

Curtain Up Theater Review . . . by Camille Bounds: “Becky’s New Car” is a complicated comedy

Play about a woman facing middle age offers up escapist fun and relatable drama

<https://morganhilllife.com/2023/08/07/beckys-new-car-review/>



“Becky Foster” (Denee Lewis) with her husband “Joe” (Robert Sean Campbell) in Limelight Theatre’s production of “Becky’s New Car.”

Photo by Elizabeth Mandel

By Camille Bounds

Limelight Theatre’s production of Steven Dietz’s comedic drama “Becky’s New Car” takes audiences on a delightful escapist adventure, while grounding the humor in relatable characters facing universal struggles. It opened Aug. 4 and runs to Aug. 27.

Centered around “Becky Foster” (a charming Denee Lewis), a middle-aged working mom whose humdrum life gets upended, the play explores what happens when she abandons responsibilities for excitement. She comes to a point in her life where she has to make a decision, one that takes her to a cross in the road of her life and that can change the lives of friends and family around her .

A handsome widower named “Walter Flood” (Rob Christopher, balancing affable charm and introspective melancholy) wanders into Becky’s car dealership workplace to make lavish purchases. The millionaire plans to buy a large number of top-of-the-line models as gifts for his employees in his hugely successful company. Soon, he whisks Becky into a world of parties and luxury. But her attraction to Walter leaves her torn between her stifling daily grind and the exhilarating escape he offers.

Anchored by Lewis’ endearing performance, the cast shines in portraying the flawed yet likable characters orbiting Becky’s messy adventure. Her husband “Joe” (a warm Robert Sean Campbell) loves Becky devotedly despite her wandering eye. Their son Chris (Alex Topete) lives with his parents in the basement, while a grad student. Joe is supportive and gently attentive with an outlook on life that’s simple and easy to understand. He asks, “What do you do if you are not sure? The audience will feel warm and safe with his answers.

Meanwhile her grieving coworker “Steve” (Bruce Pember) offers another temptation, as both men represent different forms of comfort for Becky.

Throughout the show, Becky breaks through the fourth wall to give the audience her observations of life. In one of her asides, she tells us, “When a woman wants a new car, it means she wants a new life.” You may be asked to deliver a roll of toilet paper on your next visit to the bathroom — or offered a beer.

Playwright Dietz crafts an intimate, engaging experience through subtle theatrics that draw the audience into Becky’s dilemmas. Director Andrew Cummings smartly utilizes the Limelight’s thrust stage layout to make the show feel more personal and inclusive. The audience sits just feet from the actors, able to see every expression as Becky faces questions of morality and responsibility. Costume designer Lorraine and Kathie Bell and lighting by Clara Shem-Tov and sound by Kris and Marianne Snook bring in well done details to an excellent production.

While escapist at its core, “Becky’s New Car” stays grounded through Dietz’s honest portrayals of ordinary people dealing with universal problems. Though Becky seems to “have it all” by the end, it comes at a cost, keeping the show from feeling like a fantastical fairy tale. Funny, heartfelt and slyly self-aware, Limelight’s production captures the spirit of Dietz’s work in delivering an entertaining human drama

‘Becky’s New Car’ opens Aug. 4 at Limelight

Cast describes process behind relatable characters

<https://gilroydispatch.com/beckys-new-car-opens-limelight/>



Robert Sean Campbell (performing as Joe Foster) and Denee Lewis (Becky Foster) work through a scene from “Becky’s New Car,” which opens Aug. 4 at the Gilroy Center for the Arts. Photo: Elizabeth Mandel

By:

Erik Chalhoub July 27, 2023

Andrew Cummings predicts a spirited discussion will take place among audience members as they walk out of the theater following the curtain call for “Becky’s New Car.”

Did Becky Foster, the play’s titular character, choose the right path? Should she have focused on this relationship instead of that one?

“The characters are so real and so relatable that it’s impossible not to take sides,” said Cummings, who is directing the play. “There’s an enticing ambiguity that looks a lot like real life: there are right choices and wrong choices, but just enough gray that everyone who sees the play walks out with a different take.”

