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ST. LOUIS THEATRE SNOB

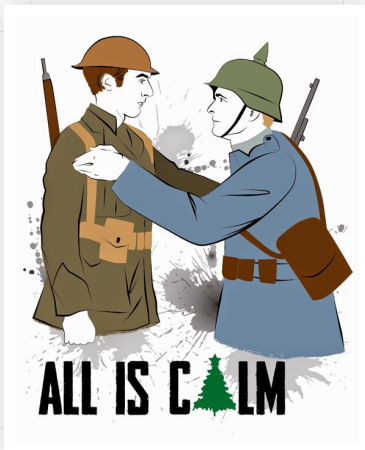
The overture is part of the show, people. Please shut your pie hole.

The Fabulous Fox Theatre • St. Louis, MO

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Sunday, November 23, 2014

ALL IS CALM: THE CHRISTMAS TRUCE OF 1914 • Mustard Seed Theatre



"All Is Calm: The Christmas Truce of 1914", was originally presented as a radio show on Minnesota Public Radio by the vocal ensemble, Cantus and Theatre Latte Da, until Mustard Seed Theatre gave this a cappella musical a fully staged production last year. The musical's text is comprised of letters and historic documents associated with a [brief truce](#) that occurred during World War I on Christmas Eve, with songs ranging from folk tunes and traditional carols to patriotic hymns and ballads. It remains, like last season's production, an aural feast.

Everyone from last season's [award winning](#) ensemble cast (and practically all of the crew) is back for this season's revival, and along with an additional number ("Good-By-Ee"), there are also several subtle changes in the staging that enhance the presentation. The show is broken down into sections -- "The Optimistic Departure", "The Grim Reality", "Christmas", "The Truce", "The Return to Battle", and an Epilogue. Within these sections, the audience is taken through the soldiers' nervous excitement heading out on the open sea to battle the Germans (a battle that many thought would be over with by Christmas), the bleak gloom of war at the front -- from rat infested trenches and sniper fire to the loss of comrades, the short truce on Christmas Eve where cigarettes, rum and gifts were exchanged, along with a lively game of

football, and the sobering joint burial of the dead. Once superior officers find out about the fraternization of the troops, they put an end to it, bringing the saddening return to battle.

Under Joe Schoen's musical direction, the voices of this cast of 10, including Charlie Barron, Shawn Bowers, J. Samuel Davis, Gary Glasgow, Christopher Hickey, Jason Meyers, Antonio Rodriguez, Tim Schall, Luke Steingrubby and Jeffrey Wright, are exceptional. They marvelously handle songs with gentle, solemn harmonies like, "The Old Barbed Wire" and "I Want to Go Home". Then there are songs that begin in unison and blossom into these full, thick chords several notes deep with refreshing harmony turns and chill-inducing dynamic changes like the haunting prologue, "Will Ye Go to Flanders?", "Wassail" (my fave), "Auld Lang Syne" and "Silent Night", that fluidly dissolves during the last quarter of the number into the titular "All Is Calm". The monologues work into the music so easily, it's hard to tell where one ends and another begins. Love. There's also much mirth to be had in songs and passages in last half of "Christmas in the Camp" and "Good King Wenceslas", and a special shout out to Antonio Rodriguez for his solo, "Minuit chrétiens (O Holy Night)". [I said this last year](#) and I'll say it again -- if the hair on the back of your neck doesn't stand on end, it's very likely that there's something wrong with you.



