



STAGE RAW

This is LA. This is your stage.

REVIEWS



Hunter Garner and Rachel Seiferth in *Please Don't Ask About Becket* at Sacred Fools Black Box Theatre (photo by Ed Krieger)

Please Don't Ask About Becket

Reviewed by Terry Morgan

Electric Footlights at Sacred Fools Theater Black Box
Through September 18

What is to be done with the prodigals and the fuckups, those we love in spite of logic, those who will likely never change but instead haunt us for the rest of our lives? Everybody knows someone like this, and it's heartbreaking not knowing what to do. Wendy Graf's *Please Don't Ask About Becket* movingly depicts how a family deals with this situation over decades, showing how some tragedies never really end.

Emily (Rachel Seiferth) and Becket (Hunter Garner) are twins. As children, they're a happy pair: Charismatic Becket is loved by all, and Emily is his closest friend. But as they become teens, Becket starts to falter. He stops trying in school, gets into trouble, and fails at every job he's offered. His parents, Rob (Rob Nagle) and Grace (Deborah Puette), do everything they can think of to help him, to no avail. Meanwhile, Emily — who is succeeding in college and causing no problems — is ignored. When Becket finally gets into real trouble, however, all of their lives change.

Seiferth does nice work as the conflicted Emily, who's frustrated and angry with Becket and her parents, but also tortured because she still loves them. She expresses this dichotomy well, but is at her best when her anger finally blazes forth. Garner is appropriately likeable and exasperating as Becket. Nagle shines as their dad, a Hollywood exec, particularly in a scene where he bonds with Emily over his inability to help his son. Puette is affecting as the doting but increasingly desperate Grace — a mother whose troubled son is clearly the center of her world.

Director Kiff Scholl gets fine, emotional work from the ensemble, but the decision to stage the show in the round (and this may have been the playwright's idea) yields debatable results. On the one hand it brings the drama closer to the audience; on the other hand, the performers' backs are to you a lot of the time, which somewhat negates the benefit of this proximity.

Graf's writing is funny (her observations on Hollywood are especially choice) and her subject matter is very poignant. Some of the situations seem familiar and the play feels a bit long, but ultimately it works, unveiling a truth that every audience member may ponder on the way home.

Sacred Fools Theater Black Box, 6322 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles; Fri. -Sat. 8 p.m., Sun. 3 p.m.; through Sept. 18. www.plays411.com/becket. Running time: 1 hour and 30 minutes.