

Review of "Rabbit Hole"  
By Julie McHale

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Outskirts Theatre has provided a nice niche in summer theater programming, using Carroll University as its venue. The theater troupe's recent choice, "Rabbit Hole," also reflects its lofty mission and high standards. It inspired thought and emotion.

The story (David Lindsay-Abaire), the excellent casting (Ryan Albrechtson) and ingenious set (Justin Gale) all merge effectively to create a tense, harrowing drama.

A young child has died as a result of dashing into the street after his dog. He was unwittingly killed by a teenage driver named Jason.

Danny was dearly beloved by his young parents, Becca and Howie, and the freshness of their grief is still palpable as the play opens, four months after the event. Both parents deal with the loss in their own way.

Howie goes about his life as best he can and chooses to watch home videos of Danny at night as he sits on the sofa drinking a beer with Danny's "blankie" on his lap. He also has tried counseling with a grief therapy group and has struggled in vain to engage his wife in their former intimate relationship, but she is basically untouchable.

Becca, on the other hand, a more volatile character, lashes out at everyone - Howie, her recently impregnated sister Izzy and her mother Nat, who lost one of her children to suicide.

Becca finds no use for the grief group or any other kind of help her family is trying to give her. She is trying to dismantle Danny's room and all reminders of him.

When Jason contacts the couple, Becca, amazingly enough, is more open to the idea of the contact than Howie is. Howie looks like he's ready to kill him.

Izzy, the wilder younger sister, so well-played by Caitlin Pilon, provides some laughs along the way. Mother Nat is also very nicely rendered by Mary Buchel. She, too, offers some comic relief as well as some wisdom.

Jason (Guillermo Contreras) is not always easily understood, but his body language effectively reveals his awkwardness and his guilt and his desire to offer some solace to the bereaved.

The stars of the show, Gemma Fitzsimmons and Danny Polaski, are quite awesome in their roles as the aching parents. As the play ends, we see some glimmer of hope that these two good people might be able to move on with somewhat happy lives together, but ask any parent who has lost a child - their lives will be forever scarred.

Kudos to director Ryan Albrechtson and the entire cast and crew for providing a very moving experience over the weekend in the Studio Theatre at Carroll University, 238 N. East Ave.