

Please Don't Ask About Beckett 'Plainly' Resonates

Posted on [September 2, 2016](#)

by Tracey Paleo, Gia On The Move



Wendy Graf has a peculiar talent. She writes 'plain'.

To suggest plain writing is a talent might sound peculiar, to say the least. Where lots of other playwrights work diligently for depth, style, nuance, grandeur, humor, shock or creative word play, Graf's work hovers somewhere just above surface on many accounts. Which is not to say, that Graf doesn't strive for those qualities in her writing. But to listen to her script line by line, one might say, 'not so out of the ordinary' or 'normal' or just 'plain'.

In Graf's 'plain' however, lies a simplicity that seems to resonate an unmistakable empathy. One only has to look around the room, during a performance at the rest of the audience to witness the phenomenon. People *connecting* with elementary experiences. Hence why a normal review will only tell half a story.

Ordinary people often do or say or bear extraordinary things. Graf's plays capitalize on that, leaving the door open for creativity by others in the physical crafting or interpretation, as it often happens with her plays. In this case with direction, staging, costume and mostly the actors who catapult this very quotidian story to a higher calling.

Graf's latest 'memory play', ***Please Don't Ask About Beckett***, currently being presented by Electric Footlights and making its world premiere at Sacred Fools Black Box Theater is pretty patent. The characters are incredibly recognizable, within an environment more than plausible, inside a story so "now" that it's almost not worth telling. Except it is.

'Can parents love a child too much?' is the question that gets asked over and over.

In ***Please Don't Ask About Beckett*** narrated by Emily (Rachel Seiferth), the twin sister of Beckett (Hunter Garner) the audience encounters a family facing probably the greatest obstacles in the repertoire of relationships. For all that parents Rob (Rob Nagle) and Grace (Deborah Puette) or sibling Emily can do to care for or encourage or protect or save their child/brother Beckett, who cannot get his life together, there is a breathtaking irreconcilable finality about a person and a circumstance that cannot change.

Actor Rob Nagle is exceptional. Nagle has developed a very subtle and highly nuanced character in Rob. Deborah Puette showcases one of her stronger performances as Grace. Hunter Garner embodies a free-spirited, charismatic Beckett, underlined by depression and self-criticism. Rachel Seiferth as Emily, is buoyantly expressive as a child growing into a young woman trying desperately to reconcile her love for her brother and wanting to emerge from his shadow.

There are emotionally challenging moments in this play but, they are unfortunately not always realized. Director Kiff Scholl has made a unique and well-decided choice to showcase this piece in the round. Ultimately, however, there are too many instances where actors are turned inward or so far out of peripheral view that one has to struggle to know where characters are. Consequently, Scholl's use of the space doesn't always achieve the kind of impact he is seeking.

Gorgeous 1970s costuming by Wendell C. Carmichael as is the set, sound and lighting design respectively by Evan A. Bartoletti, Cricket S. Myers and Kelley Finn.

Now Playing at Sacred Fools Black Box Theater

Presented by Electric Footlights

Written by Wendy Graf

Directed by Kiff Scholl