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## ◆ Center Stage

By Jared Curtis



From left: David Oddy, Craig Petersen and Chris Alan Ragner star in Theater... For A Change's production of "The Pillowman." Performances are March 12-15, 19-22 at the Grand View University Viking Theatre, 2811 E. 14th St. Tickets are \$10 - \$12 and are available at [www.iowatix.com](http://www.iowatix.com).

### Fact or fiction

#### *The only duty of a storyteller is to tell a story*

Theater... For A Change (CHANGE) kicks off its 2009 season with a bang, or rather a muffled yell for help, as they bring Martin McDonagh's "The Pillowman" to life. The dark comedy is about the life of Katurian Katurian, a short story author who is being interrogated by detectives because a number of his stories are linked to a series of child murders.

"The Pillowman is a wildly intriguing story filled with mystery, complex characters, disturbing violence, surprising humor and unsettling questions," said director Kristin Larson. "The big questions that the story poses about the responsibility of art are dangerous and ultimately unanswerable. I love the challenge of the questions, however, and I think the audience will as well."

The play intertwines between past and present experiences in Katurian's life. Throughout the show, we hear a number of his demented short stories (which I could have listened to all day), and learn about his mentally slow brother Michal (Thatcher Williams). During his interrogation,

we meet the "good cop, bad cop" duo of Det. Tupoliski (Chris Alan Ragner) and Det. Ariel (David Oddy).

"Imagine an episode of 'CSI' set somewhere in another country, with a little harsher political climate and far fewer crime fighting tools save for quick wit and thick skin," Ragner said. "The interrogation scenes are intense. McDonagh has taken a situation, something I know all would cringe at the thought of, and pushes the envelope just a little bit."

The small talented cast works well together, and the clues that continually pop up throughout keep the audience guessing at what will come next. But what carries the show is Craig Petersen's performance. As the lead character, Katurian, Petersen grabs the reins and leads the audience on a rollercoaster ride. Just as he did in last year's "Reefer Madness: The Musical," Petersen steals the show.

"I thought the show was intriguing the first time I read it," Petersen said. "It is not your typical story, and it doesn't have the typical characters in it that I have played in the past. It gave me a real chance to explore different aspects of my acting ability."

The most emotionally draining scene revolves around Katurian and Michal as they sit in a room waiting. The two

actors work extremely well together, and it's the most revealing, yet simple scene in the show.

"It truly is an amazing and unique play, and the acting is tour-de-force," Larson said. "The audience can come to delight in the mystery of the story as it is revealed. They can revel in the strange, disturbing violence in the fairy tales that Katurian writes. It is not an easy story, and I would not recommend it for the faint-of-heart."

**Stage notes:** The Comedy Co-operative presents its newest sketch comedy show on Friday, March 13 at 7:30 p.m. at the Stoner Studio Theater in the Civic Center of Greater Des Moines. "The Wearin' o' the Grin" celebrates a range of Irish traditions from Kung Fu fighting leprechauns to troll babies and their drunken grandmothers. Tickets are \$10 and can be purchased at the Civic Center box office or through Ticketmaster. ... Banana Punch, Des Moines' newest sketch comedy group, will perform its first full-length show at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, March 20, at Rex Mathes Auditorium, 1401 Vine, West Des Moines. Tickets are \$10 at the door. For advance ticket sales, call 402-9544 or e-mail [bananapunch@mchsi.com](mailto:bananapunch@mchsi.com). ... StageWest presents the Iowa premiere production of "Souvenir: A Fantasia on the life of Florence Foster Jenkins." Performances are held on March 20-22, 25-29 in the Civic Center's Stoner Theater. Tickets are \$18 - \$22 and available at the Civic Center Ticket Office or online at [www.civiccenter.org](http://www.civiccenter.org). CV

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