



New troupe brings ‘Gulp’ to stage

[Bob Evans](#) | KC Applauds

THE OMNIVORES
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It’s the “C” word. It’s the dreaded, feared word and diagnosis that used to mean impending pain and death. But that was then, and now, it’s still one of the most devastating of diseases that claims lives daily. “Gulp,” a new play by Andrew Hagerty takes a fresh, but dramatic look at the ravages of Cancer.



The Omnivores/Squeeze Box Theatre

In Hagerty’s play the audience sees a different perspective

into the disease, the stress on victims, the stress on relationships, the strain on finances, the emotional swings, the fight for survival, the need for medical insurance, the emotional roller-coaster of victims and loved ones. Most everyone knows someone who died from a form of Cancer. And, most everyone has a story to tell that relates to Cancer. "Gulp" presents Hagerty's views.

The Omnivores, a new theatrical group debuted the drama at The Squeeze Box Theatre as a workshop piece, giving some younger thespians a chance to demonstrate and built their resumes. From on-stage actors to technical crews, the play allow Kansas City to build on the notion that the KC Metro continues as a hotbed of talent both on and off-stage.



Theatre

The Omnivores/Squeeze Box

"Gulp" tells the story of a young woman who discovers she has cancer. With no job, no medical insurance, and few options, she believes that she can not afford to live. An option does present itself that offers her the chance to receive treatment, but the strain on friendships, love, and emotions discolor her world and quickly take all control from her. Her only option is to fight as best she can and hope for the best.

The Omnivores/Squeeze Box Theatre



The compelling story quickly connects with the audience and takes them through the devastation of the disease and the treatment for victims. The emotional connection among the actors and the script shows that they understand and respond appropriately to the dialogue. There are some rough passages in the play that still need some revision. Some scenes are superb with masterful staging and lighting. Most of the dialogue sounds authentic. But, some of the connections and relationships just seem to quick, not realistic, and not clear. Some small revisions could make the play stronger. Still Hagerty's play is a fresh look at a serious issue. The direction by Amy O'Connor brings the piece to life and packs a big wallop with the cast she selected and the way she maneuvered them through the piece. The thread that holds the piece together is love. "Gulp" flows with love throughout and what people do as a result of love.

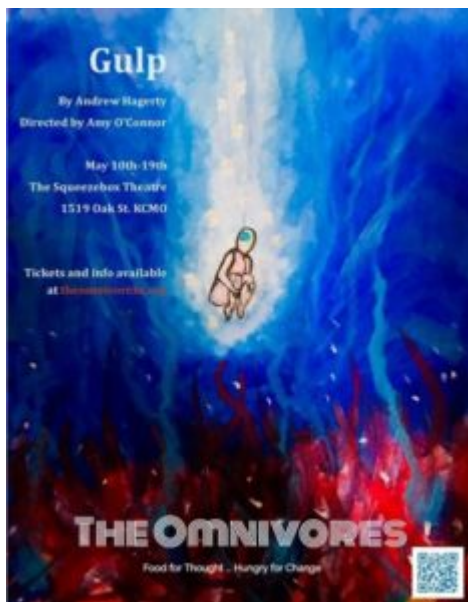
The Omnivores/Squeeze Box Theatre



The cast for "Gulp" deserves high praise for building their characters and allowing them to have depth and strong stage

presence. The cast is small, so each person must remain focused or the piece will collapse. The main character, played by Liz Kerwin, remains on stage for most of the 90 minute one-act. Her interactions with two other characters cements her character and gives Megan Sells and Jerry Manan a strong lead from which to build their characters, allowing them to show both dramatic and subtle character changes. Ai Vy Bui presents a character that allows her to display something new for Kansas City audiences. Her character is the light character in “Gulp’s” cast. She embraces the character and exudes the friendliness of the corner bar’s bartender.

The cast is Liz Kerlin as Lee, Megan Sells as Shenandoah, Jerry Manan as Washington, and Ai Vy Bui as Mavis. The crew is Andrea Awad, scenic design; Caroline Thomas, costume design; Micah Thompson, lighting design; Zach Pierson, sound design; Stephanie Roberts, intimacy choreography, Alexi Cioffi-Abt, stage manager; Claire McEwen, swing stage manager; Nick Wassermann, sound board operator.



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“Gulp” is a work in progress and very worthy of viewing. The show could be expanded to a two-hour play and still tell a gripping and tightly-focused play. The play, definitely a drama, might be difficult for those going through Cancer

treatment, those who recently lost a loved one to Cancer, or someone recently in remission from Cancer. The emotions associated with those categories bring the raw feelings to the forefront.

The play continues at The Squeeze Box Theater through May 19. The Omnivores make a statement with "Gulp." They are not to be overlooked. Don't stand back and watch; go see what they offer. "Gulp" is the first play produced by Hagerty and also the first play produced by The Omnivores Theatre group. They announced that their next adventure awaits.

"Next, we are making a video series addressing questions raised by the production and an audio drama series on podcast," Megan Sells said.

Tags: The Omnivores, "Gulp" review, The Squeeze Box Theatre, Kansas City Performing Arts, Kansas City Theatre, Kansas City Arts and Entertainment