she and Sean had dined with Michael Ovitz, former president of Disney and a collector of contemporary art.

"When we got there," Micheline explains, "Michael was very excited and said, 'I have something wonderful to show you. It's my latest acquisition.' It was a completely white painting. 'There are 50 layers of white paint,' he said excitedly. 'Don't you think it's a work of genius?' I replied, 'I think the painter is a genius and the people at the gallery are geniuses to have sold you the painting.' I quoted the poet Paul Valéry who says the most beautiful piece of art is a blank page. When I saw ART, I knew I had to have the rights to it."

The Connerys wanted the film rights, but Reza had other plans. "I told them that I wanted the play in London and on Broadway before I'd consider making the film," she says. The Connerys bowed to Reza's demands, finally agreeing to buy the English-language stage rights for Sean's partner David Pugh's production company. The film, it was decided, could wait.

"Now we've done the West End and Broadway, I am ready to think about the film," says Reza. "I haven't really thought seriously about how it will work, but I do know that Sean and De Niro may star."

Reza reels off these names like someone reading a shopping list, but drops that French cool thing when asked about her first encounter with Connery. Didn't she feel just a tiny bit starstruck? "Well, yes," she concedes, giggling. "Before I'd ever spoken to him I called to speak to Micheline, and this deep voice answered the phone. 'Hello,' it said, she growls in a gravelly accent which I assume is an attempt at Scottish. 'Is this Yasmina?' I knew it was him. I was like a 12-year old; I didn't know what to say. He is very sexy indeed."

Lucy Yeomans
Tatler/The Conde Nast Publications Ltd.