Luke Steingrubby, Gary Glasgow, Shawn Bowers, Christopher Hickey, Charlie Barron, Jason Meyers, Tim Schall, J. Samuel Davis, (front row) Jeffrey Wright and Antonio Rodriguez. Photo credit: John Jamb

Deanna Jent's direction spreads the spoken text aptly among the

cast who handle the many dialects required, with the help of dialect coach Richard Lewis, quite well for the most part, with standouts that include Barron, Glasgow, Hickey and Meyers. Jane Sullivan outfits the cast in authentic attire, and Kyra Bishop's effective scenic design of barbed wire, barricades and crates, along with "no man's land" in the middle, is evocatively lit by Michael Sullivan, highlighting the solos, and depicting stars and the illumination of mortar fire against a backdrop. All of these creative elements, with

on stage

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Boo Cat Club

[ALL IS CALM](#) • 11/14 - 12/21 • Mustard Seed Theatre

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[ORDERS](#) • 11/14 - 11/23 • Tesseract Theatre Company

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The Fabulous Fox Theatre

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[A CHRISTMAS CAROL](#) • 12/12 - 12/17

Christopher Hickey, Jason Meyers, Shawn Bowers, Gary Glasgow, Tim Schall, Charlie Barron, Jeffrey Wright, Luke Steingrubby and Antonio Rodriguez.
Photo credit: John Lamb

a seamless integration of songs and dialogue, make for an affecting night of theater -- perfect for the Holiday season.

If you saw it last year, it's worth seeing again. If you haven't, it's not to be missed. Aural feast, I'm tellin' ya! It's playing until December 21st.

ALL IS CALM: THE CHRISTMAS TRUCE OF 1914

By Peter Rothstein
Musical arrangements by Erick Lichte and Timothy C. Takach
Directed by Deanna Jent
Mustard Seed Theatre, [6800 Wydown Blvd.](#)
through December 21 | [tickets: \\$25 - \\$30](#)
Performances Thursday to Saturday at 8pm, Sundays at 2pm & 5pm



Christopher Hickey, Gary Glasgow, Tim Schall, Jason Meyers, J. Samuel Davis, Luke Steingrubby, Shawn Bowers, Jeffrey Wright, Antonio Rodriguez and Charlie Barron.
Photo credit: John Lamb

Cast:
Charlie Barron, Shawn Bowers, J. Samuel Davis*, Gary Glasgow*, Christopher Hickey*, Jason Meyers, Antonio Rodriguez, Tim Schall*, Luke Steingrubby and Jeffrey Wright.
* Member Actors' Equity Association

Creative:
Musical direction by Joe Schoen; scenic design by Kyra Bishop; lighting design by Michael Sullivan; costume design by Jane Sullivan; dialect coach, Richard Lewis; props manager, Meg Brinkley; stage manager, Jessica Haley.

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The Fabulous Fox Theatre

A CHRISTMAS STORY THE MUSICA
12/16 - 1/4 • The Fabulous Fox Theatr



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Review • THE RESIDENTS OF CRAIGSLIS ERA

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Sunday, November 16, 2014

THE RESIDENTS OF CRAIGSLIST • ERA



Experimental theatre company, Equally Represented Arts, is currently staging an original piece created entirely from Craigslist ads. Yep, you heard me. Artistic director Lucy Cashion and associate artistic director Will Bonfiglio have sifted through local Craigslist posts and adapted a variety of entries into a unique one-act play.

Performed at the AlphaBetaClub on a no-frills set with chili pepper lights, a couple stacks of phonebooks, a few lawn chairs, and a drawn outline of a house, six actors (Cara Barresi, Will Bonfiglio, Mitch Eagles, Ellie Schwetye, Natasha Toro and Ryan Wiechmann) give life to a wide array of advertisements -- people trying to get rid of stuff, people looking for stuff, people looking to escape their past, or create their futures, and of course, the "casual encounters". There's no plot to speak of, but the passages range from spurned lovers and heartbreaking loners, to groups who gather to gossip, ponder the supernatural, hook up, or rant. Taken as a whole, these stories, no matter how wacky some of them are, are relatable because they all center on the shared common denominator of people trying to connect. Directed by Cashion, the members of the ensemble work wonderfully together in their moments as a choreographed chorus, and shine in their individual representations, painting vibrant portraits of the Craigslist denizens.

The play threatens to overstay its welcome near the end, and the accompanying music drowns out the performers on occasion, but this quirky play, sometimes hilarious, sometimes sad and