

THIS 'PART' SUITS FUNNYMAN FOGEL JUST FINE

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Robert DeNiro discovered Chazz Palminteri, who went on to create the one-man show "A Bronx Tale." Palminteri paid it forward with actor Peter Fogel, who was performing in Florida in his one-man show, "'Til Death Do Us Part ... You First!"

"A mutual friend said that he was bringing a surprise to the show," Fogel said. "It was Chazz Palminteri. He said he thought it was hysterical. I said I was looking for a director and he said, 'You've got one.'"

Fogel returns to A.C.T. Studio Theatre in Stuart Jan. 31-Feb. 2 in a production directed by Palminteri. It's the only solo show the noted actor and director directs.

"It's about the absurdities of love," Fogel said. "He's married and I'm single. It's a show about the ghosts of Valentine's Day past, present and future."

The show tells the tale of eternal bachelor Peter Fogel, a commitment-phobe, who gets dumped on Valentine's Day, just as he's finally getting ready to make a commitment. He's a single guy who has spent his life on his career and not on relationships, in part because he didn't have a good role model from his own father.

"Some kids want to join the circus," he said. "I wanted to be a comedian and leave."

Fogel has spent eight years on the road as the national touring star of Steve Solomon's one-man show, "My Mother's Italian, My Father's Jewish and I'm in Therapy." Being on stage alone and voicing a variety of characters is second nature to him as he brings to life his evil stepmother, Eva, his married college friend Harold, his divorced



Peter Fogel.

PHOTO COURTESY OF PETER FOGEL

buddy Sal Monella, his Iranian ex-girlfriend Elena, his ex "almost fiancée" Tanya, and his bipolar Internet date with the screen name "Totally Committed." Tanya is his dream girl who broke his heart on Valentine's Day when he was finally ready to commit. Fogel takes the audience on a whirlwind tour of relationships as he visits the scenes of all his romantic disasters. His friends, married, divorced or single, present a sort of Greek chorus about the joys of being whatever they're not.

"It's written so single, divorced and married people will relate," Fogel said. "As long as you make it funny, they laugh. I talk about people who want to get married on Val-

entine's Day. Do they get divorced on Independence Day? Women laugh the most. I played it to a group of Jewish women on Super Bowl Sunday. It's about the craziness of marriage and observational things about relationships. Chazz helped me with that. We've tweaked it and done rewriting. I want people to relate on a visceral level. The married guys tell me, 'Stay single, you're free.' I hit all the moments and then look at a couple in the front row and say, 'That's you.'"

Fogel brought the show to the A.C.T. after speaking to its co-owner, Dennis O'Donovan.

"I talked to Dennis and knew he did quirky things," Fogel said. "He does dark comedy. Mine is laugh, laugh, laugh with some dark moments. I loved the audience (in Stuart). They got it. It's an intimate room and it feels like you're in a living room."

Fogel said that people "get" the show in different ways.

"People who are married a long time don't know what it is to be single. I tell them that the last time they dated, Madonna was a virgin. People now are dating in their 60s and 70s and they get Internet dating. For anyone married for the last 30 years, you don't know what Internet dating is. The show is written so that everyone gets it. It's interactive and I play off the audience. I do the characters, the sound effects and it's multimedia, with a screen. They're getting a great show."

A.C.T. Studio Theatre, 2399 S. E. Ocean Blvd., Stuart, presents "'Til Death Do Us Part ... You First!" with Peter Fogel and directed by Chazz Palminteri, Jan. 31-Feb. 2. Call 772-932-8880 or visit www.actstudiotheatre.com. ■