

Drama That Speaks to Tough Issues and Leaves Groups Talking

Date rape and eating disorders. While this sounds like a hyper sensationalized night of primetime on either Fox or WB, Cathy Plourde's Add Verb Productions isn't about shock-u-drama. "We are about making changes," says Plourde, "changes in what people know, how people think and hopefully how they act."

You the Man and *The Thin Line* are two plays, both written, produced and directed by Plourde, which take on the these difficult, yet vitally important, topics. Both plays have been touring schools, universities and youth programs throughout New England. They also have been provoking thought and discussion at group sessions which are a regular and required part of the performance. Plourde has just completed the recruitment and rehearsing of New York City-based casts for both productions prior to releasing them in the metropolitan area.

You the Man is a one-man, six-character play which takes on the issues of dating violence, sexual assault and just plain unhealthy relationships. Three of the characters are men connected by a young women who is an increasingly dangerous relationship - her friend, her teacher and her father. Three others include a police officer who reports the sexual assault, "Virgin Larry" whose teammate commits the rape and "Stan the Man" who provides a narrative framework for the 45-minute performance.

"The play is not really about helping an abusive person see the error of his ways," says Plourde. "It is about helping those who are bystanders make better decisions; to encourage them to speak up and create a climate in which violence is not tolerated. Because these are male voices, and because the play does not shame, blame or victimize, it seems to be working."



Eddie Martinez of Queens is featured in the one-man show "You the Man", by Cathy Plourde.

"It is refreshing to see tough issues like relationship violence and sexual assault from a male perspective through believable characters who are affected by violence against women," says Cindy Visbaras, a health educator who brought the program to Bates College in Lewiston, Maine.

The Thin Line is a 25-minute play which addresses eating disorders. Opened and closed by a friend of a girl struggling with eating disorder, the play portrays not only how the mental illness affects an individual,

but also spills over into the community. "The play is powerful and speaks to everyone: both those with the condition and those who stand by feeling helpless," says Mary Orear, executive director of Mainely Girls, a statewide human services agency serving young women based in Camden, ME.

The Thin Line began touring in March 2000 and has been seen by thousands of students and adults in over one hundred performances in 10 states. Funding has come from both The Maine Women's Fund and the Maine Community Foundation. *You the Man* premiered at the Hotchkiss School in Connecticut in February. Both plays feature a required group discussion following the performance.

Information is available on the company's website at addverbproductions.com. For information on New York City metropolitan bookings, call 845-266-4858.

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