

## 'ART' Director Notes, Michael Butler

There are three great unanswered questions in the world: "Is there a God?" "Do aliens exist?" And "What is art?"

Some time ago I visited the High Museum in Atlanta. It's an excellent small museum. They've got a Picasso and a couple of other 20th century heavyweights hanging on the walls. But the highlight for me was the Ad Reinhardt painting. Reinhardt was an American abstract expressionist best known for his monochromatic canvases in black, much like the white painting that stirs up so much trouble in Yasmina Reza's play 'ART.' In Ms. Reza's play, Marc is deeply disturbed when his friend Serge buys an expensive white painting. A third friend, Yvan, tries to hold the friendship together and things get sticky as the glue of male bonding comes undone. It's a funny, surprisingly complex play about men, written by a woman, one that explores what can happen when someone close to you, someone you think you know, does something completely unexpected. Like buy an all-white painting for a lot of money.

The High Museum was showing one of Reinhardt's black paintings. It was a canvas about 4 by 5 feet, pretty much all black but if you looked closely and patiently, it was possible to detect hues and textures, and possibly even some lines or patterns within it, and perhaps what looked like the shape of a cross. Hard to say though; look at anything closely or long enough and you may see all kinds of things. Next to the painting was a small table with an open notebook, a pen and an invitation to write one's response to the painting. I couldn't stop reading it. It was a journal of art outrage, containing page after page of invective, vitriol, apoplexy and exasperation. The diatribes were punctuated by the occasional and almost apologetic "I liked it," but for the most part it was as if the levee broke and all those years of not really getting modern art finally flooded out.



Of course art backlash is nothing new. The now universally loved impressionist paintings were initially rejected by the French Academy. Even Michelangelo was not exempt from art outrage. He was constantly battling Pope Julius II over the Sistine Chapel frescoes. The hands were too big, the Pope complained, and he was footing the bill.



So, the character of Marc is not alone in his reaction to Serge's white painting. Minimalist art has always generated an especially aggressive negative reaction. Whether it was Ad Reinhardt's black paintings from the 1950s or Barnett Newman's The Voice (1952) – an all white painting and perhaps the model for the fictional artist Antrios' white painting in 'ART' – or even the first truly minimalist paintings – Kazimir Malevich's Black Square (1915) and White on White (1918).

But 'ART' the play really isn't about "art." It's about friendship. Playwright's Yasmina Reza's brilliance is that she uses the white painting as the flashpoint for the deconstruction (another art term, but that's for another article!) of the long friendship between Marc and Serge. It's the painting that makes them ask, "Are we who we think we are or are we who our friends think we are?" and take the psychological, emotional and power dynamics of friendship to such comedic lengths.

So, what did I think of Ad Reinhardt's black painting? A few years before the High Museum show, the Modern in New York had done a big retrospective of his work. They had a full series of his black paintings, shown the way he intended – all in one room, with special low level lighting. I had read about this and I admit went to the show curious, but also expecting to perhaps have a good laugh. To my surprise, I found I couldn't take my eyes off them. They were moving and mysterious and powerful in ways I couldn't understand. Like the character of Serge who buys the white painting in 'ART,' I began to see things in them. They had a glow and a depth, or as friend Yvan says with his new-found art appreciation, "I felt a resonance." There seemed to be patterns in them but those patterns kept changing with repeated viewings. Even though they were ostensibly the same, they took on individual character as single paintings, and as a group they were awesomely powerful, the way the stone figures on Easter Island are powerful. Powerful as what, exactly, I don't know. It was inexplicable. That's not too bad for a painting, to take us into the realm of mystery, majesty and the unknowable. With the Sistine Chapel, Michelangelo was trying to take us closer to God. I think Reinhardt might have been trying to do the same. Their paintings may not answer the question, "Is there a God?" or "What is Art?" but they point the way to possibility. We still don't know about the aliens.

*Michael Butler*



# CENTER REPERTORY COMPANY

Michael Butler, Artistic Director

Scott Denison, Managing Director

presents

# 'art'

By  
**Yasmina Reza**

Translated by **Christopher Hampton**

Scenic Designer

**Joshua Lipps**

Sound Designer

**Theodore J. H. Hulsker**

Costume Designer

**Victoria Livingston-Hall**

Stage Manager

**Anthony E. Gabrielson\***

Lighting Designer

**Kurt Landisman**

Props Master

**Roger Anderson**

Cast

**Cassidy Brown\***

**J. Michael Flynn\***

**Liam Vincent\***

Directed by **Michael Butler**

Produced on Broadway by David Pugh, Sean Connery and Joan Cullman  
March 1, 1998

"ART" is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York.

