

ACTING TRIO SOARS IN THOUGHT-PROVOKING NEW PLAY BY CARTER LEWIS AT FLORIDA STAGE By Ron Levitt

MANALAPAN, FL -- Florida Stage, which has found its place in the sun by presenting thought-provoking new plays, has done it again! This time, it's an 85-minute extra-ordinary, intellectually-stimulating production about three smart, tortured souls who seemingly beg for acceptance.

The Storytelling Ability of a Boy by educator Carter W. Lewis is the latest play by the prolific, prize-winning playwright who has introduced several of his works at Florida Stage, including the highly successful Ordinary Nation two years ago.

This time Carter – thanks to the astute and sensitive direction of Louis Tyrrell and an eerie but effective use of sound by technical guru Matt Kelly – introduces his audience to three people (one teacher and two students) who are struggling to “fit in.” The trio, for different reasons, can't seem to find their place in the social setting of a rural school and their loneliness and misunderstanding trigger a drama filled with violence, sexual confusion and fury.

Seeking acceptance – yet, making it difficult to engage others in their lives – are the teacher Caitlan (Laura Carbonell) and her students: Peck (Marshall Paillet), a brilliant and imaginative writer, and Dora (Bethany Anne Lind), his intellectual sparring partner and best friend. The two students seem too resent the implication that there are things they don't understand and they release temperament and attitude that can only lead to disaster.

It is easy to give praise to any production which makes its audience think! “Storytelling” is that kind of play. It forces you to ask yourself if you ever knew any young people like these – kids who are far ahead of the ordinary students in many ways intellectually, but who may seem dysfunctional to the crowd or at least misunderstood individuals.

But, this play – as stimulating as it is mentally -- is especially notable because of the acting skills of the three performers. And, one will find it difficult not to laud the acting prowess of this trio in making this production so intriguing.

Carbonell is realistic as the teacher trying to nurture her talented nerdy, teenage student. Paillet – as the student with a gift of storytelling well beyond his age and experience -- is totally believable in a stunning acting rendition, and the charming Lind – whether mouthing foul-mouthed four-letter words or expressing doubts about her sexuality – uses Carter's colorful script and language skills to emerge as a star with a bright future on stage. All three are credible New York-based actors who are leaving an indelible mark on South Florida theatre. One cannot help but praise this acting trio for making “Storytelling” so mind-bending. Their acting skills are three indelible and compelling reasons to see this production!

This production runs through January 17. Call 561-585-3433 or visit www.floridastage.org.