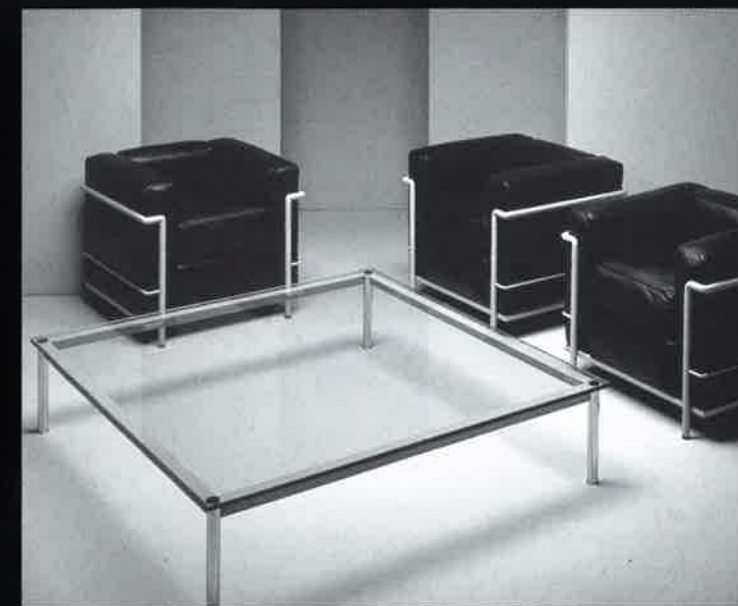
art

CHRISTOPHER HAMPTON *Translator*

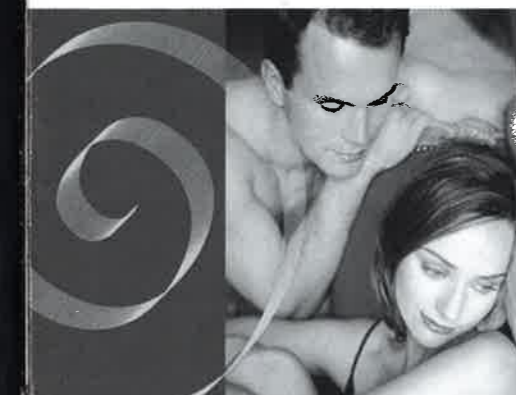
Christopher was born in the Azores in 1946. As a child he travelled around Aden, Egypt and Zanzibar and at 13 went to Lancing College. In 1966 he went to New College, Oxford to read German and French and in 1969 graduated with a First Class honours degree. His theatre credits include: WHEN DID YOU LAST SEE MY MOTHER (first performed by undergraduates at Oxford, subsequently Royal Court and Comedy theatres), TOTAL ECLIPSE (Royal Court, Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, BBC TV), UNCLE VANYA (Royal Court with Paul Schofield), THE PHILANTHROPIST (Royal Court, Mayfair and Wyndham's theatres), HEDDA GABLER (Stratford (Ontario) Festival with Irene Worth, New York with Claire Bloom, revived at the National Theatre), SAVAGES (Royal Court with Paul Schofield and Tom Conti), A DOLL'S HOUSE (Lincoln Centre with Liv Ullman, New York and West End with Claire Bloom), TREATS (Royal Court and Mayfair theatres), TALES FROM THE VIENNA WOODS (Royal National Theatre), DON JUAN COMES BACK FROM THE WAR (Royal National Theatre), THE PORTAGE TO SAN CRISTOBAL OF A.H. (Mermaid Theatre), TALES FROM HOLLYWOOD (commissioned by and first performed at Mark Taper Forum, LA. Royal National Theatre), TARTUFFE (RSC, Barbican), LES LIAISONS DANGEREUSES (RSC at the Other Place, Barbican Ambassadors Theatre, Music Box Theatre Broadway), FAITH HOPE AND CHARITY (Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith), WHITE CHAMELEON (Royal National Theatre), SUNSET BOULEVARD and ALICE'S ADVENTURES UNDER GROUND (Royal National Theatre). Television credits include: ABEL'S WILL, THE HISTORY MAN (BBC adaptation in four parts by Malcolm Bradbury), TARTUFFE (BBC/RKI/RSC - televised adaptation of stage play), HOTEL DU LAC (BBC adaptation of novel by Anita Brookner, winner of BAFTA award for Best Single Television Drama), THE GINGER TREE (BBC), and TALES FROM HOLLYWOOD (BBC). Film credits include: A DOLL'S HOUSE (starring Claire Bloom), TALES FROM THE VIENNA WOODS, THE HONORARY CONSUL, THE GOOD FATHER, LES LIAISONS DANGEREUSES (Oscar winner for Best Adapted Screenplay in 1988 and BAFTA for Best Screenplay, 1989), MARY REILLY (starring Julia Roberts), CARRINGTON (starring Emma Thompson, directed by Christopher Hampton), TOTAL ECLIPSE, SECRET AGENT (starring Robin Williams, Bob Hoskins, Gerard Depardieu, directed by Christopher Hampton).

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PAUL BARRETT
as Yvan



If you hadn't been an actor/actress/director/designer what would you have been?

Conductor or Concert Pianist.

What moment in your life decided your career in theatre?

Birth.

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

That I have been able to work in theatre for the last 20 years.

Most memorable (worst/best/funniest) moment on stage?

Most memorable worst moment on stage was trying to be funny during a long scene in ROOKERY NOOK while blood pumped from my gashed thumb all over the stage, the props, my clothes...

What was/is/could have been your favourite role?

Favourite role was 'Sergei Diaghilev' in CHINCHILLA.

What medium is your favourite in the visual arts?

My favourite painter is Paul Cezanne.

Which artist inspires you the most and why?

Gustav Mahler - his music contains the

sublime and the ridiculous and everything in between.

What is your definition of friendship?

Constancy, tenderness.

What is your idea of happiness?

Working.

What is the quality you most admire in yourself?

The ability to engage with other people.

What is the quality you most admire in a woman/man?

Their ability to engage with me.

What is your favourite journey?

Anywhere in a 747.

What is your motto?

Laugh; love; make art.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS.

