

Morra, Chace Stage 'Scared of Sarah'

Sometimes the only thing we can expect in life is the unexpected. And the only guarantees are that there are no guarantees. These may be cliché, but it's hard to argue their truth. When life throws an unexpected event our way, we must be prepared to take it on, something that's often difficult to do. The play *Scared of Sarah*, being presented at the Black Box Theater at the Artists' Exchange and presented by Sidecar Theater Company, examines just this situation.

Sidecar is a young company, recently formed by Rich Morra, Artistic Director at the Black Box Theater and Tom Chace, an actor and the Black Box's Musical Director. They formed Sidecar so they could perform the kinds of shows they really wanted to do. "We can produce whatever we want," Morra says. "Shows that have interesting, edgy characters. Shows with small casts, that are a little bit edgier. It's more cutting-edge kind of stuff."

Scared of Sarah is a three-character play, focusing on young couple Lilly and Sam, who are expecting their first, unplanned, child. "It's the story of a couple forced to be ready for more than they are," Morra says. That event comes in the person of Lilly's sister, Sarah, who is autistic. Due to a fire in her apartment, Sarah moves in with her sister and brother-in-law. Her presence in their home creates fear in Lilly. "She is afraid of having a child, what if the child has a disability, like Sarah," Morra says.

"The play also deals with how the world views people with disabilities," Morra notes. "People with autism and Asperger's are in our everyday life. We might not even know they have a disability." This also fits in well, Morra says, with the Artists' Exchange's mission to integrate adults with developmental disabilities into its programs.

"A friend of mine saw the play and said it was a really good story, right up my alley," Morra says. The play is relatively new, having had a staged reading at the Kennedy Center in D.C. and a production at the Fringe Festival in New York City. While he loves what he does full-time, Morra says getting to do plays like this allows him to do his kind of theater, which he says is "minimalistic," adding, "Give me a box. I'll paint it black. Put some actors in there and tell a story, it will be awesome."

The story he's telling with this play, Morra says, is "How do you deal with things you just aren't ready for? It's about being available for things you thought you weren't ready for." There is also, he says, an important story about the relationship between the two sisters. "Lilly has great difficulty getting along with her autistic sister but she's in a much better place by the end of the play, after having to deal with her sister much more than she used to."

Sidecar's first show, *Love Song* was successful for Morra, who is excited for what's happening with his small company as well as the Artists' Exchange at large. "We're really enjoying relative success. It's a community kind of program that's been growing and growing." It may be safe to say that they can expect even more success in the future.

Sidecar Theater Company presents

Scared of Sarah, by Laura Brienza, at Artists' Exchange, 50 Rolfe Square, Crantson. Runs Feb 17-26. Visit www.artists-exchange.org