

Local Drama Plays Out on Stage

By ERIKA MARTIN
Reporter

It's a trope often seen in books and movies, but living in Pacific Palisades you are likely to come across at least a few trust-fund children who squander their good fortune.

Playwright Wendy Graf, a longtime Mandeville Canyon resident and Palisades High graduate, has seen it play out many times and wanted to address the question of why siblings respond differently to the same upbringing.

In her new play, "Please Don't Ask About Becket," the protagonist Emily takes the audience through a psychological journey of her coming of age as she wrestles with her complicated relationship with her twin, Becket.

Graf doesn't seek to provide answers but weaves a quilt of emotional complexity that engulfs the audience, both figuratively, with gripping dialogue, and literally, with intimate seating arranged on four sides of the action.

The play was inspired by a story someone who's a twin told Graf. He described going to

dinner with friends he's known for 15 years, who were shocked when he mentioned having a twin. It's too hard to get into so he doesn't bring it up, he said.

In the play, Emily and Becket are the only children of a high-powered film studio executive and doting, vitamin-obsessed mother. Emily, now in her 50s, is looking back on her upbringing in the '70s and '80s, and Graf allows past and present to intersect in a seamless and evocative way.

The drama stems from the fact that Emily feels "destiny comically flipped in Becket's favor when the sperm hit the egg."

Despite her constant success, it is always the effervescent yet troubled Becket that seems to draw their parents' attention.

"You've got everything going for you," Emily's father tells her in an unguarded moment. "He needs me more."

Watching her high school classmates and children's friends grow up, Graf noticed how some become "lost."

"I think the Westside—Palisades, Brentwood, Westwood, Beverly Hills—mix in the whole Hollywood thing ... there's a lot of white privilege and elitism," Graf noted.



Twins Emily and Becket in playwright Wendy Graf's new family drama "Please Don't Ask About Becket," now playing at Sacred Fools Theater in Hollywood.

Photo courtesy of Sacred Fools Theater Company

Graf uses this trend to explore the hard choices parents make that can have far-reaching consequences.

On the Westside, this is often complicated by parents' ability to provide of easy outs.

"There's been a trend that parents are faced with certain choices and in some cases make

qualified for," Graf said. "You love your kids and you don't want them to be hurt or disappointed, but one of your jobs as a parent is teaching your kids to deal with obstacles. Of course parents want to invest in their kids' success, but they're afraid to let them fail."

"What kind of man am I if

Originally Graf had written that the family lived on Amalfi Drive but removed the setting to highlight the larger themes of family, identity and home.

The characters are still a composite of people Graf knows, allowing her to craft candid, believable dialogue and characters.

"These were characters I



Wendy Graf lives in Mandeville Canyon and graduated from Palisades High.

Rich Schmitt/Staff Photographer

look stuff, in spite of what may be best for them."

See "Please Don't Ask About Becket" at Sacred Fools Theater—Black Box in Hollywood (6322 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90038) at 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays and 3 p.m. Sundays, until Sept. 18. Tickets are \$25 and can be purchased at