

## Venus in Fur

Review by Jane Zussman

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**VENUS IN FUR...** wow. This intriguing evolution of power/sex roles/stage roles seemed to us more immediate and involving than the movie; the live stage is the perfect medium for this message. The audience circles the actors on stage-level as “voyeurs” of a sort. This 90-minute mind game is aptly done without intermission as the tension builds and there is “no way out” for any of us.



The set is deceptively simple; it’s all about the acting, the in-and-out of real life and role-playing in the script that “Thomas” (Joseph Mull) has written. This play-within-the-play is an adaptation of the 1870 novel *Venus in Furs* by the Austrian author Leopold von Sacher-Masoch which is the novel that inspired the term masochism. How much of this play IS the author? How does sex destabilize the balance of power?

Multi-layered auditioner “Vonda” (Mary Dilworth) is amazingly able to bounce in and out of characters... in a whirlwind of energy and fluctuating intensity. Who is she REALLY? It was a wonderful ordeal to watch this dynamic play out. Both actors are excellent, well directed by MSU’s Rob Roznowski in this spooky dark funny intense script by David Ives. Lightning and thunder suggests the Gods of Olympus may be preparing vindictive thunderbolts. And the stage/work lighting fluctuations (James B. Brunk III) pull us into different states of reality/unreality.

Don’t miss this entertaining power struggle of sexual dynamics, continuing through May 17, 8 pm Thur/Fri/Sat & 2pm Sun.

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