

'BOY' CELEBRATES POWER OF NARRATIVE

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WELLFLEET — "The Storytelling Ability of a Boy" is one of those fascinating pieces of theater that will seem utterly true to some people and utterly overwrought to others. It's doubtful anyone will walk out of Carter W. Lewis' sharply written drama feeling on the fence.

The boy in question, Peck, is one of those jittery, edgy, semi-genius high school kids so beloved by English teachers and so victimized by cruel classmates. Peck's only real friend is the equally outcast Dora, who walks around with a bad attitude and a nail gun in her backpack. (Never fear, she only uses it on herself. Why? Because, she says, "it's so hard to stay popular.").

According to Dora, who has been abused by her father, she and Peck would be humming along very nicely in their us-against-the-world relationship if it weren't for the fact that their teacher, Caitlin, has taken such an interest in Peck, a promising writer.

Caitlin, who has brought some secrets with her to this school (I mean, she has a cello in her house), believes that Dora is a negative influence on Peck.

Peck, who has been repeatedly brutalized by other boys in school, just wants to survive with that particular secret intact. In other words, everyone has a particular narrative. And they are all powerful. So powerful, in fact, that when they intersect, some pretty dangerous things might happen.

Whether you find those things believable (I did) or over the top (as the woman in front of me did) will determine how much you enjoy this tightly paced production, directed with precision by Robert Kropf.

But, either way, you'll have no complaints about the acting.

Bridget Doyle makes Dora more than sardonic but less than irritatingly Goth. It's easy to see why she drives people crazy, less easy to see inside those little fissures of vulnerability.

As Peck, Adam Foster is all gangly and physically awkward, but when he speaks the words he's written, he's transported to a magical place. He's almost overwhelmed by his passion.

Dakota Shepard's Caitlin is not as finely tuned as the other two characters, but it's through her sad eyes and initially hesitant interactions that we see most of the big picture of what is going on.

Ted Vitale's sparse set for "The Storytelling Ability of a Boy" makes it almost like a reading, which really works for a play about the power of narrative, and allows us to focus on the interaction among the three actors.

It's an intense experience, reminding us once again how transforming words on a page, especially when spoken aloud, can be — for characters in a play, and for us; for good, and for evil.