After seeing *Limelight* by South Valley Civic Theatre’s “Becky’s New Car,” which opens Aug. 4 and runs select days through Aug. 27 at the Gilroy Center for the Arts, Cummings said he hopes the audience walks away inspired to reflect on their own lives and determine if they are truly living or just going through the motions.



Dennee

Lewis (Becky Foster) and Rob Christopher (Walter Flood) are two of the main characters in *Limelight* by South Valley Civic Theatre’s “Becky’s New Car.” Photo: Elizabeth Mandel

Foster, described as being “caught in middle age, middle management and in a middling marriage,” meets a grief-stricken millionaire Walter Flood, who offers her a new life in this play written by Steven Dietz.

Cummings praised the “incredible” cast of seven, “who were all too ready to find the fire in each relationship.” He also gave kudos to assistant director Christy Wright, who he said “has a special talent for finding the key moments between two characters that need to blossom on stage.”

Such a factor is important in any play, but especially so in “Becky’s New Car.” Cummings said the main character’s primary struggle is based entirely on relationships, and which one should she dedicate the most time to: her husband or Flood?

Denee Lewis, who performs as Foster, said she aims to create a “realistic, imperfect character” that every audience member can find something to relate to.

“To do this, I find aspects of Becky’s life that I can connect to such as her day-to-day challenges of being a working mother and wife,” she said. “I also relate to Becky’s desire to find happiness in a life that is seemingly fulfilled, but unknowingly lacks an excitement she never dreamed possible.”

Rob Christopher, playing as Flood, said to convey an authentic performance, he puts himself in the shoes of his character to determine how he would react to each situation.

Both actors said the small, intimate nature of the play and Limelight stage allows a tighter camaraderie among the cast and crew, with Lewis noting that the cast has had many “in-depth discussions” about each of their characters.

“You become a small band of brothers and sisters leaning on, caring about, and helping each other create the best outcome that you can,” Christopher said.

While “Becky’s New Car” is a comedy, it also tackles difficult subjects with humor and compassion, Christopher said, which helps the audience get further engaged with the material.

And another benefit of the setting? The audience can chat with the cast at the end of the show.

“We hope everyone will join us before the show by ordering dinner or bringing their own, and by hanging out with us at the end of the evening for a friendly debate over drinks at the bar,” Cummings said.

“Becky’s New Car” runs Fridays through Sundays from Aug. 4-27 at the Gilroy Center for the Arts, 7341 Monterey St. Showtimes are Fridays and Saturdays at 8pm, and Sundays at 2pm. For information and tickets, visit svct.org/2023_becky.

‘Becky’s New Car’ is personal, mischievous, and hilariously real

Limelight’s show explores the question: what would you do if you could just leave it all behind?

<https://morganhilllife.com/2023/07/21/limelight-beckys-new-car/>

Published in the July 26-August 8, 2023 issue of Morgan Hill Life



“Becky Foster” (Denee Lewis) with her husband “Joe” (Robert Sean Campbell) in Limelight Theatre’s production of “Becky’s New Car.”
Photo by Elizabeth Mandel

By Calvin Nuttall

When a handsome widower wanders into “Becky Foster’s” mundane life and whisks her away, she finds herself torn between her daily responsibilities and the excitement she craves. The comedic drama “Becky’s New Car” explores what happens when an ordinary woman takes the road not often traveled.

Limelight Theatre’s latest play opens Aug. 4 in downtown Gilroy’s Center for the Arts. Written by Steven Dietz, the show takes South Valley audiences along with the middle-aged protagonist on a delightful and rebellious ride.



The married “Becky” (Denee Lewis) works as an office-manager at a car dealership. She faces a complicated mid-life crisis when a handsome millionaire named “Walter Flood” (Rob Christopher) arrives to buy a large number of cars as gifts for his employees. The show becomes a delightful romp down the road not often taken as her soul is pulled in two directions, romantically and socially, said director Andrew Cummings.

