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ENTERTAINMENT - LIVE STAGE

Theater Review: *The Wanting*

By Tina Dhamija

Sometimes the best performance is the kind that takes time to grow and enfold you in its clutches, but once it has you, you're in so deep you feel a love slave to it. Such is the case with *The Wanting*, the latest project by Katrina Lenk, the acclaimed star of last season's rock opera *Lovelace*, for which she won the LA Weekly and Garland awards.



While *The Wanting* starts off a bit hard to follow being that the entire story is told without dialogue and

wholly through dance and the music and lyrics of Lenk (as her alter ego, moxy phinx), you soon realize that this is a story about every single person who's ever been torn apart by matters of the heart, and therefore, needs no dialogue as the viewers' personal interpretation is the very art of it.

Running at Highways Performance theatre in Santa Monica Nov. 20th - Dec. 19th, *The Wanting* is avant-garde in every sense of the term. Part concert, part dance, part tale of love, lust, seduction, betrayal and insatiable desire, Lenk's latest creation is nothing short of a small masterpiece.

The characters of the play are six very talented dancers in the roles of father (Michael Quiett), mother (Whitney Kirk), twin sisters (Jennifer Cooper and Liz Sroka), brother (Daniel Huynh) and nanny (Jackie Lloyd). It's a who's groping on who type of family affair, whose torridness is portrayed entirely through the emotional tone of the music and impeccable choreography by Janet Roston (who also served as producer and director of the show). This is where *The Wanting* really shines – the choreography. Roston's direction of the movement of the bodies, the perverse grasping, grinding and pulling away make this production hard to dislike, ignore or forget.



Once inside this family twisted with desire and betrayal, it's impossible to escape the wicked ecstasy of the players. The cold and robust father, his through-thick-and-thin wife, the portly daughters presumably plucked from the bottom of the cheerleading

pyramid and thrust into latent sexuality, to the nanny with the body that just won't quit; there's never a dull moment with this show.

The only character that didn't quite mesh with the production as well as could have been done was that of the son. While Hyunh plays the part with elegance and passion, the character of the token, "gay-son-turned-whipping-post," of the show was just too subservient and typical in a story that could have benefited more from a strong gay character. There just wasn't room for the stereotypical subservient, shamed gay character moping around in a show brimming with so much innovation.

The music, however, was the glue that holds this puppy together all throughout. Every lyric, note and instrument is written and performed by Lenk as her alter ego moxy phinx, which is more than impressive since the music is standout all on its own. While her style has been described as "Bjork meets Marlene Dietrich with a touch of Prince," I'd say it more like 90's synth-pop duo, Shakespears Sister meets Poe with a touch of Anoushka Shankar. Further, Lenk's deeply emotional lyrics and the power of her vocal give her music its own special stamp of originality.

The Wanting also features elements of puppetry and film, and best of all -- a Cirque Du Soleil-style acrobatic ribbon dancer -- that makes certain the audience leaves *wanting* more.

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