Theatre: Sergei Diaghilev in CHINCHILLA, Jamie Tyrone in LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT, Bernard Nightingale in ARCADIA, Mitch in A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE, Elliott in PRIVATE LIVES, Jacques in AS YOU LIKE IT, Guy Burgess in SINGLE SPIES, Badger in THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS, Larry in FORESKIN'S LAMENT.

ROY BILLING
as Marc



If you hadn't been an actor/actress/director/designer what would you have been?

Insane and rich (or maybe sane, and richer) Who knows? Certainly never as happy as I am now!

What moment in your life decided your career in theatre?

When I walked on stage in an amateur musical in the 70's and got a laugh on my first line. I was immediately bitten by the acting bug.

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

Having SOME hair, albeit not much, at 52.

Most memorable (worst/best/funniest) moment on stage?

In a production of Bergman's The SEVENTH SEAL in the early days of Theatre Corporate, I accidentally stabbed a fellow actor in the throat during a stage fight. I had to stay on stage after he'd left and had no idea whether he'd be alive or dead at interval. It fortunately wasn't too bad - two stitches (and a front page photo in the Herald!)

What was/is/could have been your favourite role?

Stage: Tupper in FORESKIN'S LAMENT - all 5 productions I've done.

Television: George the taxi driver in the 80's TVNZ series INSIDE STRAIGHT

Film: Bob McIntyre - a small town mayor in the yet to be released Australian film THE DISH which I shot last year with Sam Neill.

What medium is your favourite in the visual arts?

Painting.

Which artist inspires you the most and why?

This varies. At the moment Jeffrey Smart. His retrospective exhibition at the NSW Art Gallery in Sydney last year was a knockout. I particularly like his industrial landscapes.

He has that special ability to make the ordinary appear extraordinary. I also like the Australian artist Fred Cress. I have a number of his drawings. Again, an ability to form the ordinary into the extraordinary.

What is your definition of friendship?

Mutual affection, loyalty, and respect.

What is your idea of happiness?

Sitting down with my wife and friends to good food, good wine and good conversation.

What is the quality you most admire in yourself?

I'm too modest to answer this question!

What is the quality you most admire in a woman/man?

Honesty.

What is your favourite journey?

Life. This journey I'm on. It gets better as it gets further on!

What is your motto?

Live hard, die old, leave a good-looking corpse.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS.

Film: (Australia) SIAM SUNSET, THE DISH, DOING TIME FOR PATSY CLINE, THANK GOD HE MET LIZZIE, PASSION, ERSKINEVILLE KINGS.
(New Zealand) OCEAN SCORES.

Theatre: (Australia) SCAM - Belvoir St Theatre, CHILLING AND KILLING ANNABEL LEE - Griffin Theatre Co.

(New Zealand) FORESKIN'S LAMENT - Auckland Theatre Company.

1989 - Feltex Award, Best Actor for TV series INSIDE STRAIGHT

1991 - New Zealand Film Award, Best Supporting Actor for OCEAN SCORES

1999 - AFI Awards, Best Supporting Actor nomination for SIAM SUNSET

2000 - Film Critics Circle of Australia, Best Supporting Actor nomination for SIAM SUNSET

PETER ELLIOTT as Serge



If you hadn't been an actor/actress/director/designer what would you have been?

A Fishing Guide or Paragliding Instructor.

What moment in your life decided your career in theatre?

At age 6 in the Christmas Show my mask ripped open. I vowed NEVER to let that happen on stage again.

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

Keeping my family, my sanity, and my career alive through the late 80's and 90's.

Most memorable (worst/best/funniest) moment on stage?

Being tied to my Siamese twin and farting in my death throes whilst stuck under the sheet.

What was/is/could have been your favourite role?

Orin Scrivello (the dentist) in LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS. Oh and Rex Redfern (GLOSS) was fun (good payers).

What medium is your favourite in the visual arts?

Sculpture.

Which artist inspires you the most and why?

