



## Fringe: CYCLE – A Vaudeville Comedy

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by Duncan Pflaster

Rose Courtney's play *CYCLE: A Vaudeville Comedy* is a sweet and amusing piece. After an opening interlude with two stagehands (Ashley Pearse and Joseph Lopez) who play and sing a bit as the audience enters, we are introduced to a troupe of traveling vaudevillians from the 30s- Lenny (J.T. Arbogast), the

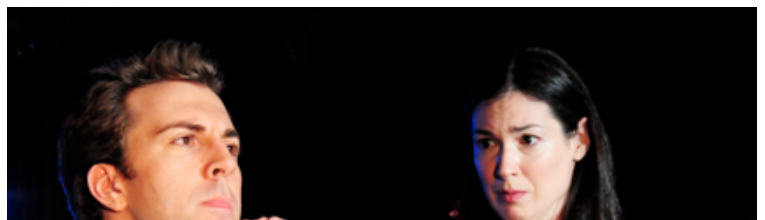


leading man, Fran (Krista Braun), the grande dame, Betty (Danielle Cautela), a dancer and violinist, Violet (Halley Zien), the ingénue, and William (Eric Zuckerman), the character man. They show up expecting to play The Palace, until their manager Morris (Michael E. Lopez) shows up and informs them that due to a slip of the tongue, he accidentally said the name of The Scottish Play on the way, and they've flashed forward in time to our present. Morris found a note in his hat telling him that they have to find the key to a hit, or "kiss lady vaudeville goodbye".



Their steamer trunk opens to reveal Charlotte (playwright Courtney), an unsure semi-suicidal young woman, who is depressed about her birthday. The Vaudevillians decide that they must help Charlotte find The Secret of Success, and stage a day for her of trials and opportunities, a rabbit-hole journey where everyone tells her something else is The Secret of Success, bouncing her from movie auditions to voice lessons to vehicular manslaughter. Along the way the thespians pull out all their schtick, with stock characters, a little softshoe (Choreography by [Laura Sheehy](#)), bad jokes, Shakespeare, Chekhov, singing (music by Rachel Kaufman, when not 1930s standards), and a little old-fashioned razzamatazz. In a way, it's sort of a modern distaff counterpoint to *Pippin*, though here the acting troupe is trying to save their star from suicide.

The cast is delightful, especially Arbogast, Braun, and Courtney, but all have wonderful moments throughout. Each proves they are as well-rounded in performance as a Vaudevillian should be. The performance I saw was at Noon, and the Spiegel Tent Fringe venue was oppressively hot, which damped down the



audience response, but the actors were still game and pulled off an effective show.

**CYCLE: a Vaudeville Comedy**

Wiltsie Bridge Productions in association with  
Jeremy Handleman/Off the Leash Productions

Part of the 2008 New York International  
Fringe Festival at Venue #4 at The Deluxe of  
Spiegelworld. Remaining performances:

Wed, Aug 20 @ 7:15pm, Sat, Aug 23 @ 9:15pm

**Photo Credit:**

- 1. Danielle Cautela as Betty**
- 2. J.T. Arbogast as Lenny and Rose Courtney as Charlotte.**



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Duncan Pflaster is an award-winning playwright (2 time winner, Spotlight On Award, "Best New Play" 2005 and 2006), whose plays have been produced in Florida, Georgia, New Jersey, and New York. He also has been known to direct, write music, play the ukulele, and (if his arm is twisted) act.