

BWW Review: PLEASE DON'T ASK ABOUT BECKET Looks Deeply into Family Relationships and Personal Identity

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by Shari Barrett



The heart of the story in **Wendy Graf's** world premiere play **PLEASE DON'T ASK ABOUT BECKET** centers on a young woman's journey to self-awareness as she learns to separate herself from her identity as the twin of a young man who should have been able to achieve greatness due to his social standing and upbringing as the "star" of his close-knit Jewish family. Seen through the lens of upper middle-class privilege where a favored son is seen as perfect in every way, we are taken on the journey through his life and how his presence affects each of his family members, both uniting and dividing them as they struggle to reconcile their relationships.

Graf brilliantly grapples with universal questions many of us ask ourselves everyday: To what extent are parents

responsible for their children's bad behavior? Can parents love a child too much? Where do we draw the line between standing up for our kids and forcing them to overcome obstacles on their own? Director Kiff Scholl takes the black box theater-in-the-round production to artistic heights, always making sure his actors play to as many audience members as possible through direct eye contact. No doubt you will be drawn into the characters' lives just as I was, and hopefully will walk out with just a little more confidence on how to make your own way in life.



As the Diamond family's favored son Becket's world falls apart due to his lack of personal responsibility as he slips into drugs and alcohol, his twin sister Emily learns to not buy into her long-held idea that she is not as good as he is. **Rachel Seiferth** allows us to see her transformation from a follower to a leader and the emotional costs involved. Questions of guilt at expressing her true feelings for her faltering brother will no doubt

haunt her for all of her days, especially since their bond as twins has always united them as a team. Her internal struggle to live her own life is at the core of the story and Seiferth's ability to

move through time and the widest range of emotions from scene to scene will astound you.

Hunter Garner portrays Becket as the most likeable of kids raised thinking he deserves everything life has to offer. He truly loves his family but with no limits or responsibilities, Becket certainly believes nothing bad will ever happen to him since his well-heeled parents will always be there to catch him when he falls. Certainly it's easy to understand parents wanting the best for their children. But what happens when you raise kids who think the world owes them something since their parents have always given them whatever they want and protected them from having to take responsibility for their actions?

The parents Rob and Grace are perfectly portrayed by **Rob Nagle** and **Deborah Puette**, thrilled when their son is born and centering their support on him rather than his twin sister. After all, that's the experience of most families, desiring a son to carry on the family name and traditions. Their emotional descent as Becket's world falls apart will tear at your heartstrings. Rob's success in the entertainment industry has made him a real mover and shaker, but is his money really the only thing that matters when raising children? Surely the parents meant well and as such, it's often tough to understand how all their love and support could not save their son from himself.

It's a sad and biting story well told with empathy for the entire family, allowing us to experience how their good intentions and support lead to the most unexpected results. Graf's heightened sense of tension from the get-go will compel you to care about these people even as they make the wrong decisions for the right reasons.

Kudos also go to the creative team of set designer **Evan Bartoletti**; **Sound Designer Cricket S. Myers**; and costume designer Wendell C. Carmichael for their attention to detail which transforms the small black box into a most creatively functional space to examine a family's lifetimes of experiences in this most fluid staging thanks to **Wendy Graf's** storytelling brilliance and Kiff Scholl's insightful direction.

The world premiere of PLEASE DON'T ASK ABOUT BECKET continues through September 24 at **SacRed Fools Theater Black Box** located at 6322 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90038 (one block West of Vine at the corner of Lillian Way). *Remaining performances on*

- **Thursday at 8 p.m.:** Sept, 15 ONLY
- **Fridays at 8 p.m.:** Sept. 9, 16, 23
- **Saturday at 4 p.m.:** Sept. 24 ONLY
- **Saturdays at 8 p.m.:** Sept. 10, 17, 24
- **Sunday at 3 p.m.:** Sept. 11 ONLY

General admission tickets are \$25 and may be ordered by calling (323) 960-7745 or online at www.plays411.com/becket.

Photos by **Ed Krieger**