God, what a question! Barber, McCahon, Dean Martin, Beethoven, Woolaston, Frizzell, Degas, Van Gogh, Lyle Lovett, Ted Brown, Bowie, Iain Banks, Castaneda, Michel Tuffery, Nat Lees, my wife Sue, Grace & Lucy, Jo Seagar, Sinatra, Gibran, John Kehoe, Herge, Roget, Shakespeare, Anthony Burgess, Bragg, Calvino, Mervyn Peake, Pirsig, Fowles, Mozart,

Willie Nelson, Coltrane (both), Elric Hooper, de Bernieres, Tarantino.

What is your definition of friendship?

The ability to listen, care and not judge.

What is your idea of happiness?

Family, friends, food, fun and a crystal clear day involving water and a sunset.

What is the quality you most admire in yourself?

Empathy.

What is the quality you most admire in a woman/man?

Self knowledge and respect.

What is your favourite journey?

An early morning trip to calm sparkling waters full of fish, followed by an evening flight along the coast.

What is your motto?

If it's worth doing, it's worth doing well.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS.

Film: Bill Perry in HEAVENLY CREATURES.

TV: Rex in GLOSS I, II & III, David in SHORTLAND STREET, Paul Davison in EREBUS: THE AFTERMATH.

Theatre: Bizozzo in ACCIDENTAL DEATH OF AN ANARCHIST, Ken in JONESKIN'S LAMENT, Dentist (et al.) in LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS, Bassanio in MERCURY OF VENICE, Eliot in PRIVATE LIVES, Eug in SIAMESE TWINS, Earl of Warwick in ST JOAN, Tom in THE GLASS MENAGERIE, Konstantin in THE SEAGULL, Maurice Halghwood in TOM AND VIV and Ed in TORCH SONG TRILOGY.

DIRECTOR Simon Prast

If you hadn't been an actor/actress/director/designer what would you have been?

A lawyer, pilot or veterinarian, but I was no good at maths.

What moment in your life decided your career in theatre?

Playing Willy Loman in an Auckland Grammar School production; getting into the Theatre Corporate Drama School.

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

Giving up alcohol.

Most memorable (worst/best/funniest) moment on stage?

Hearing the applause at the end of the DEATH OF A SALESMAN School matinee. Like a rock concert. I was very chuffed.

What was/is/could have been your favourite role?

Producing is all care, all responsibility. Directing is all care, no responsibility. Acting is just plain fun, so any role would be cool!

What medium is your favourite in the visual arts?

Photography, some sculpture. I like 'conceptual art' (and don't mind the Antrios!). My friend Latham Gaines is a superb photographer and artist and I treasure the work he has done for me.

Which artist inspires you the most and why?

Arthur Miller's writing is a constant inspiration. Sir Christopher Wren's ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL is awesome. Both created art that is humbling and humane.

What is your definition of friendship?

Forgiving trespasses (particularly my own!)

What is your idea of happiness?

Fishing with friends (and actually catching a few...fish that is!)

What is the quality you most admire in yourself?

'Stickability'. And a sense of humour.

What is the quality you most admire in a woman/man?

Honour. An instinct for telling the truth.

What is your favourite journey?

Anywhere in the Volvo! Man, that car can move.

What is your motto?

This too shall pass.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS.

Producer for ATC: 35 productions.

Director: 12 ANGRY MEN, CLOSER, THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN, DEATH OF A SALESMAN.

Actor: (TV) GLOSS, SHORTLAND STREET, HERCULES, XENA, EREBUS: THE AFTERMATH, SINKING OF THE RAINBOW WARRIOR (Film) WHEN LOVE COMES.

(Theatre) CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF, TORCH SONG TRILOGY, AMADEUS, THE CRUCIBLE, HAMLET, M. BUTTERFLY, THE HOME COMING, THE SEAGULL.

SET & COSTUME DESIGNER

If you hadn't been an actor/actress/director/designer what would you have been?

A Scientist.

What moment in your life decided your career in theatre?

At a drunken party.

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

Survival.

Most memorable (worst/best/funniest) moment on stage?

