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## THE NEO-SACRED REVIVAL: THREE SHORT PLAYS FOR THE MODERN SOUL

BY **BILL RADEN**  
 Published on February 12, 2009 at 2:23am

Three smartly staged one-acts from the current generation of Padua Playwrights illustrate both the risks and the rewards of the long-running writing workshop's dedication to what they call a "poet's theater." The evening's highlight is Sharon Yablons' "Acts of Love," a scathingly funny look at physical desire, emotional intimacy and the sadomasochistic trap awaiting those couples who don't understand the difference. Richard Azurdia and a nicely nuanced Mickey Swenson are the witless cads unable to muster desire for the women they love and respect; Lake Sharp, Sandra McCurdy and Kim Debus are the significant others grappling with their partners' mystifying erotic indifference. Gray Palmer directs. Less successful are Guy Zimmerman's "Hammers" and Heidi Darchuk's "Tiny Trumpets." Zimmerman (who also directs) uses a callow screenwriter's (Gill Gayle) relationship to his brain-damaged brother (Adrian Alex Cruz) to implicate storytelling, history and the past in the fate of the tortured siblings. Darchuk's tale follows estranged parents (Lisa Denke and Palmer) reuniting for the funeral of their daughter (Caroline Duncan). Though director Gill Gayle ably realizes Darchuk's dark humor and off-kilter lyricism, the compelling human drama never feels connected to the piece's more oblique passages. It's a flaw shared by Zimmerman — trying to score big intellectual points far too unwieldy and abstract for such intimate work. Art Share Los Angeles, 801 E. Fourth Place, L.A.; Fri.-Sun., 8 p.m.; thru Feb. 15. (213) 625-1766. A Padua Playwrights production. Fridays-Sundays, 8 p.m. Starts: Jan. 23. Continues through Feb. 15, 2009

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