

PICK OF THE WEEK: THE SNAKE CAN



Ed Krieger

L to R: Diane Cary, Sharon Sharth and Jane Kaczmarek

Jane Kaczmarek stars in a new comedy about friendship among women. Writer Kathryn Graf (author of late 2011's hit play *Hermetically Sealed*) perfectly captures the easy and sparkling conversation -- the kind that always resumes midsentence -- among three longtime female friends. Nina (Diane Cary), Harriet (Jane Kaczmarek) and Meg (Sharon Sharth), now middle-aged, all are successful in their careers but unlucky in love for different reasons. The trio frequently gets together to drink wine and share war stories and encouragement as widowed Harriet nervously dips her toe into the online dating pool. Nina's enjoying a new direction with her fine art but can't quite let go of her estranged famous-actor husband, Paul (Gregory Harrison), whose wandering eye begins to size up Meg. What's superb about Graf's insightful play is its refreshing unpredictability, its allegiance to its focus (the women and their enduring friendships) and the raw scenes, of which there are several, in which all six characters express themselves with searing honesty. Plus, there are numerous memorable lines that transcend mere quippery; Meg confesses she feels "ruined by loneliness" while Harriet's new boyfriend, the bisexual Stephen (James Lancaster), confesses to his old flame Brad (Joel Polis) that sometimes being with a woman is "like eating on a full stomach." Steven Robman's sensitive direction (and sensible, unfussy staging) permits the performances to chime with veracity. Odyssey Theatre, 2055 Sepulveda Blvd., W.L.A.; Thurs.-Sat., 8 p.m.; Sun., 2 p.m.; through Feb. 24. (310) 477-2055, odysseytheatre.com. (Pauline Adamek)