

Art for Art's sake in The Art of Something

By Jim Spencer and Shirley Lorraine
For the Ventura Breeze
Posted 5-14-2014

Playwright Tom Eubanks has Concurrent careers. He is a playwright who has spent decades developing and polishing his skills. He is also as a licensed private investigator. His efforts in both fields come together well in his latest script, *The Art of Something*, which is enjoying its debut production now through June 1 at Oxnard's Elite Theatre Company.

The Art of Something is a dramady (a play with strong doses of comedy and drama) about a competent, but burned-out, L.A. private eye named Art who has also recently begun experiencing symptoms of agoraphobia (a fear of public places and attendant panic attacks). The action revolves around how these issues affect Art's professional and personal lives, as well as his newly adopted artistic avocation of painting nudes.

Along the way Art resolves two cases, heals a marriage, confronts some personal demons, expands his personal horizons, and helps others re-connect—all the while the audience enjoys some thoughtful insights shared by the characters,

plus a number of good laughs.

Overall, the plot is intricate, stylish and refreshing in its structure, concept and approach to the topics it tackles. The humor in the piece comes not from a series of punch lines, but from both the extraordinary, but believable, situations that confront Art, plus the comedic nuances provided by the characters.

Eubanks knows how to develop characters and give them a richness and texture over the course of the play. They are not one dimensional, as those usually found in a straight comedy. Rather, they are literate, thoughtful and well-read, which makes the observations the characters offer appealing and acceptable.

The eleven members of the cast have the talent, experience and depth required to make the play work. David Colville plays Art, the conflicted investigator, with apparent ease. Vivien Latham, as Art's wife, displays her exquisite professional versatility as her character experiences unexpected emotional and physical events. Roger, Art's outside operative (a la Nero Wolfe), is portrayed with comic flair by Scott Blanchard. Maranda Mobley, Art's co-ed model Sedona, is congenial and convincing. Terry Fishman is a delight as Art's kookie client, as are Robert Sabotka and Eric McGowan who play different, unusual clients. Both Allison Williams (Art's daughter) and Sandra Demongenes

(Sedona's mother) ignite their scenes with energy in pivotal roles. Christina Colombo and Michelle Wagner play a mother-daughter team who are potential clients for Art.

All new plays experience post production refinement after their inaugural presentation. In this case the trimming of some character banter and judicious editing will undoubtedly help cut the play's running time (2-3/4 hours on the night we attended, including the intermission) to a more audience-palatable length.

The Art of Something runs until June 1, 2014 at the Elite Theatre Company

<http://www.venturabreeze.com/5.14.14.pdf>