

Dramatic decade

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CityPulse's theater critics look at the productions, companies and people who made the '00s worth watching.

Sweet standard

Since I began reviewing local theater for CityPulse in 2006, it has unfortunately become necessary at times to distinguish community productions with a second set of standards. But one company in particular has worked to defy those standards by consistently matching quality with variety. That company is **Peppermint Creek Theatre**.



During its 2006-'07 season, Peppermint Creek was led by the powerful, innovative duo of Chad Badgero and Louis Balestra, who blended their talents on and behind the stage with savvy marketing and an ability to attract top-notch acting talent from the "community" pool.

Their first production that season was Martin McDonagh's "**The Pillowman**," a dark "what if" scenario that stretches the liberal implications of free speech, while simultaneously satirizing the good cop/bad cop cliché in a not-so-distant fascist future. The end result was a head trip that provoked as much laughter as it did squirming. It was not a perfect production, but it was daring and risky, with honest, intense performances from the entire cast.

But Badgero and Balestra didn't stop there. They followed up with Edward Albee's "**The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?**," a searing portrait of upper-class hypocrisy and an absurdity of why we love whom we do. Local actors presented an extremely dense, complex and delicate script that was as hilarious as it was disturbing with its results. The thrust stage within a converted East Lansing art studio further intensified the visceral impact of smoldering performances that literally broke glass.

"The Goat" is a show that I still compare all Peppermint Creek shows by, as well as Lansing theater in general.

—Paul Wozniak

First and last

In the last decade, mid-Michigan gained another professional theater company (Williamston **Theatre**), and possibly lost one (BoarsHead **Theatre**). Here's a look at the former's first great show, and the latter's last great one.



Picking Williamston's first great show was easy: it was their actual first show in June 2006, the premier production of "**Additional Particulars**."

Written by Ed Simpson, the play is a bittersweet comedy that explores the intersecting lives of four discount store employees in separate-but-related stories. It starred Aaron Moore, Dennis North, Emily Sutton-Smith and Brian Thibault and was directed by Tomi Casali.