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## Stripe and Spot (learn to) Get Along

[Sophie Kerman](#) / [June 8, 2014](#)

by SOPHIE KERMAN



Summer sees a nice trend in the Twin Cities: just like local produce, theater starts to appear that is local, affordable, and fresher than your average mass-market products. **Mixed Precipitation** does it with their annual Picnic Operettas, the **Classical Actors Ensemble** takes Shakespeare to the parks, and **Off-Leash Area** has their garage tour. I was lucky enough to preview their new original show, **Stripe and Spot (learn to) Get Along**, in its three-day run this weekend. It won't be starting its travels to neighborhood garages until Labor Day weekend, but it is just the kind of light and entertaining summer fare that is worth keeping in mind once those hot September evenings roll around.

The one-hour format, with a vaudevillian Sun (**Jesse Schmitz Boyd**) and Moon (**Jennifer Ilse**) narrating the pantomimed antics of Stripe (**Paul Herwig**) and Spot (**Taous Claire Khazem**), is family-friendly in many ways. As Stripe and Spot find themselves stranded on two sides of an island, they discover both the potential in their own creativity and, later, the consequences of their greed.

The story of two people who can't "play nice" has an easily understandable message for kids, while also serving as an easy metaphor for the dire situation of our modern world. (The moral, which focuses on rebuilding after conflict rather than on avoiding war in the first place, may or may not be a smart lesson for your kids, depending on how much like Stripe and Spot they actually are!)

The actors' use of chalk and mime also creates a playful atmosphere that certainly appealed to the kids at Saturday evening's performance. Herwig and Khazem are engaging performers who are well-trained in physical theater, with larger-than-life facial expressions that speak far more than words. Children who can't read might lose a joke or two during the (infrequent) use of subtitle cards, but thanks to the miming and narration, they will certainly understand the plot. The only potentially objectionable content is a scene where Ms. Sun and Mr. Moon indulge just a bit too much in their tropical beverages; they aren't promoting anything particularly scandalous, but their drunkenness feels somewhat incongruous with the otherwise very kid-friendly storyline.

Apart from the show's innovative performers, its other primary asset is its brilliant set by **Paul Herwig**. On a rotating platform with panels that are drawn on, flipped, and removed, Herwig's set is both an ingenious way to transform a small garage space and an immensely appealing-looking piece of playground equipment. (I bet he could make a lot of money marketing a plastic version of that thing.)

*Stripe and Spot* takes a small fable and tells it well. Fun and refreshing, it is a nice reminder that, like summer, theater is something we all can enjoy, no matter where we live or how old we are.

**Stripe and Spot (learn to) Get Along**, conceived by Paul Herwig & Jennifer Ilse. Presented by Off-Leash Area in garages around the Twin Cities, Labor Day weekend through late October.