

Mommy issues take center stage

BY PHILIP BRANDES

‘Mama Metal’ in Atwater Village

The essentials: In this meta-theatrical deconstruction of a mother-daughter relationship like no other, Sigrid Gilmer’s raucous, semi-autobiographical new surreal comedy leapfrogs through efforts by her stand-in narrator (Courtney Sauls) to separate herself — and even her memories — from her domineering mom (Lee Sherman). In a dreamlike, hilariously self-reflective odyssey,

Gilmer scrambles the three formative pillars of her identity: her mom, heavy metal music (personified by her imaginary band Demonic Afterbirth), and the American theater (with guest appearances by the great “mama drama” playwrights Eugene O’Neill and Tennessee Williams).

Why this? Gilmer declares at the play’s outset that she refuses to offer easy catharsis or glib takeaways. She is part of a generation of African American playwrights exploring bold new stage possibilities, demonstrating command of theatrical rules and conventions even as they gleefully break them.

Details: An IAMA Theatre Company production at Atwater Village Theatre, 3269 Casitas Ave., Los Angeles. In previews now, opens May 23. Performances 8 p.m. Fridays-Saturdays, 7 p.m. Sundays, through June 23. \$40. 323-380-8843, iamatheatre.com