Being the back end of a cow with a very creative udder.

What could have been your favourite role?

The copyrighted original Designer for PHANTOM OF THE OPERA.

What medium is your favourite in the visual arts?

Ceramics.

Which artist inspires you the most and why?

Nature - She knows all the answers.



John Parker

If you hadn't been an actor/actress/director/designer what would you have been?

A Scientist.

What moment in your life decided your career in theatre?

At a drunken party.

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

Survival.

Most memorable (worst/best/funniest) moment on stage?

John Parker continued

What is your definition of friendship?
Not having to try.

What is your idea of happiness?
Getting through the day unscathed.

What is the quality you most admire in yourself?
The ability to work.

What is the quality you most admire in a woman/man?
Not needing me.

What is your favourite journey?
To China.

What is your motto?
This isn't a dress rehearsal.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS.

Head of Design, Theatre Corporate:
HEDDA GABLER, TRAFFORD TANZIA and CABARET.

Resident Designer, Mercury Theatre:
OUR COUNTRY'S GOOD, THE HOMECOMING, BRIGHTON BEACH MEMOIRS and THE MIKADO.

Opera NZ: CAVELLERIA RUSTICANA and PAGLIACCI.

ATC: THE BOOK CLUB, CABARET, AMY'S VIEW, JULIUS CAESAR, HONOUR, DEAD FUNNY and LOVELOCK'S DREAM RUN.

Louis Vuitton Cup Ball,
America's Cup Ball.



LIGHTING DESIGNER

Bryan Caldwell

If you hadn't been an actor/actress/director/designer what would you have been?
A Code Breaker.

What moment in your life decided your career in theatre?

In my first fortnight as a trainee technician, I learnt from the companies supporting Prunella Scales, Billy T James, Perkel Opera, and Limbs Dance Co. - Could I stop after that opportunity?

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

Lighting CABARET, the Louis Vuitton Ball, and THIS IS IT! and co-designing STAR TREK: THE EXHIBITION in the last two months of 1999.

Most memorable (worst/best/funniest) moment on stage?

One arm around my mum, intercom on my other, outside the lighting and sound tent watching the fireworks in the Domain, rain daubing our upturned faces, after directing the lighting of THIS IS IT! to its finale on time for the countdown to the Millennium.

What was/is/could have been your favourite role?

Dr Frankenstein.

What medium is your favourite in the visual arts?

The adrenal gland in the human body.

Which artist inspires you the most and why?

Robert Wilson - his synaesthetics.

What is your definition of friendship?

We will still be laughing, arguing, striving, playing, listening, a phone call away, together when laughing becomes a bubble in a dribble, arguing a venerable grumble, striving is getting one more heartbeat out, playing over our memories, and the phone is speed dialed to the funeral parlour.

What is your idea of happiness?

Playing.

What is the quality you most admire in yourself?

Perseverance.

What is the quality you most admire in a woman/man?

Man - wonder.
Woman - self.

What is your favourite journey?

Across the indivisible map.

What is your motto?

Two feet in the 21st Century.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS.

This is Bryan's second lighting Design in the 21st Century, his last and 92nd design in the 20th Century was THIS IS IT! at the Auckland Domain for Inside Out Productions.

AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS

art

BY YASMINA REZA

TRANSLATION BY CHRISTOPHER HAMPTON

BY ARRANGEMENT WITH DAVID PUGH AND SEAN CONNERY

This is the first production of the VOLVO 2000 SEASON of WILD CHILD
ART opened at the MAIDMENT THEATRE 18 February 2000

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| Serge | Peter Elliott |
| Marc | Roy Billing |
| Yvan | Paul Barrett |
| Director | Simon Prast |
| Set & Costume Designer | John Parker |
| Lighting Designer | Bryan Caldwell |
| Wardrobe | Elizabeth Whiting |
| Stage Manager | Frith Walker |
| Technical Manager | T.O. Robertson |
| Assistant Director | Ilona Rodgers |
| Props | Suzanne Gratkowski |
| Original Paintings | David Kayrouz |
| Set Construction | Third Stage Ltd. |

