

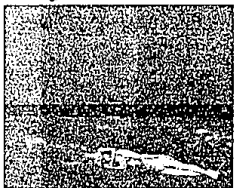
THE WEEKEND

FRIDAY



James Spader stars as Nick Vanzant, the pilot of a deep space medical vessel who must uncover a destructive force that threatens the ship, in "Supernova," a science fiction thriller opening today at metro Detroit movie theaters.

SATURDAY



The Stuttgart Ballet makes its Detroit debut 8 p.m. at the Detroit Opera House, 1526 Broadway, Detroit. Tickets are \$17-\$62. Call the box office (313) 237-SING or Ticketmaster (248) 645-6666.

SUNDAY



B.B. King performs classic blues with special guest the Bobby "Blue" Bland 8 p.m. at the Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Avenue in Detroit. Tickets \$27.50-\$50. Charge by phone at (248) 433-1515 or (248) 645-6666.



Hot Ticket Item: "The Plymouth International Ice Sculpture Spectacular" through Monday, Jan. 17, in downtown Plymouth, features ice carving competitions, an "Icy Toyland," and other surprises. Open 24 hours a day, for more information or directions, call (734) 459-9157 or visit the Web site at www.oeonline.com/plymouth.htm.



On stage: Jack Willis (left to right), Judd Hirsch and Cotter Smith star in the Tony Award winning play, "Art."

By JON KATZ
SPECIAL WRITER

"Art" is about an artist the way "Fiddler on the Roof" is about a musician.

That is to say, it isn't. The Tony Award-winning Best Play of 1998, which runs through Jan. 30 at the Fisher Theatre in Detroit, deals with friendship, power and values.

Specifically, the aesthetic and monetary worth of an abstract painting, a large white canvas with some white stripes and nothing else. Starring Judd Hirsch, Cotter Smith and Jack Willis, "Art" is billed as a comedy.

Speaking by phone from Charlotte, N.C., the tour's stop before opening on Tuesday in Detroit, Smith took issue with that label.

Enjoyable

"The wonderful thing about this play is that it's so enormously enjoyable," he said. "And yet, it's also very serious and deeply moving. It's quite extraordinary."

Smith appeared on the ABC TV series "Equal Justice" and as Robert Kennedy in the mini-series "Blood Feud." In "Art," Smith plays Serge, one of three middle-aged, middle-class Americans living in Paris. Recently divorced, Serge pays 200,000 francs (approximately \$40,000) for the abstract painting. His longtime friend Marc (Hirsch) takes one look and calls it something that won't get printed here but will get laugh at the Fisher.

A third friend, Yvan (Willis), is called in as mediator. In trying to appease the other two, he ignites

ART

WITTY, MODERN 'ART'

A PORTRAIT OF FRIENDSHIP

Art

WHEN: Through Sunday, Jan. 30 at the Fisher Theatre, 3011 W. Grand Blvd. at Second, Detroit.

CURTAINS: 8 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 2 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, and 7 p.m. Sunday. No performances on Mondays. **TICKETS:** \$25-\$47.50, available at the box office, and all Ticketmaster outlets. Call (248) 645-6666 to charge tickets, or (313) 872-1000 for information.

the quarrel that forces all three to re-examine their friendship.

"Art" was written by French author/actress Yasmina Reza and is directed by Matthew Warchus.

"To me the play is about the art of friendship," said Smith. "These friends, ostensibly over a piece of art, all of a sudden begin to uncover trouble in their relationship and how fearful they are of losing each other."

Author Reza drew on men she knew to craft the play, which enjoyed success in 25 countries before opening on Broadway two years ago. She has insisted that it remain set in Paris no matter where it runs, with some minor Americanisms substituted in the English translation for clarity.

Story meaning

One member of the audience who found the story very clear was nine-year-old Madeline Smith, Cotter's daughter.

"I was curious what it would mean to her," said Cotter Smith. "She said, 'At first I thought you guys were ridiculous. I couldn't figure out what you were so upset about, why you were fighting over this painting.' And then she took a pause and said, 'But then I realized that you weren't fighting about the painting, that you were really very upset with each other about something else.' And I thought, that's

how powerful the play really is, that she actually got that at the age of nine."

