



## **A *CurtainUp* Los Angeles Review**

### ***My Thing of Love***

#### **Cynthia Citron**

*Something very bad is going to happen to your penis. . .*

— Elly, to her cheating husband, Jack

She has discovered that her husband is having an affair. So how does she handle it? With humor? With rage? With despair? Yes, all of the above. Which makes playwright Alexandra Gersten's *My Thing of Love* funny, loud, and poignant.

Johanna McKay, as Elly, the distressed wife, carries the play nearly single-handedly. She is, by turns, hilarious, bitterly sarcastic, bewildered, distraught, and frozen. It's a masterful performance, and McKay earns our sympathy as well as our applause.

As her wayward husband, Jack, Josh Randall plays the quintessential schlemiel, and he does it so well that he almost earns our sympathy. He is a victim of the doldrums that sometimes beset a marriage after 12 years and two kids. The kind that make a person dread getting out of bed in the morning. His way of handling it, however, is anything but admirable. He lies, he cheats---he even dallies with his mistress in his own marriage bed while his wife is away.

It's clear he still loves his wife, as he keeps insisting. And it's very clear she still loves him, which makes her vulnerable to his pleas and promises. Until the "other woman" shows up. Her name is Kelly, and she is young, thin, and initially, polite and timid. But when the children's school counselor shows up, she becomes a cocky know-it-all, offering her unsolicited opinions at every juncture. And later, in bed with Jack, she becomes ditzy and inane. Heather Fox does a fine job as a self-deluded femme fatale who can't distinguish true love from a transparently convenient copulation.

There is also a silly subplot in which John Schumacher takes over the play. He is Garn, the new counselor at the girls' school, and he comes to the house to discuss the aberrant behavior of daughter Kate. Apparently she has been jumping up on the teacher's desk and shouting to the other students, "Wake

up, you bastards---the bomb is coming!" Not behavior that Garn can condone. He is an exaggerated version of an authority figure who has read every book on his subject and misinterpreted all of it. His method of calming a recalcitrant student is to sing songs that are more appropriate to a toddler's "Mommy and Me" class than to students in K through 6, and he proceeds to sing them to Elly and Kelly to demonstrate their efficacy. His totally digressive scene is a major highlight of *My Thing of Love*, and a feather in the cap of Director Darin Anthony.

Another highlight is Tom Buderwitz' well-designed set: the living room and kitchen of Elly and Jack's home, which is transformed into a warm, cozy bedroom in the second act. Buderwitz has designed sets for just about every playhouse in California, for television specials for every major broadcast and cable network, and has won three LA Stage Alliance Ovation Awards and three LA Drama Critics Circle Awards, including the 2005 career achievement award in scenic design.

Dan Jenkins has provided a rather strange lighting design. The well-lit stage goes dim periodically and inexplicably, since it doesn't appear to coincide consistently with the action of the play. Costume designer Sherry Linnell has provided a minimal but appropriate wardrobe, although Jack wears the same suit throughout.

*My Thing of Love* is a very funny, dark, slice-of-life production. Even though it ends on a downbeat note and the shouting gets to be a little heavy at times, it is a play that provides amusement and entertainment, if not a very profound message. It is worth seeing primarily because the Syzygy Theatre Group is an exceptionally fine company of some 40 actors, directors, designers, and writers, and their productions are generally very well done, as this one is.

*My Thing of Love*  
By Alexandra Gersten  
Directed by Darin Anthony

Cast: Heather Fox (Kelly), Johanna McKay (Elly), Josh Randall (Jack), John Schumacher (Garn), Kansas Klocki (Chris), Andra Nechita (Kate)  
Set Design: Tom Buderwitz  
Costume Design: Sherry Linnell  
Lighting Design: Dan Jenkins  
Sound Design: David B. Marling

Running Time: 2 1/2 hours (includes one 15-minute intermission)  
The Syzygy Theatre Group, Syzygy Theatre Group at GTC Burbank  
1111-B West Olive Ave., Burbank, (800) 838-3006, [www.syzygytheatre.org](http://www.syzygytheatre.org)  
Performs weekends from 03/07/08 to 04/05/08; opening 03/07/08  
Tickets: \$20  
Reviewed by Cynthia Citron based on 03/07/08 performance