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Theater review: 'Sidhe' at Road Theatre

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Set in 1994 Chicago, “Sidhe,” now in its world premiere at the Road, is so loaded with Celtic coloration, Irish mysticism and fairy lore it could well have transpired on the Old Sod hundreds of years ago.

The title refers to the Sidhe, capricious, randomly motivated fairy folk who factor into the plot, very tangibly. It's all part of playwright Ann Noble's fraught and prevalent mysticism, a tone that underscores Noble's themes about the random and capricious nature of violence in modern

society. However, although Noble has intentions to match that name with a frequently fascinating premise, her play lacks a requisite splinter of ice at its wildly beating heart. Call it Yeats on steroids.

The action opens as suspected terrorist Conall (Patrick Rieger) and his purported wife, Jackie (Jeanne Syquia), go to ground in a fleabag flat. Their feisty new landlady, Louise (Noble), a bar-owner whose sister was recently murdered, takes a protective interest in the downtrodden Jackie. Vernon (Rob Nagle), Louise's lonely, boozy cop brother-in-law, also sparks to the strangely affectless Jackie. But is Jackie the abused waif she appears, or an instrument of ravening retribution?

Director Darin Anthony leads a fiercely committed cast that tamps down the play's overwrought emotionalism in close-to-the-bone performances. Yet the characters' unlikely round of romantic hookups seems as capriciously motivated as the Sidhe themselves, while certain mythic references require a Gaelic lexicon to interpret. Potentially fascinating, Noble's obscure drama ultimately wanders the fairy road into impenetrable shadows.

— F. Kathleen Foley

“**Sidhe**,” Road Theatre, Lankershim Arts Center, 5108 Lankershim Blvd., North Hollywood. 8 p.m. Fridays-Saturdays, 2 p.m. Sundays. Ends March 20. \$30. (866) 811-4111. www.roadtheatre.org. Running time: 2 hours, 5 minutes.



Photo: Ann Noble and Rob Nagle. Photo credit Matt Kaiser.