“It’s about a woman who was living a regular life,” he said. “She had bills to pay and jobs to work. But she, like all of us, was sometimes a little dissatisfied with that.”

The cast swirling around her suddenly chaotic life include her husband “Joe Foster” (Robert Sean Campbell), college-age son “Chris” (Alex Topete), coworker “Steve” (Bruce Pember), “Walter’s” daughter “Kenni” (Jenna Hernandez) and Walter’s single neighbor “Ginger” (Joyce Bedard).

“‘Becky’ gets an opportunity to go on a little bit of an unexpected adventure, and she has to make some complicated choices along the way,” Cummings said. “Her escape from her regular life at times is really fun but has the potential to hurt some of the people around her. So she has to make some decisions in terms of what she wants for herself.”

Equal parts escapist and relatable, the story revolves around a central question: can “Becky” have it all? She launches herself from her mundane, stressful, middle-class life into a glamorous world of wealth and parties. Her responsibilities to her family and career pull back on her in a tug-of-war that creates the fundamental conflict of the show.

“You are really rooting for ‘Becky,’” Cummings said. “She is just so likable and charismatic, and she has a great sense of humor. You want her to have her cake and eat it, too. Eventually, it becomes clear that is not possible.”

Performing the title role has been a fun and unique challenge, Lewis said. The character is complicated, both likable and flawed in a way that makes her compelling.

“She was very content with her life,” Lewis said. “But it was exhausting and overwhelming, and I don’t think she even realized how much of a weight it was. So when the opportunity to escape came along, it’s like she hadn’t even realized she needed it.”

Audience members should be ready to get swept up in the adventure alongside “Becky,” Lewis said.

“I don’t feel alone up there,” she said. “I’m bringing all of my friends along with me on this. I think it is going to be a unique experience for everyone.”

Mirroring “Becky’s” pursuit of opulence and glamor, “Walter” is a man with more than his fair share of luxury — but nonetheless, he also feels the crushing mundanity of life and wishes for something more.

“Despite that he has a comfortable life, he is a little bit lost and rudderless,” Christopher said. “But he brings some terrific perspectives on life. Here is somebody who comes from a completely different point of view and brings a certain maturity to it — and sense of optimism and opportunity. I like this role, and I see a lot of myself in him.”

Ultimately, “Becky” must find a way to balance her dual lives and reconcile her selfish desires with the demands of reality.

“You could say that she deserves to be a little bit selfish,” Cummings said. “She gives and gives, and she doesn’t ask for a lot back. By the time she makes that first selfish decision, you think, well, good for her. She has earned it. And then the question becomes: how many selfish decisions is she allowed to make before she has crossed a line?”

With its complex relationships and flawed characters, the show will have audience members constantly questioning the characters’ morality, Christopher said.

“We’re all enjoying the challenge of it, and Andrew is doing his best to bring out our more conflicted selves,” he said. “We’re supposed to walk the line in between that, like in real life, is a bit ambiguous. Sometimes we lean a little bit this way, sometimes a little bit that way.”

Playwright Dietz masterfully portrays everyday experiences in a relatable and engaging way, Campbell said. With understated scenes and subtle theatrical devices, the story remains personal and accessible rather than over-the-top dramatic.

“The way he writes and stages is very inclusive and engaging in a way I think most theater productions aren’t,” he said. “The stage setting is not presentational — you’re going to feel like you’re part of it. I wonder if this audience has ever experienced this type of show.”

Contributing to that intimate feel is the up-close-and-personal layout of the Limelight Theatre stage, which brings the audience almost within reach of the performers. Rather than the traditional proscenium theater, where the stage and audience are opposite one another separated by an arch, the Limelight has a three-quarter thrust layout.

“The playing area comes right out into the audience,” Cummings said. “Everybody has either a first- or a second-row seat. You get to see every tiny, little detail. For us, the artists making the work, the fun thing is pressing ourselves to be real, to be authentic, to be ready for that up-close audience interaction.”