Smith cautions against bringing children to "Art" because of adult language, but says "it's a great play to take teenagers to because I think it will excite them about the theater." The play runs 90 minutes, with no intermission.

The three stars had not worked together before "Art." Hirsch is best known for his starring roles on "Taxi" and "Dear John," but has twice won Tony Awards ("I'm Not Rappaport" and "Conversations With My Father," both by Herb Gardner). Hirsch starred in "Art" in London and then on Broadway, where Jack Willis (currently appearing on screen in "The Tailor of Mr. Ripley") joined the cast.

To prepare for the national tour, Hirsch invited his co-stars to his home in upstate New York. As Smith tells it, "he hired a cook and we hung out together; it was really wonderful. We all get along so well; it would be a mess on a nine-month tour if we didn't."

A founding member of the Matrix Theatre Company in Los Angeles, Smith derives more satisfaction from his stage work than from lucrative film and television offers.

"We don't have to wait 10 hours until they get the lights right and do every line 50 times," he said. "To me, theater is very primitive as it goes all the way back to sitting around a campfire. You really do sit in a dark room and tell a story to a breathing audience. There's nothing quite like that."

FAMILY FUN

Get in on the act, spend an evening enjoying theater

By KEELY WYGONIK
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This is a good weekend to introduce your children to the magic of theater. The Rising Stars, a repertory theater for young people in grades six through nine, ages 10-14, is presenting "Pride and Prejudice," 7:30 p.m. Thursday-Friday, Jan. 13-14, at Andover High School on Andover Road in Bloomfield Hills. Tickets are \$3 per person. Call (248) 453-9886.

Several local performers, including Lisa Andres of Livonia, are featured in Dearborn Family Theatre's production of "Bye, Bye Birdie," Friday-Sunday, Jan. 14-16, in the Adray Auditorium in the MacKenzie Fine Arts Center on the main campus of Henry Ford Community College, Eversgreen south of Ford Road in Dearborn. Performances are 8 p.m. Friday-Sunday, with an additional show at 2 p.m. on Jan. 16. Tickets are \$10, senior citizens \$9. Call (313) 943-3096.

"Cinderella" opens Friday, Jan. 14, and continues through Sunday, Feb. 6,

at the Baldwin Theatre, 415 S. Lafayette, downtown Royal Oak. Tickets are \$14-\$16, all seats reserved. Performances 8 p.m. Thursday-Saturday, 2 p.m. Sunday. Call (248) 641-6430.



Presented by Slogocrafters "Cinderella," with music by Richard Rodgers/book and lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II, features a cast of 27 people from all over metro Detroit.

Karl Miller of Troy stars as the prince who sweeps Cinderella off her feet.

The Rising Stars
"Pride and Prejudice" is based on Jane Austen's classic novel. The play centers on Mrs. Bennet's determination to see her daughters married well. It is an age when a woman's future depended on who she married. Headstrong Elizabeth, the second oldest of the Bennet clan, resolves to marry for love, or not at all. Her refusal to do what is expected of her brings Mrs. Bennet to the "end of her nerves" in this romantic comedy set in the early 1800s.

The play features 22 actors from Bloomfield Hills, Pontiac, Sylvan Lake, Waterford, Clarkston and other cities in Oakland County. Rising Stars is sponsored by the Bloomfield Hills Parks and Recreation Department. In addition to putting on five shows per season, the group studies improvisation, monologue delivery and other aspects of theater.

"Pride and Prejudice" is directed by Thomas Logan of Pontiac and Danielle Pascone of Rochester Hills.

In March the group will present "The Little Luchonnette of Terror," May brings "The Hobbit" and "The Skin of Our Teeth" is the scheduled summer production. For more information about The Rising Stars, call (248) 335-1788.

Dearborn Family Theatre
Celebrating its third year, under the direction of founder and artistic director Mary Bremer, Dearborn Family Theatre is presenting "Bye, Bye Birdie," Jan. 14-16.



Acting: Shaina Yorke (left to right), Erin Biebuyck, Kaitlin Hoke, and Erica Lardo in a scene from the Rising Stars presentation of "Pride and Prejudice."