

## The Storytelling Ability of a Boy

by Michael Martin

EDGE Contributor

Tuesday Dec 15, 2009



Marshall Paillet and Bethany Anne Lind star in *The Storytelling Ability of a Boy*, playing through Jan. 17 at Florida Stage (Source: Ken Jacques Photography)

Continuing its tradition of producing new American theatrical works, Florida Stage greets the holiday season with an amazingly crafted piece by playwright Carter W. Lewis, entitled, **The Storytelling Ability of a Boy**, which also marks the fifth collaboration between the author and the theatre.

Lewis, who currently serves as Playwright-in-Residence at Washington University in St. Louis, has created yet another intriguing piece that explores the influential teenage mind.

Peck (Marshall Paillet), a non-conformist seventeen-year-old high school student who borders on "nerdy" and who often pushes the boundaries of contained saneness, possesses a unique flair for creative writing, a gift recognized by teacher Caitlin (Laura Carbonell).

Caitlin often spends additional time with Peck, attempting to nurture his rare journalistic ability. The teacher further discourages Peck's association with fellow non-conformist student and friend, Dora (Bethany Anny Lind), viewing her attention-seeking antics as an obstacle in the path to the boy's potential growth.

Both students display an above-average intelligence, which only serves to ostracize them from mainstream high school cliques, and which particularly singles out Peck as a target for bullying by an unseen group of roughneck classmates.

After one particular beating, Peck and Dora seek refuge at Caitlin's residence. The off-campus encounter crosses personal boundaries, and sets the scene for a triangular interlocking of emotions. The resulting palpable air then creates an environment where each character eventually reveals important facts that help explain their idiosyncratic makeup.

Throughout the play, Lewis utilizes an interesting dramaturgical device that shifts the narrative between characters, creating a multiple perspective format that allows the audience to view the same story from antipodal points of view.

At one point, the line is so gray between dialogue and formulated narration that Peck begins to speak of himself in the third person. Sensing a loss of perception, Caitlin and Dora both take aim at reeling Peck back to reality.

Youthful Paillet, with already three Broadway credits to his name, outstandingly handles Peck's delicate balance between storyteller and real person. The actor expertly brings to light the internal struggles of boy who hails from a dysfunctional past, and who in turn has trouble fitting into a functional society.

Lind and Carbonell likewise justly portray Dora and Caitlin, respectively, as multi-dimensional characters apt at hiding their own personal struggles.

Director Louis Tyrrell cleverly utilizes the intimate theatre's setting to stage a story filled with heart, angst, and hope... a story that author Lewis has so amazingly constructed through his own special gift of the written word.