There will be no intermission

AUCKLAND THEATRE COMPANY

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Producer | Simon Prast |
| Marketing Manager | Amy Drury |
| Business Manager | Susanne Ritzenhoff |
| Production Manager | Ross Joblin |
| Patron Services Manager | Leal Butler |
| Administration | Carly Tawhiao |

TRUST BOARD

- Dr Hinemoa Elder (Chair) Timothy MacAvoy
Simon Prast David Haywood John Taylor
Dayle Mace

Journey through a white canvas

Art, whether it is painting, sculpture or poetry, cannot exist in a vacuum. Most art must be valued in relation to the entire history of art. One has to set an artpiece, for contrast and comparison, among everything that has gone before it.

But white on white paintings are outside that history. They represent a threat and an uncertainty to those, like Marc in the play ART, who approaches art from that philosophy of history.

Viewers of the white on white painting struggle for words to describe it and the new pattern it has set.

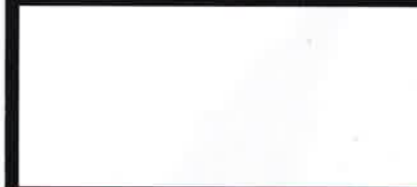
There is an honoured tradition of monochrome painting starting with Kazimir Malevich, whose first white on white painting appeared in 1918.

Malevich, an important pioneer of geometric abstract art, began creating abstract patterns he called suprematism in 1913. He began painting Russian rural scenes and peasants in a massive tubular style similar to that of Leger but was fired with the desire to "free art from the burden of object".

He claimed he made a picture consisting of nothing more than a black square on a white field as early as 1913, but his first suprematist paintings were shown publicly in Moscow in 1915.

Malevich moved away from absolute austerity, tilting rectangles from the vertical, adding more colours and a hint of painterly handling but then in 1918 or thereabouts returned to his purest ideals with a series of white on white paintings.

Malevich wrote of visualising a state of feeling, of creating through abstract painting a sense of bliss and wonder. His paintings from the suprematist era often



contain forms that are meant to evoke sensations of floating or flying.

After this brief series he seems to have realised he could go no further along that particular route and virtually gave up abstract painting, turning to teaching, writing and making three-dimensional models. Later, in the 1920s he returned, or "regressed" as some academics put it, to figurative paintings of peasants but was now out of favour with the Soviet system which demanded Socialist Realism from its artists. He died in poverty and neglect in 1935.

Piet Mondrian, a more well known pioneer of truly abstract visual language, also took a reductive approach to form but had a tighter geometric orientation, more brighter colours and stricter compositional order.

Mondrian was inspired by landscape. He reduced elements to their purest state, creating geometrically ordered and balanced compositions that he viewed as expressions of harmony.