Margaret Leshner Theatre  
April 1 - 30, 2016  
Leshner Center for the Arts

Season  
Sponsor



Season Partner



Foundation Sponsor



Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States  
The Director is a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society  
The Lighting Designer is a member of United Scenic Artists Union  
Center REP is a member of Theatre Bay Area and Theatre Communications Group (TCG), The National Organization for the American Theatre



**CAST (in order of appearance)**

Serge .....Liam Vincent\*  
 Marc.....J. Michael Flynn\*  
 Yvan..... Cassidy Brown\*

**TIME and PLACE**

The present.

The Paris apartments of  
 Serge, Yvan and Marc.

'Art' is performed without intermission.

**CAST BIOGRAPHIES**

**CASSIDY BROWN\* (Yvan)** is pleased to return to Center REP, where he has previously appeared in *The 39 Steps*, *Ella*, *Don't Dress for Dinner*, and *The Underpants*. He recently appeared in *Fallen Angels* at Theatreworks, where he was also in *Doubt*, *Disturbed*, *The Loudest Man on Earth*, and *The 39 Steps*. He has been seen at Marin Shakes in *Complete History of America (Abridged)*, *The Tempest*, and *Don Quixote*, at San Jose Rep in *Game On*, at San Jose Stage in *The 39 Steps*, and at SF Playhouse in *In a Word*. Other credits include *Hunter Gatherers* and *The North Plan* at Capital Stage, and numerous shows at Pacific Repertory Theater. Cassidy produces and hosts a monthly storytelling event called *The Shout*, and is a proud member of AEA and Theater Bay Area.



**J. MICHAEL FLYNN\* (Marc)** Returning to the Bay Area after almost four years, Mr. Flynn is thrilled to be joining Center REP. During more than four decades in the American theater, Mr. Flynn has worked with – among others – A Contemporary Theatre, The Alabama Shakespeare Festival, American Conservatory Theatre, The Arizona Theatre Company, Aurora Theatre, Baltimore CenterStage, Berkeley Rep, Boise Contemporary Theater, Brooklyn Academy of Music, California Actors Theater, California Repertory Theatre, Cleveland Play House, Geva, The Goodman, The Huntington, The Idaho Shakespeare Festival, The Long Wharf, The Magic Theatre, The Old Globe, The Oregon Shakespearean Festival, P.C.P.A., Pittsburgh Public, Portland Center Stage, San Jose Rep, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Syracuse Stage and The Sundance Institute. His Hollywood career can be traced on the IMDb. BTW, Mr. Flynn is continually in wonder of (and deeply thankful for) Mrs. Flynn.



 <p><b>CITY COUNCIL</b>                  Loella Haskew, Mayor                  Rich Carlston                  Cindy Silva                  Bob Simmons                  Justin Wedel</p>	<p><b>CITY MANAGER</b>                  Ken Nordhoff</p> <p><b>DIRECTOR</b>                  Arts, Recreation                  and Community Services                  Kevin Safine</p>
<p><b>ARTS COMMISSION</b>                  Glynnis Cowdery, Chair                  Polly Bradbury,                  Vice Chair                  Joe Bologna                  Jane Emanuel                  Anita Sagastegui</p>	

**LIAM VINCENT\* (Serge)** is thrilled to be back at Center REP, where he appeared last season in *The Book Club Play*. Other Center REP credits include *Don't Dress for Dinner*, *Boeing-Boeing*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Most recently he appeared in *A Christmas Carol* at ACT and at the California Shakespeare Theater in *The Tempest* and *The Mystery of Irma Vep*. In the Bay Area, he has been seen in numerous productions at the American Conservatory Theater, The Aurora, San Jose Rep, TheaterWorks, The Magic, The Encore, SF Playhouse, Shakespeare Santa Cruz, Marin Theater Company, Shotgun Players, San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, Word for Word, and Campo Santo. Nationally his work has been seen off Broadway with the Civilians, at the Huntington Theater, The Alliance, Portland Center Stage, Pasadena Playhouse, and the Arizona Theater Company. He is a graduate of Boston University.



