

# the world through Night-Tinted Glasses

Monday, September 19, 2016

## *Please Don't Ask About Beckett* (review)



*Spoilers ahoy!*

When I walked into the Black Box theatre at Sacred Fools on Santa Monica Blvd, I blinked. Not sure but this might be the first time I begin a review with praise for the set. *Evan A. Bartollett's* design drew me in instantly. The rock like shapes carefully dotting the floor and some furniture. The furniture itself clearly doing some kind of double duty, including what looked like (and later proved to be something akin to) a bridge. The abstract shape made from tiny white christmas tree lights winding along the ceiling. "A memory" I thought to myself. "I've walked into a memory."

Here's the most impressive part. I was right.

*Please Don't Ask About Beckett* by Wendy Graf and directed by Kiff Scholl, focuses on one American family--specifically the relationship between a set of twins and their parents. It spans decades, in one way or another touches on what seems like the whole scale of humans trying to figure out how to love one another.

The twins are Becket (*Hunter Garner*) and his sister Emily (*Rachel Seiferth*), children of Hollywood producer Rob (*Rob Nagle*) and his wife Grace (*Deborah Puette*). Emily serves as guide and narrator--not merely to events but on the emotional journey we share with this family as Becket

proves...difficult.

There's no easy way to describe it. Nor anything like an answer offered as to why or what can/should be done. Becket proves very charming, very supportive and likable, full of talent. All through childhood he is the favorite, but doesn't take advantage of this, no more than anyone would. Probably less. It would be far too easy to call him a sociopath. This play refuses to go there. The cast and director follow the playwright's lead.

So we see Rob and Grace puzzle over Becket's poor grades, his getting into trouble, his drinking (although he really doesn't show any signs of alcoholism). Emily, struggling with her genuine love of her brother and gentle jealousy of him, becomes aware of same. After awhile it is hard to miss, following Becket being expelled from school after school.

The parents try to figure out what's wrong. Every single doctor they can find examines him. Not one of their many theories pans out. Bob uses vast sums of money to help his son--well, who would not? It never seems to work. Beckett--charming, nice, beloved, stunningly immature on so many levels--gets into more and more trouble until a drunk driving incident cranks everything up to eleven.

All of which could be so grim, so tragic. But while sad, this never stops holding our hearts tight. The story simply refuses to demonize anyone, nor to sugarcoat them. No one is a saint, but they try their best to do the right thing--if only they (or we) could figure out what that is!

Everyone in the cast captures that terribly human conundrum--which after a while seems to embody all the unanswered, unsolved puzzles of all our lives.



How much they all long for answers! Even Becket. Maybe especially him, since it becomes clear he's the least qualified of them all to make any kind of plan or judgment or solve any important question.

Emily tries hardest, but in many ways has the least power. Her dad Rob is the only one who (sometimes) really confides in her. Her mom Grace focuses relentlessly on finding some way to look at events in a way she can handle. Don't judge--so do you. So do I. So does everyone else in this play, sooner or later. We all experiment with different solutions, as does Bob. We all act as support, feeling powerless and overwhelmed and maybe seeing things others do not. Like Emily. Just as we all sometimes screw up royally without any understanding of how or why we did that!



Like Beckett.

Finally there is not one answer but many. None complete, not one satisfying or enlightening. Just different decisions made, for better and for worse. By everyone. Perhaps what happens really does represent the best that could happen, under the circumstances. Which made me bleed a little bit watching all this unfold.

Not sure if I can offer more praise than that.

*Please Don't Ask About Becket* plays Fridays and Saturdays at 8pm with a 4pm matinee on Saturday September 24 (that evening's show is scheduled as the last as of this writing). The show is at the Sacred Fools Black Box at 6322 Santa Monica Blvd (at Lillian Way, one block west of Vine), Los Angeles CA 90038.

Posted by [Zahir Blue](#) at 10:11 AM