

ON STAGE & SCREEN

TV and theater talk from a New Yorker living in LA.

Theater Review: Electric Footlights' Please Don't Ask About Becket

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All families have their secrets—but some are darker than others. In *Please Don't Ask About Becket*, a world premiere play by Wendy Graf currently being presented by Electric Footlights at the Sacred Fools Theater in Hollywood, a twin—who now considers herself a former twin—looks back on her life and the tragic series of events that changed her family forever.



Photo Credit: Ed Krieger

The structure of *Please Don't Ask About Becket* is unconventional and, honestly, a bit off-putting at first. We open on Emily (Rachel Seiferth) delivering an aside to the audience about how she still dreams of her twin brother, Becket (Hunter Garner). The play continues in this fashion—there is little to no fourth wall, and Emily essentially serves as the narrator of the story, setting the scene for the different events leading up to the climactic occurrence that shakes her life to its very core. Personally, I find narration in theater to be comparable to voiceover in television—with very few exceptions, I see both as easy, unimaginative ways to convey information. With that being said, the narrative device in this play grew on me throughout its 90 minutes.

The story of Emily and Becket is a tale as old as time—Becket is the golden boy, the charismatic, hilarious son all parents dream of, and Emily is just...Emily. She is kind, and capable, and excels in everything she does, but it's never quite enough to escape her brother's shadow. At camp and at school, she is simply "Becket's sister," and at home, she isn't much more. The twins' parents do nothing to help the situation. Their father, Rob (Rob Nagle) is a big-time movie executive, and their mother, Grace (Deborah Puette) is so determined to have perfect children that she easily morphs into

the Queen of Denial whenever needed. The action begins in the 1970s, when Emily and Becket are children, and continues into their college years, and briefly beyond. As Emily goes away to college and struggles to find her own identity, Becket, who has always been troubled to an extent, spirals further into self-destruction until his family can no longer ignore the ramifications.

The thing that separates this play from any other family drama is the twin relationship. Emily regularly refers to Becket, when he is absent from her life, as her “phantom limb,” and wonders if he feels the same way about her. I have close lifelong friends who are twins, and their “twin bond,” which borders on a psychic connection, has always been fascinating—they will buy each other identical gifts for holidays and birthdays, or dress their children in nearly identical outfits without discussing it. It’s a relationship like no other that understandably runs deeper than that of your average pair of siblings, and it makes what ultimately happens between Becket and Emily even more heartbreaking.



Photo Credit: Ed Krieger

The performances throughout were very solid. Seiferth was an endearing narrator, guiding the audience through her emotional story with the relatable desire of just wanting to finally win her parents’ approval and find her own place in the world. As Becket, Garner was appropriately enigmatic, convincing you equally of why he is put on such a pedestal and why he takes such a hard fall from it. Nagle was a standout as their father, blinded by his own pride and need to keep up appearances to the point where he will stop at nothing to make things “right.” Puette is heartbreaking as their well-meaning but misguided mother who will always choose any other explanation over the truth when it doesn’t line up with her dreams for herself and her children.



Photo Credit: Ed Krieger

While I would have preferred a structure that allowed the action to unfold more organically between the characters rather than as a story told to the audience, *Please Don't Ask About Becket* was ultimately an effective family drama. Everything about it felt very real—while the family portrayed is a slightly extreme example, I know, as I’m sure most people do, a family or two that has gone above and beyond to maintain appearances, and the ever complex relationship between parent and child is practically universal. Graf’s characters all respond to situations in understandable, relatable ways, and while the plot may not be groundbreaking, it is certainly compelling.

Please Don't Ask About Becket runs at the Sacred Fools Theater Black Box (6322 Santa Monica Blvd) through September 18th. Performances are Fridays and Saturdays at 8pm and Sundays at 3pm, and tickets, which are \$25, can be purchased at www.plays411.com/becket (<http://www.plays411.com/becket>).