

# St Louis Theatre Snob: Blog

PRAYER FOR THE GUN BUG • OnSite Theatre Company

OnSite Theatre's current offering, "Prayer for the Gun Bug" will satisfy the minds and bellies of theatre adventurers. In keeping with the company's tradition of presenting site-specific theatre, this one takes place at Meskerem Ethiopian Restaurant on South Grand. This world premiere collection of short plays written by Carter Lewis, playwright-in-residence at Washington University, includes dashes of the surreal in each play, making for a savory production that's easy to sit back, take in, and enjoy. With some tasty Ethiopian food!

"No-Preying" finds Heddie (Peggy Billo) and her friend Agatha (Jacqueline Thompson) nibbling and gossiping about the latest happenings at Meskerem's, recently the source of a controversy about whether or not prayer should be allowed in the restaurant. With a "No Praying" sign above the door, Heddie and Agatha, an atheist and agnostic respectively, spar about spiritual beliefs and behavioral instincts, when a giant mantis (Pete Winfrey) in black leather with huge eyes, folded fore-limbs and all, enters the room. Yep -- [one of these guys](#), only *way* better dressed. The arrival of this huge bug drives the conversation about spirituality to a whole different and unexpected level.

After an intermission, Evelyn (Billo) and Alex (Gary Wayne Barker) are discussing the state of our crowded little planet in the second play, "A Geometric Digression of the Species". With a world count of around 6 billion people, Frank and Evelyn are convinced that there's no way humanity will be able to meet the demands of a constantly growing population. Their agreement concerning the theories of [Thomas Malthus](#) aside, this married couple has contributed their fair share to the population with eleven kids of their own, leaving Alex with a longing to carve out a little private space for himself and Evelyn thirsty for intimacy. Their cravings become evident once they are asked to leave the restaurant because there's no room for them. Anywhere in the restaurant. And no room for parking, either. I know, right? *I said it was surreal*. Hello, Malthusian catastrophe.

"Art Control", following the second intermission, finds Donna (Thompson) having a hard time focusing on the conversation with her husband, Frank (Barker). Donna's been patiently waiting for her gluten-free injera, but is abruptly brushed off by their waiter (Winfrey). When Donna finally becomes truly and highly annoyed, she pulls a gun on the waiter to make her point clear. Turns out the waiter's packing too, along with Frank. The standoff ends when Officer Joe (Paul Edwards) comes to the rescue. He's got no gun, but he does have a clicker. What?! Things get seriously meta when an audience member (Billo) calls bullshit on the whole thing, making fun of the actors, calling out the writer, and demanding a more satisfying end to the proceedings. WHAT?! As amusing as it is to see "[the fourth wall](#)" completely obliterated, Billo's character adds some spice to this piece that threatens to meander, and completes an overall entertaining night out.

Lewis made some slight adjustments to his one-acts to accommodate the cozy surroundings of Meskerem's, and along with Bill Whitaker's breezy direction and the energy of a solid and fearless cast, OnSite continues its tradition of presenting unique theatre boldly. Also, Robert Van Dillen is credited with costume design, notably Winfrey's awesome praying mantis getup.

For some yummy Ethiopian cuisine and the kind of theatre experience that only OnSite can offer, check it out! It's running until the 25th.

Cast:

Peggy Billo\* (Heddie/Evelyn/Audience Member #1), Gary Wayne Barker\* (Alex/Frank), Paul Edwards (Waiter #2/Officer Joe), Jacqueline Thompson (Agatha/Valet/Donna) and Pete Winfrey (Mantis/Waiter #1).