

7th & Jordan

notes about IU Theatre + the
Department of Theatre and Drama

H-T PREVIEW: IU debuts new play by graduate student

Posted on [March 24, 2017](#)

By Joel Pierson, H-T Theater columnist



From left: Joshua Robinson, Chris Handley, and Josh Smith in rehearsal.

Man, I tell you, I can't catch a break.

My play, "I Saw Jesus at the Jiffy Treet," sits in a drawer, unread and unproduced. Meanwhile, Bruce Walsh's "Prospect Hill" is about to get a big premiere at IU Theater as part of their At First Sight new play series. OK, if pressed, I will admit that my story is an underdeveloped retelling of the day I met someone at the Jiffy Treet who looked a little bit like Jesus ... from the back. And Walsh is an MFA playwriting student who's created an intimate, humorous and poignant story about life in Bloomington through the eyes of a gay couple. Still, some guys get all the luck.

Every year, the Indiana University Department of Theatre and Drama selects a new work for a staged production, following months and even years of development. Bruce Walsh is a third-year MFA playwright, and over the course of his graduate studies, he's worked with the faculty to develop his script, building up to this month's premiere.

Just west of downtown, the Prospect Hill neighborhood stretches from Second Street to Kirkwood, and from the railroad tracks to the cemetery. This quiet neighborhood lends the play its title, in a story of three men battling fear, addiction, and resentment in a world that's becoming more and more divisive. What results is a tale of hope and faith — a tale of redemption in challenging times.

Peter Gil-Sheridan, the head of the playwriting program, has worked with Walsh during the past year, using workshops and staged readings to get the script ready for its big day. The author is no stranger to the process; last

year, his play “Berserker” saw a main stage production as well. “Prospect Hill” is his thesis project, and all indications are that he’s more than ready.

Walsh came to Bloomington from Philadelphia, where he was a playwright and a journalist. (I like this guy already.) He’s also the author of plays such as “Far Country,” “Whiskey Neat,” “Chomsky vs. Buckley,” “1969” and “The Guided Tour” and co-author of “Holly’s Dead Soldiers.”

Of his new work, Walsh says, “Before deciding on an M.F.A. track, I strongly considered Episcopal seminary. My fascination with sacredness infuses all of my writing, but not in the ways people often expect. I have no interest in prescribing moral codes. My characters are bold, queer, angry, ridiculous, joyous, deeply sexual beings.”

Bloomington is a city that celebrates new plays, and IU always rises to the occasion. Having the latest entry take place right here adds another dimension to a play that will already touch the hearts and minds of those with an eye to see and an ear to hear.

Contact Joel by sending an email to features@heraldt.com with “Pierson” in the subject line.

If you go

WHO: Indiana University Department of Theatre, Drama, and Contemporary Dance

WHAT: “Prospect Hill” by Bruce Walsh

WHERE: Wells-Metz Theater, 275 N. Jordan Ave., Bloomington

WHEN: 7:30 p.m. March 24-25, 28-April 1; 2 p.m. April 1

TICKETS: \$15-\$25. Call 812-855-1103 or visit theatre.indiana.edu.

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