

My Thing of Love

by Madeleine Shaner

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Love becomes a close relative of hate in Alexandra Gersten's spirited tale of the quotidian boredom and love-hate irritation that often sully a long marriage. Elly (a consistently screwball and hysterically interesting Johanna McKay) is close to the end of her rope. She seems to have lost the desire to shower or dress or pay attention to her home or kids, but she's obsessed with the battle of wills that takes the place of that "thing of love" in her stale marriage to the terminally wimpy, defensive, and unresponsive Jack (an equally engaging Josh Randall). Although the couple fulminates on their search for the perfect relationship -- mutual respect and equal parts responsibility and passion -- there's too much dividing them. Unembroidered honesty comes at the expense of courtesy and appreciation of the other's good parts, followed by that killer of relationships, unfettered criticism of all the bad ones, something at which Elly is articulately agile.

When a nubile young "serpent," Kelly (aced by Heather Fox, superbly characterizing every wife's worst fear: a young, sexy dimwit in Eden), enters the mix, the conjugal fabric begins to fray. Sexy goings-on between Jack and his new Jill bring the illicit pair noisily tumbling down the hill. A school counselor badly in need of counseling (a bombastic and hilariously bombastic John Schumacher), responding to Elly and Jack's daughter Kate's distressing classroom behavior, gets his comeuppance when Elly takes him on in her dubious battle with her disappointing life.

Director Darin Anthony invigorates the production, highlighting the great passion and humor in Gersten's kitchen-sink dramedy. With Tom Buderwitz's good and practical set design, Dan Jenkins' lighting, David B. Marling's sound, Sherry Linnell's costumes, and a top-notch accomplished cast, this is a memorable addition to the romantic comedy canon.

Presented by the Syzygy Theatre Company at GTC Burbank,

1111-B W. Olive Ave., Burbank.

Fri.-Sat. 8 p.m., Sun. 2 p.m. (Also Thu. 8 p.m. Mar. 27.) Mar. 7-Apr. 5.

(800) 838-3006. www.syzygytheatre.org.