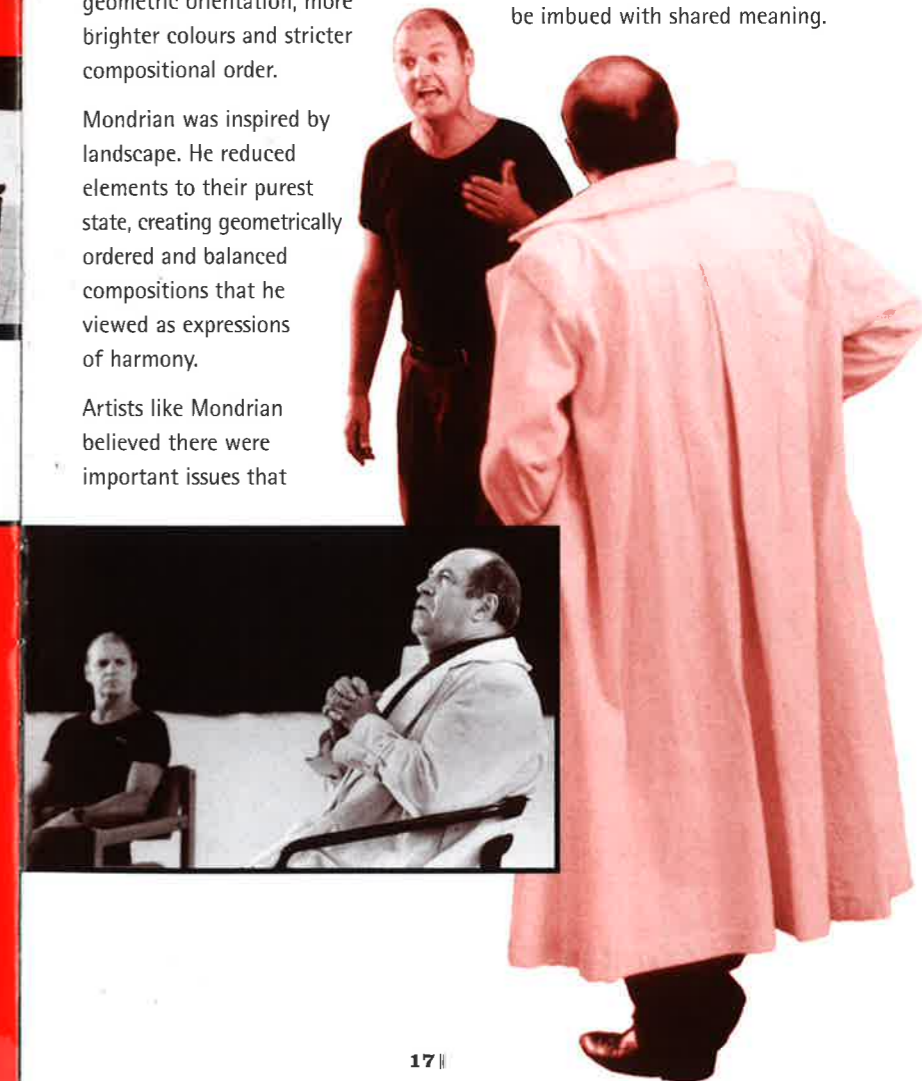
Artists like Mondrian believed there were important issues that

got lost or ignored when the artist concentrated on the appearance of objects. In Mondrian's opinion, it was necessary to avoid being distracted by the surface, so that the artist could capture in their art the essence of the world or the visual representation of truth.

By the end of the play ART, the character who described the white canvas as "shit", says the canvas represents a journey of "a man who moves across space and disappears".

The white on white artwork is a vehicle for viewers to make sense of the world.

ART is about lessons drawn from a white canvas – lessons of ascription and meaning. In the play, the three characters discover how the white canvas as a symbol can be imbued with shared meaning.



art and design



The design problems with ART come from its excellent writing and structure: Twenty-one scenes set in five locations moving imperceptibly between each other like cinematic cross-fades or jump cuts. Some are like brief asides or even resemble the classic Shakespearean soliloquy.

Problems are their own solutions. The play is really timeless and apart from the odd place name, is also location-less. However, the world of the play remains very French. I have distilled interior design elements of many famous Parisian apartments such as Isabelle Adjani's Left Bank mansion decorated by Jacques Grange and Tunisian couturier Azzedine Alaïa's self-designed warehouse as well as the minimal interior work of Japanese architect Masakazu Bokura in Paris and Andrée Putman's own eclectic Left Bank loft.

Textual references indicate "a monastic" feel.

I have conceived a very real space that I prefer to think of as undefined with paint or colour rather than being just a white set. The apartment walls are all covered in primed canvas as if the characters inhabit their own 3D painting. The piece is about the intangible nature of art and friendship and the hidden agenda eye of the beholder. The single apartment is at once "every apartment" and we can be anywhere instantly with a different lighting state or the magical illusion of other art appearing and disappearing.

