

BACKSTAGE THE ACTOR'S RESOURCE

The Baby Dance

At the McCadden Place Theatre

Reviewed by Jon Steely

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Sometimes opposites attract; sometimes they come together just because each has something to gain. This is the general thrust behind playwright Jane Anderson's intelligent dramedy about the woes surrounding adoption.

Affluent Los Angeles couple Rachel and Richard (Elena Beuca and Robert Ambrose) hire an attorney (Lauren McCormack) to orchestrate an adoption from which they will receive a yet-to-be-born baby from a white-trash Louisiana couple. Rachel and pregnant redneck Wanda (Nora Marie Ellis) awkwardly meet for the first time in the trailer that Wanda and her grubby husband, Al (Dave Rogers channeling Larry the Cable Guy), predictably call home.

Their obvious cultural differences are further showcased when Al comes home, expressing his resentment at having to give up his baby due to lack of funds and pointing out the hypocrisy of so-called liberal Rachel's specific request to adopt a white baby. As they await the birth, the couples try to agree on the adoption conditions, but friction arises as these proceedings highlight their socioeconomic differences and opposing views on money, religion, and lifestyle.

Director Michael Monks' stylish touch navigates Anderson's script nicely, playing up the humorous lines as a buffer for the playwright's penchant for depicting men, of either high- or low-class status, as pricks who view the wonderful world of parenthood primarily in terms of dollars and cents. Though the less-than-spectacular cast tends to let things fall flat, missing opportunities to play up dramatic and comedic moments, they eke out serviceable performances, sustaining the tension the circumstances create and providing a portrait of two couples doing business from opposite sides of the tracks.

Things take a sad turn when a possible problem with the baby arises and threatens to deconstruct the deal. And it is just this sort of twist of fate that makes audience members wonder if our own convictions are strong enough not to sway our behavior should life throw us a cruel and unexpected curve.

Presented by and at the McCadden Theatre, 1157 N. McCadden Place, L.A. Sept. 25–Oct. 24. Fri.–Sat., 8 p.m. (323) 309-9148. www.plays411.net/babydance.