

## An Inspiring Ensemble

3/22/2019

[0 Comments](#)

As citizens of a contemporary society dealing with all of the problems of living in a modern age oversaturated with information, we are absolutely *crippled* by the weight of injustice in the world. It is appallingly easy to do nothing in the face of injustice. Get a group of the most clever people of an era together in one place and one would hope that it would be strikingly easy for them to set aside their differences, recognize injustice and do something about it. It's not as easy as that, though...a problem which is explored at length in **Steven Carl Mccasland's *Little Wars***--a drama about a meeting between Dorothy Parker, Lillian Hellman, Alice B. Toklas, Gertrude Stein and Agatha Christie in France in 1940. Bryce Lord directs a production of the drama for **the Milwaukee Entertainment Group** which is staged this month in **the Brumder Mansion**.

**Maggie Wirth** plays a very obstinate and intellectually dominant novelist Gertrude Stein. The play is set in Stein's home in Paris. As Stein's partner Alice B. Toklas, **Donna Daniels** is the sweet hostess balancing out Stein's bluntness. As the play opens, Stein and Toklas are prepared to receive guests. They are quite unprepared for the *number* of guests they are about to receive or the drama that is to ensue when they arrive.

**Ruth Arnell** plays the first to arrive: the American psychiatrist Muriel Gardiner. She's early. She's meeting Stein and Toklas on rather important business. Arnell plays the mysteriousness of Gardiner as something of an enigma in plain sight. Delicate nuances wash over Arnell's performance as each of the other guests arrive and begin to introduce themselves. Arnell is stirring heroic as the social conscience of the ensemble. She's an unknown among literary legends, but her ideals prove her to be a towering figure in her own right.

**Cara Johnston** cuts a dazzlingly shadowy figure as Dorothy Parker. Johnston plays the acclaimed

Russ Bickerstaff

### Archives

[March 2019](#)  
[February 2019](#)  
[January 2019](#)  
[December 2018](#)  
[November 2018](#)  
[October 2018](#)  
[September 2018](#)  
[August 2018](#)  
[July 2018](#)  
[June 2018](#)  
[May 2018](#)  
[April 2018](#)  
[March 2018](#)  
[February 2018](#)  
[January 2018](#)  
[December 2017](#)  
[November 2017](#)  
[October 2017](#)  
[September 2017](#)  
[August 2017](#)

### Categories

[All](#)

[RSS Feed](#)

**Carrie Gray** is inspiringly poised as playwright Lillian Hellman. There's a crisp precision about Gray as she constructs a very actively organic emotional resonance. In order to have achieved the level of success she had, Hellman had to be quite deft with the scalpel of interpersonal politics. Mccasland gives Hellman some of the most complicated internal dynamics in the ensemble. Gray handles these dizzying dynamics with tenaciously tame alacrity.

**Victoria Hudziak** is handed a challenge of an entirely different kind in playing Agatha Christie. Mccasland gives Christie a Sherlock Holmesian attention to detail that is paired with a clever tactical mind that keeps her from being completely open about all she knows. The challenge here is to play a character who is only *pretending* not to know A LOT more than she actually knows about a situation. Hudziak handles the intricate layering of Christie's tactical mind quite well.

**Molly Corkins** is achingly strong in silent stillness as Stein and Toklas' domestic aid Bernadette. Her resilience is revealed slowly from around the edges of the plot. As Bernadette, Corkins plays to another end of the same heroism that Arnell is conjuring as Muriel Gardiner. Corkins stands resolutely around the margins of the stage without over-rendering the heroic fortitude of the character, which is quite an accomplishment given the true nature of what she's portraying.

It's a really, really impressive cast from a variety of different backgrounds all coming together to play a group of people from a variety of different backgrounds. Rarely does an ensemble feel this well balanced on this many levels. It's a deeply engaging dramatic experience that comes across as an inspiration to those of us still struggling to find some way out to do something other than injustice in an increasingly bleak world.

Milwaukee Entertainment Group's production of *Little Wars* runs through **April 6th** at the **Brumder Mansion** on **3046 West Wisconsin Avenue**. For ticket reservations and more, visit [Milwaukee Entertainment Group online](#).

Like 71

Tweet

0 Comments

---

Leave a Reply.