The minimal four pieces of furniture are similarly icons of the Art of Design. Classics of Mackintosh, Ruhlmann and Le Corbusier sit beside an Egyptian influenced French antique. The set is intended to be like an Art Museum exhibition of the Archaeology of Modernity.

The furniture defines each character as much as their single costume. Marc, Serge and Yvan are real people. I was after a French male arrogance, costumes with attitude. I wanted a "not in Auckland now" quality that was stylish in a believable normality. However the clothes are also enhanced theatrical character costumes, which define their lives before we encounter them.

The performers become their own iconographic Works of Art moving about on the unpainted canvas.

John Parker
Set & Costume Designer

art

Some art is immediately exciting and engaging, some stirs us in ways we had never expected, and some leaves us cold or even angry. But all of these experiences of art speak of its power to transform, to confirm, or to move us. Art is defined as much by what it is as what we bring to it. When we share our experience of art we define ourselves through our response to the work. That is just one of the many ways in which art affects us.

Works of art endure because more and more people, over time, are able to see and understand something of their relevance to their own experience, regardless of when or where they were created. Each response becomes in some way bound up with what the work has come to mean. Consider the millions who have not just seen the Mona Lisa but witnessed it in such numbers as to make it an icon. And we must not forget that even after 500 years debate still rages about the meaning of Leonardo's work.

Imagine then that a chair has been placed on the stage of this theatre and a question is posed: "What does this mean to you?" Replace the chair with an abstract painting that is entirely white and repeat the question. Ignore the voice of the aesthete that lurks within and you will find that most of us can agree on what a chair means as much as what it is, but there will always be much less agreement about the painting.

This is not because we feel less informed about abstract painting, in a way that we never feel about a chair. Nor is it because we actually see something different, rather it is that our experience of art helps to more closely reveal who we are and what we believe than does our experience of a chair. Art is always an open system of knowledge and experience, capable of infinite extension. What we see has always depended on who we are and where we stand.

So, when Henri Matisse said that painting was like a good armchair, believe me, he meant his own.

Chris Saines
Director
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki



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DONALD MARGULIES

United States 1996

"What am I without my stories?
I'm nothing. I'm good as dead."

When celebrated writer-turned professor Ruth Steiner takes on student Lisa Morrison as an assistant, the two soon become friends and confidantes. Awe-struck by the older woman's wealth of experience, Lisa appropriates as her own the story of a secret love affair that long ago changed Ruth's life. When the story is published to great acclaim, the stage is set for an emotional meltdown neither the ambitious protégé nor betrayed mentor will ever forget.

Nominated for a 1997 Pulitzer Prize, Donald Margulies' intriguing drama has been described as a literary ALL ABOUT EVE.

A powerful insight into the creative process, COLLECTED STORIES probes the complexities of the student-teacher relationship and the lives of two very different women voraciously moving through life.

Starring Elizabeth McRae as Ruth Steiner and Sara Wiseman as Lisa Morrison

**UPCOMING ATC
ATTRactions**

MARTIN McDONAGH

Ireland 1996

"I suppose now you'll never be dying. You'll be hanging on forever, just to spite me."

Leenane, a small town in County Galway. Forty-year-old spinster Maureen Folan yearns for a life of her own but is thwarted by the constant and manipulative demands of her aged live-in mother Mag. When local lad Ray Dooley announces the return of his eligible brother Pato, Maureen recognises her first and possibly final chance of a loving relationship. However, Mag's attempt to sabotage her daughter's break for freedom sets in motion a train of events that leads inexorably to the "mother of all reckonings".

Fast emerging as one of modern theatre's most creative storytellers, Martin McDonagh (THE CRIPPLE OF INISHMAAN) puts the fun back into dysfunction with another wicked fable peopled with indelible characters. Suspenseful, brazen and beguiling, THE BEAUTY QUEEN OF LEENANE is a darkly comic tale that will stir the mind and memory long after its breath-taking dénouement.

Starring Geraldine Brophy, Lee Grant, Micheal Lawrence and Andrew Glover



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