

33rd Street Productions debuts with David Ives' 'Venus in Fur'

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The name "Venus in Furs" has many well-known and acclaimed modern connotations to it. The first is a song off of The Velvet Underground's 1967 album, "The Velvet Underground and Nico." The second is a 19th century dramatic novella by Leopold com Sacher-Masoch about which that song is based. The third is a play written by David Ives based off of this same novel entitled "Venus in Fur," and it is this play, or more correctly play-within-a-play, that the fantastic team at 33rd Street Productions chose to perform on Tuesday, August 18 to ceremonially open the floodgates to a semester of great performances.

It's difficult to describe this play to someone that doesn't have much of an idea of what the book is about. In black and white terms, the book relates a lot to a notion of certain taboo subjects like lust, masochism, and domination, and how it relates to one's relationships with others and their relationship with oneself. The play does touch on many of the powerful elements of the book, but not

without making light of the absurdity of the subject matter in a modern context.

This play is both about sex and not about sex at the same time. The trouble in definition comes with trying to define anything intimately pleasurable without touching on a sexual element. The play's dramatic peaks are sensual and spiritual and powerful, while much of the rest of the play is enjoyably comedic and casual. It is a humorous play to be sure, the humor residing almost entirely in the "real" portion of the play, whereas the play-within-a-play, which is a more literal adaptation of original novella, offers the two characters in the play some context for commentary and discussion on modern society and their personal lives as they explore them and gain a relationship with each other with a complexity that rivals the characters in the book.

The crux of what made this performance so brilliant were astounding actors that pulled the parts off considerably well and landed the many dramatic and comedic scenes with expert timing and skill. Those actors were Sydney Vogo, who played the role of Thomas Novachek, the ambitious, recently-engaged

playwright looking to end a fruitless day of auditioning incapable female actors for his new self-directed play "Venus in Fur," and Margaret Lee, who played the role of the loud, and overtly comfortable Vanda Jordan who, after arriving late, unscheduled, and soaked from a raging thunderstorm to said audition, forces herself upon the playwright/director to land a last minute audition for that lead.

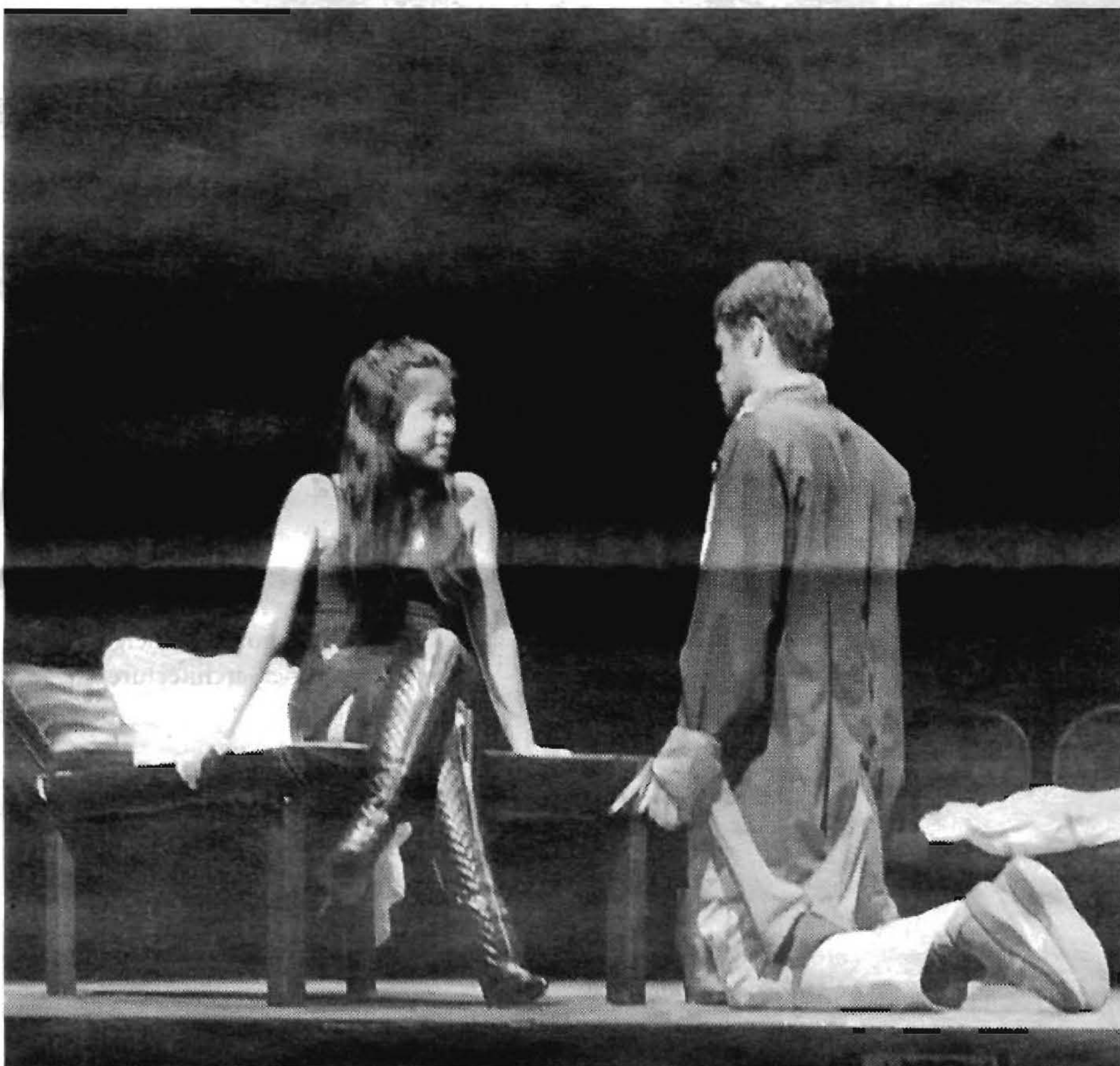
Seamlessly do both actors phase in and out of the play-within-a-play to the "real life" plot during the audition sequence with the enhancement of well-done changes in their poise, accent, and demeanor, so that it was never too confusing from the audience's perspective whether each actor was playing their character, or reading lines from the fictional play.

