



The Bellflower Sessions, reviewed by Pat Taylor



From I, Stephanie Erb and Rob Nagle
in “The Bellflower Sessions.”

Celebrating The Whitefire Theatre’s 30th anniversary (the last eight years owned and run by Bryan Rasmussen) who *excellently directs* this world premiere play ... believe me, it packs an emotional wallop! A gritty, hard hitting look at the dark places people’s psyches will go ... when put in compromising life situations, this is a psychologically intriguing and most involving story. *Compellingly* written by Andy Bloch, repeatedly alternating darkly human dysfunction and anger, with side splitting flashes of humor, every character reveals multi-layers. An intriguing telling about a man who is out of work, out of life inspiration, and on the way out of his marriage ... and his relationship with his female mentally whacked psychiatrist ... this is a very good play! Incarcerated for murder, the play opens on Jack, who takes us back to the life events that led him there (*a powerfully focused* Rob Nagle). Jobless, uninspired, and facing divorce from his wife (Marshelle Fair) his tacky but old buddy Grant advises him, in the neighborhood bar (Michael Monks). Jack’s wife’s friend Derek offers him a business opportunity, but can’t convince him to take it (Kevin Benton). Eventually, desperate and “ticking like a bomb,” at Grant’s insistence, he begins sessions with Dr. Wendy Bellflower. Not what he expected to be sure ... she is a gorgeous, volatile, sexual, and offbeat bundle of dynamite (an award worthy performance here, by Stephanie Erb) and a fine cast all round! As we study all of these characters, savoring the edgy journey, the ultimate question is ... Which of them did the troubled Jack murder? A most unusual script, it held our interest from start to finish! Technical *kudos* are in order here too ... as the mood was created perfectly. Attractive set design by John Burton, costumes by Paige Russell, lighting by Derrick McDaniel, sound by Ryan Vig, and fight choreography by Brian Danner. A *meticulously produced* production, taking us on a cerebral trip ... do take the time to see this one! Running weekends through Oct. 13 at The Whitefire Theatre. For seats call (818) 990-2324 or go to brownpapertickets.com