**PRODUCTION TEAM**

**YASMINA REZA (Playwright)** is a French playwright and novelist, based in Paris, whose works have all been multi-award-winning, critical and popular international successes, produced worldwide and translated into 35 languages. She has written seven plays (*Conversations After a Burial*, *The Passage of Winter*, *Art*, *The Unexpected Man*, *Life X 3*, *A Spanish Play*, *God of Carnage*, *How You Talk the Game*) and 6 novels (*"Hammerklavier"*, *"Une Desolation (Desolation)"*, *"Adam Haberberg"*, *"Dans la Luge d'Arthur Schopenhauer"*, *"Nulle Part"* and *"L'Aube, le Soir ou la Nuit (Dawn Dusk or Night)"*). Films include: *"Le Pique-Nique de Lulu Kreutz"*, directed by Didier Martiny and *"Chicas"*, written and directed by the author.

**MICHAEL BUTLER (Director/Artistic Director)** This is Michael's tenth season as Artistic Director of Center REP, where his directing credits include *Anything Goes*, *Clybourne Park*, *Real Housewives of Walnut Creek*, and *To Kill a Mockingbird*, as well as the Shellie and BATCC Award-winning productions of *Around the World in 80 Days*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Enchanted April*, and *Witness For The Prosecution*. His directing work has also been seen at San Jose Rep, Cleveland Playhouse, Seattle Rep, Laguna Playhouse, ACT in Seattle, Marin Theater Company, Aurora Theatre Company, San Jose Stage, Shakespeare Santa Cruz, and The Juilliard School, of which he is a graduate. As an actor, Michael has worked on Broadway and off, in regional theatres, film and television, as well as REP's productions of *Mirandolina*, *The Mousetrap*, *Noises Off* and *Rumors*. He is a published songwriter and the co-writer and composer of numerous music-theatre pieces, which he has directed and performed in NY, LA, and at festivals in India and Morocco. In his career as a performer he has also danced with the Erick Hawkins Dance Company, portrayed the villainous Pierre LeChance on *"The Guiding Light"*, and played guitar and harmonica in many rock, blues, and country western bands at all the notable dives in NYC.

Special acknowledgement to Timothy Near's 2002 production of 'Art' for providing inspiration.

**JOSHUA LIPPS (Scenic Designer)** has been with Center REP since 2008 and has been the Technical Director there for the last seven seasons. Josh designed the Off Center productions of *A Number* and *Spring Awakening*. Prior to working with REP he was the TD for Alameda Civic Light Opera for 5 years. During his time there he designed the sets for *Man of La Mancha* and *Cinderella*. When not working, Josh enjoys spending a quiet moment in silent contemplation hoping the fish will bite. He also loves the time he gets to spend with his wife Jennifer and his children Carter and Avery, who completely support his theatrical career. Really.

**VICTORIA LIVINGSTON-HALL (Costume Designer)** Work at Center REP includes *Anything Goes*, *Mirandolina*, *Deathtrap*, *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, *Xanadu* (Shellie Award) *The Underpants*, *Arms and The Man*, *Smokey Joe's Cafe*, *Boeing Boeing*, *She Loves Me* ( BACC Award), *Dracula*, *Noises Off*, *Witness for the Prosecution* (Shellie Award), and *Cabaret* (Shellie Award and BACC Award). Work in London includes, "The Long Hard Goodbye"- film, "Olympia" at the Baron's Court Theatre, "S.N.U.B."- feature film-Angry Badger Pictures, "Striklem", The National Film and Television School, British Society of Cinematographers "BSC Test Shoot", "Viv" Skillset Screen Academy, "Midsummer Murders" for Virgin Media and she assisted at the Holland Park Opera productions of *Lakme* and *La Traviata*. Bay area work includes the *A Seagull in the Hamptons* for Shotgun Players, the *ReOrient Festival* for Golden Thread Productions, *Abe Lincoln's Big Gay Dance Party* for SF Playhouse and the NYFringe Festival, among other shows for Crowded Fire Theatre Co. The Magic Theatre, and Theatre Artaud.

**KURT LANDISMAN (Lighting Designer)** Local audiences will be familiar with his work through past productions designed for Center REP including *Born Yesterday*, *Anything Goes*, *Mirandolina*, *Deathtrap*, *Life Could Be a Dream*, *Ella*, *the Musical*, *Sweet Charity*, *The 39 Steps*, *Old Wicked Songs* and *Xanadu*. His designs have been seen throughout the Bay Area at many theaters including San Francisco Opera, ACT, Berkeley Rep, San Jose Rep, Theatreworks, California Shakespeare Festival, The Magic Theatre, and Marin Theatre Company. Locally his work has garnered 16 Bay Area Critics Circle Awards, 5 LA Dramalogue Awards and 5 Shellie Awards. Nationally, his work has been seen at many regional opera & ballet companies, including the Los Angeles Opera, Minnesota Opera, Virginia Opera, Tulsa Opera, and Ballet Arizona. His designs have also been presented off-Broadway, represented at Circle Rep, and the Douglas Fairbanks Theatres. Other designs internationally include world premieres of plays by Sam Shepard in Japan, and Singapore, as well as the San Francisco Opera in Shanghai, China, and the Moscow Circus in Tokyo, Japan.

