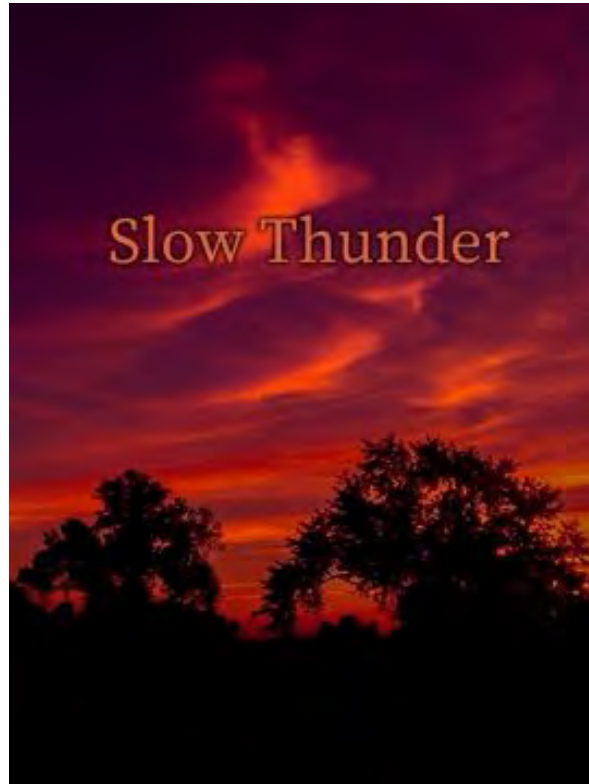


Theater Review: SLOW THUNDER (The Emerson at the Theatre 68 Arts Complex)

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Tony Frankel

October 29, 2023



SO, WHERE'S THE THUNDER?

What a strange and unsatisfying evening. As baffling as the title of the producing company, **bAfA TheatreWorks**, **Suse Sternkopf's *Slow Thunder*** is all slow and no thunder. Even with the presence of two of my favorite actors — **Ann Noble** and **Rob Nagle** — **Sternkopf** as director fails to create the undercurrent needed to bring her script to any kind of fruition. (Then again, even Lunt and Fontanne couldn't have brought this overwritten, under-baked story to life.)



Ann Noble and Robert Yacko

We are in the Prairie State of Illinois in the backyard of Jewel (Ms. Noble) when Peter (a sorely miscast **Robert Yacko**), an ex-boyfriend from New York, walks in, having inexplicably not contacted her before motoring on his Harley over a thousand miles to see her. One presumes he wants to get back together now that time has passed after he cheated on her. We assume (we presume and assume throughout) that she must've been devastated when he didn't return her calls. After all, she moved from NYC all the way back to her childhood home and fixed it up with her roommate Rob (Mr. Nagle).



Rob Nagle and Robert Yacko

But Noble's reaction is one of calm with no volatility brimming below the surface. Ah, I think, giving benefit to my already sizable doubt, this is the calm before the thunder in the title. Well, there is an explosion, but it comes late in the one-act, when Noble screams for a minute, and then it's back to calm. And what's going on with Rob (both character and actor)? When he first espies Peter in the backyard, he positively glares, then it goes away, then it comes back, then they're kinda friendly, with no explanation as to their multiple personalities. (Right after sneering like a dog, Rob suddenly acts like a little puppy when Peter lets him ride the Harley.)



Robert Yacko, Rob Nagle, Sue Gisser and Ann Noble

Then when a friend of Jewel's (**Sue Gisser** as Roberta) shows up, we assume her heavy attraction to Peter will stir things up. No such luck. All I could hear was the clicking of Ms. Sternkopf's typewriter as she is merely spouting her opinions through her characters. Her dialogue contains easy chats about feminism and the Corporate America morass we're in with no rhyme or reason. Roberta departs having provoked nothing but my ire, to no fault of the watchable Ms. Gisser. Most odd is that Peter is such a flavorless character, it's difficult parsing out why these women are so hot for him.



Ann Noble and Rob Nagle

Do you wanna believe we're never really sure what Jewel wants. Watching this at the **Theatre 68 Arts Complex**, I knew what I wanted. The keys to the Harley.



Sue Gisser and Robert Yacko

photos by **Suse Sternkopf & Allen Corben/ImageWorks**

Slow Thunder

Theatre 68 Arts Complex, The Emerson
5112 Lankershim Blvd. in North Hollywood
Thurs-Sat at 8; Sun at 2
ends on November 12, 2023
for tickets (\$32-\$39), visit [Ticket Tailor](#)
for more info, visit [Slow Thunder](#)