This writer can comment on the amount of work both performers put in to preparing for this for this play and is can confirm the amazing triumph of mastering this play having had less than a month to do so. With a sincere passion did Vogo voice his aggravations with his explosions, "you idiot actress; you idiot woman!" and "how can you be so

good at playing her and be so f---ing stupid about her," and with an expert command of the audience did Lee voice her landmark dramatic and powerful praises at the end, "Hail Aphrodite," and with an abject, brilliant conclusiveness did she gasp her final line before the lights went out on the stage and the performance ended.

I can go on about the revealing costume choices made for this performance, and the explicit and fantastic dialogue that peppers the play, but for the sake of brevity, I recommend anyone interested look into the play themselves.

I will finish with the hope that this is only the first of many wildly entertaining performances this year, and recommend those that think they can match the Margaret and Sydney in skill come to auditions, which are being held the week this paper is released (from Monday, August 31 to Thursday, September 3) from 5 p.m.-7 p.m. in the Hermann Hall Auditorium.



Photos by Alexis Renk

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A&E

WIIT Review: Second City's 'Panic on Cloud 9'

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Famed Chicago comedy center Second City strikes again with another masterpiece, "Panic on Cloud 9," a comedic sketch revue currently entering the second third of its production phase.

As with any revue, its sheer dynamic rogue plotline throws you into an unbending theatrical whirlwind of satire, covering a vast range of socio-political and topical issues: ranging from the disciplines and upsets of raising a child, to the nuances of arguing with a tone-deaf high school bully, or riding a bus with a group of estranged drifters, and even poking fun at everything, from the American Islamophobia to Batman and Robin, and the crime waves in Chicago.

Never stopping to slow down, "Panic on Cloud 9" is unrelentingly blunt and downright hysterical. Taking jabs at corporate welfare, the secret service, and covering Ebola, gender identity, and modern religious ideals. It is sure to bring even the most studious to tears.

The ability for the cast to engage an audience member in a barber shop scene was one of the most entertaining scenes for not only the

to depict any scene with such colorful and hilarious emotion is something that we don't see in every production that we review.

of occasion, from a date to a large social group. Second City is perfect for any occasion.

WIIT gives Ryan Bernier's "Panic on Cloud 9" two thumbs up with a flying color rating for its originality, satire, and improv, for both stand-up and musical talent. Between the dirty comical humor and social, economic and political satire, it's sure to make anyone cry in tears of laughter and amusement. It's the perfect place to go for any occasion, from a night out with friends and family, to taking that someone special in your life out on a date. If you have some cash to spare, "Panic on Cloud 9" is where it should be spent!

The show currently runs Tuesday through Thursday at 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m. and 11 p.m. and Sundays at 7 p.m. Tickets start at \$23.00, and you can order online at (<http://www.secondcity.com/tickets/>) or call Second City at (312)-337-3992.

Keep in mind if you're looking for tickets, buy early, and arrive even earlier, because most shows are sold out.



audience as a whole, but the cast themselves.

Daniel Strauss shines in "Panic on Cloud 9" as one of the most colorful and emotional comedians in the sketch. His ability

The service and amenities on Second City are second to none, as one would expect. It has a nice menu selection to choose from and different seating options that can fit any type

Image courtesy of The Second City