THANK YOU TO:  
 Massimo's Ristorante  
 Waters Moving and Storage  
 Associated Services-Alta Water

**THEODORE J.H. HULSKER (Sound Designer)** is a Bay Area native who has been designing sound professionally in the region since 2010. Past productions include Shotgun Player's productions of *Woyzeck*, *Strangers, Babies* and *Antigonick*; *The Chairs* at Cutting Ball Theater; *Yellow, Pansy*, and *American Dream* at NCTC; Boxcar Theater's *SpeakEasy*; San Francisco Playhouse's productions of *Seminar*, *Storefront Church*, and *Tree*; and Center REP's productions of *Mirandolina!* *Mistress of a Tuscan Inn*, *Sleuth* and *Deathtrap*. He was the 2012 recipient of the Eric Landisman Fellowship for Emerging Designer.

**ROGER ANDERSON (Props Master)** comes to Center REP after 14 years at Seattle's Village Theatre. There he propped world premieres of *Million Dollar Quartet*, *The Ark*, and *It Shoulda Been You*. Roger's Prop wizardry has been seen at Intiman Theatre, Milwaukee Rep, GeVa Theatre, and Syracuse Stage. He is excited to be making the East Bay home!

**ANTHONY E. GABRIELSON\* (Stage Manager)** is stoked to work with Center REP after returning to his native East Bay. Most recently he Assistant Stage Managed *The Behavior of Broadus* at Capital Stage, Stage Managed a concert reading of *Bottle Shock: The Musical* for Fogg Theatre and numerous productions with Transcendence Theatre Company where he also served as Production Coordinator and Volunteer Coordinator. Proud member of Actors Equity Association.

**SCOTT DENISON (Managing Director)** has been a leader in the arts for 40 years for Walnut Creek and the surrounding communities. For the last 24 years he has been the General Manager of the Leshar Center and oversees over 850 public events each year. He coordinates performing arts activities with over 85 producers and producing organizations. He is also the Managing Director of Center REPertry Company producing 6 professional productions each season; and is the director and co-founder of Fantasy Forum Actors Ensemble, an adult family performing arts company which presents programs for the young and Young at Heart. Scott directed CCMT's hits *The Music Man*, *Les Misérables*, *Disney's Beauty and the Beast*, *Rodgers and Hammerstein's Cinderella*, *Hairspray*, and for the past 16 seasons Center REP's *A Christmas Carol*. Denison has directed over 150 productions including REP's *The Lady with All the Answers* starring Kerri Shawn. In 1979 he created the Shellie Awards, which annually honors outstanding performing arts achievement in Contra Costa county. In 2007 he created the Chevron Family Theatre Festival bringing adult nationally acclaimed performances together for one day performing to over 7,000 guests of all ages.




The Director is a member of the STAGE DIRECTORS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS SOCIETY, a national theatrical labor union.

**OUR SPONSORS**

**Chevron** (Season Sponsor) has been the leading corporate sponsor of Center REP and the Leshar Center for the Arts for the past nine years. In fact, Chevron has been a partner of the LCA since the beginning, providing funding for capital improvements, event sponsorships and more. Chevron generously supports every Center REP show throughout the season, and is the primary sponsor for events including the Chevron Family Theatre Festival in July. Chevron has proven itself not just as a generous supporter, but also a valued friend of the arts.

**Diablo Regional Arts Association (DRAA)** (Season Partner) is both the primary fundraising organization of the Leshar Center for the Arts (LCA) and the City of Walnut Creek's appointed curator for the LCA's audience outreach. DRAA's role in the community is all about building partnerships with the focused goal of enhancing artistic quality at the LCA and providing opportunities for everyone to enjoy the arts. Through partnerships with the LCA and its producers, individual donors, corporate and foundation sponsors and the City of Walnut Creek, DRAA plays a vital role in advancing the arts for the betterment of the community. Please visit us online at [www.draa.org](http://www.draa.org).

