

Theater troupe brings King's twisted 'Misery' to Santa Cruz

Featuring local actors from MCT, gripping horror play explores obsession, survival

By [Christina Wise](#), October 10, 2025

If you're looking to add a little "Misery" to your world, look no further than Santa Cruz Actors' Theatre. From Oct. 17 through Nov. 1, Stephen King's twisted story will keep audiences on the edge of their seats as they witness the peril-fraught relationship between a novelist, Paul Sheldon, and his self-proclaimed "number one fan," Annie Wilkes.

After a car accident in a snowstorm, Paul is "rescued" by Annie, who turns out to be dangerously obsessed with a series of his novels. This skillfully constructed play explores themes of obsession, captivity and the sinister side of fandom, culminating in a horrific and dramatic struggle for survival.



Master of Horror Miguel Reyna directs the frighteningly talented cast of Manirose Bobisuthi (Annie Wilkes), Ian Dyer (Paul Sheldon) and Brad Roades (Sheriff John T. "Buster" McCain), and all of them are ready to deliver a few sleepless nights to audiences.

Bobisuthi is no stranger to the stage. From performances with Mountain Community Theater (MCT) to multiple roles at the 8 Tens @ 8 Festival, Bobisuthi plays an eerily convincing Wilkes, and says this is the role of a lifetime.

"Stephen King is a brilliant storyteller, and he gives you a lot of backstory," Bobisuthi said. "I think ultimately, if you're a human that listens and a human that pays attention, you can tap into a lot of different things that humans experience, like longing, desire, pain, abandonment, judgment and fear. All of those things are themes regardless of what your life is like, right? And these are things that exist for Annie."

For Dyer, whose acting background also includes MCT and 8 Tens, his acting chops prove no match for his incredible humility.

"I very much assumed I was not going to get the role," Dyer said. "A tremendous amount of talented actors had come out for this play and with such a small cast, I figured it was

unlikely I'd get the opportunity. However, I did know that I really wanted to work with Miguel; and that I really wanted to act in this show. It's exciting as an actor to do work that feels contemporary. Horror is the language of our times and I'm eager to get a chance at it with this great cast."

Roades is another long-time actor, playwright and director whose resumé is thick with experience, including the aforementioned buffet of MCT and 8 Tens, and his thoughts on the project are as deep as his acting experience.

"I have a lot of opportunity to watch the interaction between Ian and Manirose since they play Annie and Paul. But, the interesting work that's happening is the humanity," Roades said. "It's very easy to just take a look at Annie Wilkes and think, 'Oh, she's psycho.' But if you add the human element, then it becomes a play that's more than just a horror story. It tells a bigger story. And if you think about the embodiment of Wilkes' humanity, then it's a way more interesting play."

For his part, Director Reyna thrives in all things horror, and is thrilled with the way his cast is approaching their characters.

"I'm more into fly-on-the-wall conversation rather than presentational theater, you know? I'd rather them find the human side instead of being caricatures of themselves or a one-dimensional character. And that's one thing I wanted to stray from with Annie and these characters—I did not want to make them one dimensional," Reyna said. "It's easy to, reading from just text, but if you do that, it becomes campy and I don't like doing camp when it comes to horror. And because Ian, Manirose and Brad have been doing such incredible work getting to the core of that, what you're going to see is real interactions between these people, which will make the horror much scarier."

If bringing characters to light in such dark material is challenging, Dyer said it's the work the cast is investing in their roles is what will be most intriguing for the audience.

"This process has been highlighted by two distinct experiences. The first is the physical and emotional challenge of playing Paul. The character undergoes a range of emotions and sensations that I've had the good fortune to never have had myself. Allowing that to be communicated through physicality has been legitimately thrilling and new for me entirely," Dyer shared. "The other experience that marks itself as the true center of this work has been rehearsing this undertaking with Manirose. Audiences are in for a treat, and I can say that with firsthand experience during the weeks of preparation we've had."

As for the experience of working with Reyna, the cast of three were effusive in their praise for his approach, and Roades led the charge of support.

"I've been doing theater for over 50 years, and Miguel is an actors' director. He has genuine enthusiasm for actors and acting, and how he likes to see them get in the midst of it and create real motivation. He is supportive of his cast and is still pointing us in the right

direction,” Roades said. “What I like is, Miguel doesn’t try to throw the universe at you in one rehearsal. You do a little bit here, a little bit here, a little bit more growth the next time, and you can see creative sparks going with him. It’s clear that he has a vision and an idea of what this should look like in the final product. I mean, I guess all directors probably do, but they’re not always as good at communicating what that looks like, but Miguel is willing to adapt.”

Bobisuthi agreed, adding, “We’ve had sparks of realization on the set as we’ve moved through our rehearsals, and they’re supported and celebrated by Miguel. He’s one of the best directors I’ve ever worked with, and I’m thrilled to be in this production with him.”

Reyna is determined to leave the audience with a taste of humanity and a cathartic awakening after seeing “Misery,” but mostly, he just really digs horror.

“Horror is a disruptive force that emphasizes the positive forces that you value, and it’s the antidote for empathy, sympathy and compassion,” he said. “That’s why I want audiences to come out and see the show. My hope is that they leave feeling a little bit better and forgetting the fact that the world is a messed up place. Horror, Westerns and science fiction have always been the avenues for delivering messages. I hope the audience gets the messages embedded in this play.”

“Misery” runs from Oct. 17 through Nov. 1 and is appropriate for ages 16-plus. Catch performances on Thursday, Friday and Saturday at 8pm, and Sunday at 2pm, at the theater, 1001 Center St. in Santa Cruz. To get tickets, visit santacruzactorstheatre.org.