

'Babe' and 'To the Bone' premiere in Atwater



Sal Viscuso, Julie Dretzin, Wylie Anderson in Echo Theater's premiere of "Babe" in Atwater. Photo: Cooper Bates.

Perhaps you've noticed that I haven't been nearly as positive about the productions in this post as I was in my last [post](#) on September 23. There was even more bad news from a few productions that opened since then but have already closed. I'll avoid beating those dead horses.

However, I can recommend two world premieres that are still running, side by side, in the Atwater Village Theatre complex. They're written by established women scribes, who focus primarily on women characters but who also make room for one vivid male character in each play.

The better of the two is Jessica Goldberg's "[Babe](#)," produced by Echo Theater. At first it appears to be a confrontation between a veteran male music-industry bigwig and the young Generation Z woman who's applying for a job at his firm. But as the play develops, we gradually realize that the central character is the less talkative woman (Julie Dretzin) who's literally in the center. She's in her 50s and has been with the firm for years, apparently contributing more than her share of great ideas, but who is occasionally dismissed with the diminutive "Babe."

Directed by Chris Fields, "Babe" shoots to the top of the charts in both comedy and current commentary on sexual politics. My one slight objection occurs only at the last moment, so I won't be any more specific about it.

Adjacent to the "Babe" Echo chamber is Open Fist Theatre's space, where the company is producing Catherine Butterfield's "[To the Bone](#)." It's set in 2013 in south Boston, in the home of two sisters in their late 30s, plus the younger sister's teenaged son. The plot pivots around the first reunion of that younger sister with her biological daughter — now a young woman — whom she gave up for adoption more than two decades earlier.

Tisha Terrasini Banker — who plays that younger sister, the birth mother of the newcomer — and the rest of the cast supply brash, vibrant performances that hold our attention through some of the script's weaker links. Credit Butterfield, who directed, but a second production should probably have an independent director who could serve as a sounding board for script issues.

By the way, both of these plays include a character who has cancer. But this development fits more easily into "Babe" than into "Bone."