**Leshar Foundation** (Foundation Sponsor) Since 1994, the Dean & Margaret Leshar Foundation has awarded grants totaling more than \$40 million and reaching citizens in all parts of Contra Costa County. True to the original wishes of Dean and Margaret Leshar, the Foundation continues to build on the strengths of the community by supporting organizations and programs that provide help and support to people in need; enhance and enrich the lives of all citizens; and promote a healthy and exciting future for the community. Established in 1989, the Foundation received its principal assets from Dean Leshar's estate in 1993 and 1995. In 1997, an additional endowment from Dean Leshar's estate followed the death of Margaret Leshar. A significant and final bequest from Mr. Leshar's estate was received in 2003. As a family foundation, support for the Contra Costa community will be carried on by the next generation of family members. Grant-making decisions are based on the vision of Dean and Margaret Leshar who felt quality education, diverse art programs, and healthy children and families are the building blocks of a strong and vibrant community. The Leshars defined the "spirit of giving" as "investing in the community and its people." By providing financial support and direction in these critical areas, the Dean & Margaret Leshar Foundation is investing every day, every week and every year in the health and well-being of this county that Dean and Margaret so loved.

THANK YOU TO OUR  
 OPENING NIGHT DINNER SPONSOR:  
 Fleming's Prime Steakhouse & Wine Bar

**ABOUT CENTER REPERTORY COMPANY**

**Center REP** is the resident, professional theatre company of the Leshar Center for the Arts. Our season consists of six productions a year – a variety of musicals, dramas and comedies, both classic and contemporary, that continually strive to reach new levels of artistic excellence and professional standards.

Our **mission** is to celebrate the power of the human imagination by producing emotionally engaging, intellectually involving, and visually astonishing live theatre, and through Outreach and Education programs, to enrich and advance the cultural life of the communities we serve.

**What does it mean to be a producing theatre?** We hire the finest professional directors, actors and designers to create our productions at Center REP. These are not touring productions – they're conceived and developed here, the sets and costumes are built in our shops, and the actors rehearse in our rehearsal hall. Whether the production is a Bay Area premiere or a Shakespearean classic, each is devised to be a one of a kind, artistic creation that will be a unique theatre experience for our audience.

**What does it mean to be a professional theatre?** It means that all our artists and artisans are career theatre-practitioners. The actors in this production are members of Actors' Equity Association; our directors and designers are members of professional unions. All do theatre because it is their profession and their passion.

We are very proud to have the opportunity to produce professional theatre for our community in the beautiful theatres here at the Leshar Center for the Arts. Thank you for your support!

 <p><b>Center REPertry Company</b></p> <p>Managing Director - Scott Denison                  Artistic Director - Michael Butler</p>	
<p><i>Production Services</i>                  Production Services                  Coordinator  <b>Toni Kilcoyne</b>                  Technical Staff  <b>Steve Pino</b>  <b>John Earls</b>  <b>Michael Arlen</b>  <b>Chris Currie</b>  <b>Kieren McEntee</b>  <b>Garrick Schuster</b>  <b>Stephen Spleiss</b>  <b>Josh Stouffer</b></p> <p><i>Audience Svcs</i>                  Audience Svcs Coordinator  <b>Courtney Egg</b>                  Ticket Office Staff  <b>Jeremiah Vierling</b>  <b>Rami Kim</b>  <b>Robert Nolan</b>  <b>Vaughn Edward</b>  <b>Kiersten Jones</b>  <b>Shannon Taylor</b>  <b>Sarah Walker</b>                  Usher Coordinator  <b>Pat Mitchell</b>  <i>Costumes</i>  <b>Bethany Deal</b>  <b>Kat Pruyn</b>                  Dresser  <b>Alea R. Gonzales</b></p>	<p><i>Education</i>                  Education Directors  <b>Jeff Draper</b>  <b>Kerri Shawn</b>  <i>Marketing</i>                  Marketing Director  <b>Gabe Marin</b>                  Marketing Assistant  <b>Ariel Brewer</b>                  Casting Director  <b>Jennifer Perry</b>  <i>Production</i>                  Production Manager  <b>Jeff Collister</b>  <i>Technical</i>                  Technical Director  <b>Joshua Lipps</b>                  Master Electrician  <b>Del Medoff</b>                  Carpenters  <b>Sean Bryan</b>  <b>Gabriel Johnson</b>  <b>Caleb Salmon</b>                  Assistant                  Stage Managers  <b>Joe Coe</b>  <b>Matthew Wright</b>                  Administration                  Asst. to Managing Director  <b>Gail Pfeiffer</b>                  Program  <b>Linda Nomura</b></p>