

The Bad: Unfortunately, the greatest distraction is the transitions and technical difficulties throughout the performance. When the actors did find a rhythm in the second act, miscues in lighting and sound completely derailed it. Technical problems are expected for opening weekend, but this felt like the production didn't have a tech rehearsal and it hurt the show as a whole.

I never got lost in the illusion of the story. I blame heavy handed writing. Whereas my usual critique is that I didn't get it or understand what the writer was trying to convey in a piece, here the voice of the author is all over it. At some points it feels like exposition rather than language organic to the colorful characters that have been placed in this situation. I would have been nice to not know exactly where the plot was going every moment. I believe the piece would be a lot stronger if it explored the subtleties more.

The Verdict: At first glance, the thrust of *Mustang Sally* is the question of a double standard between men and women when it comes to labeling an adult a predator, or the perceived extend of damage that sexual abuse can cause on a girl versus the damage it causes on a boy. However, for me, there is an even more poignant issue of the impossibility of choosing the people we are biologically linked to.

Elizabeth does not understand Kathy. Their mother, Marilyn, has trouble dealing with Kathy because her daughter reminds her of her ex-husband. And it is this dysfunction that Elizabeth sees in her own family that makes her incapable of having a relationship, especially when she has a perfectly good (and interested) candidate in Edward. But the point for me is that Elizabeth never stops trying to bridge the gap in communication, particularly in her sister's time of need. That's family.

I was at odds with the lack of chemistry between the players, until I realized that was the point. These characters are trying to relate to each other, despite their vast differences in points of view, in personality. Some characters are successful in communicating, others are not, and still others continue to try. And again, when it matters most, you feel the love and the pain of these characters. That is an absolute success.



The mother-daughter talk goes no way

Mustang Sally presents interesting ironies about the incompatible people that one is expected to love and the inappropriate persons that one is sometimes not allowed to love.

Mustang Sally runs Fridays through Sundays, now until November 18th.

Whitefire Theatre

13500 Ventura Blvd.

Sherman Oaks, CA 91423

For ticket information call: 866-811-4111

www.mustangsallytheplay.com

Mustang Sally Theater Review - New Drama Tackles Controversial Topic

By Keisha7\

In **Linda Felton Steinbaum's** new drama, *Mustang Sally*, Music teacher Kathy (Sally Conway) is asked to resign from her position in a middle school for having inappropriate relations with her 13-year-old student Sal. Kathy's older sister, successful dance instructor Elizabeth (Andrea Conte), is floored. She knows that she must go over to her sister's and fix something yet again, which is why she invited new client, lawyer Edward (Michael Blain-Rozgay) to join them. However, she had no idea it was this serious. Marilyn (Tish Smiley), sister's magazine buying mother who is determined to outrun old age, joins the meeting but offers little more than an ineffective flirtation, an anxiety attack and a good slap across the face. None of what Marilyn has to offer helps the situation. Finally art teacher Tony (Sean Vincent Biggins) is Kathy's friend and confidante. He is the only link the family has to what is going on and what people are saying at the school.



(l to r) Sean Vincent Biggins, Andrea Conte, Tish Smiley, the Michael Blain-Rozgay and Sally Conway

Through Tony and Elizabeth, we learn that Kathy has always had trouble relating to adults. She prefers her imagination to reality most of the time. Moreover, when Kathy continues to insist that she and Sal are in love, she really believes it. And she really believes that their ages shouldn't and don't make any difference. Ed explains that Kathy's declarations of love mean nothing in the eyes of the law; sexual abuse is the same when involving a minor. The first act ends with the authorities coming to collect Kathy and the family wondering how they will save Kathy from herself, since she believes she has done nothing wrong.



Sisterly Love

The Good: I loved the way Kathy bible bashes her Commandment-quoting mother. It felt rare and spontaneous and heartfelt. It was the quintessential cry for a mother's love that ultimately went unreciprocated. Conway's performance truly embodied the torment and persistent earnest of a little girl who navigates the emotional and social pitfalls of adulthood poorly. Well done.

I enjoyed Biggins' restraint with the character of Tony. He appears to be just a stock character, the helpful, perhaps secretly doting friend. But he always conveys the sense that there is more going on with him, even when others have written him off for his seemingly limited usefulness.

I loved that just in the nick of time, we see the love between these two sisters.