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Fringe Festival 2008 Reviews!

Krapp, 39, Behold, the Bowery!, Nudists in Love, and more

By **Various**

Tuesday, August 12th 2008

Stay tuned here to our own "Fringe Central" as we post online reviews of productions in this year's New York International Fringe Festival. New reviews added daily. (For tickets, show times, and addresses, check out www.fringenyc.org).

Krapp, 39

If *Krapp's Last Tape* is a little white pill of Samuel Beckett's concoction, then Michael Laurence has swallowed it whole. But as we watch Laurence, wracked bodily by the dramatic prescription, it becomes plain that his *Krapp, 39* (Schaeberle Studio Theatre/Pace) is no mere Beckett riff— it's a thoughtful response, a valuable contribution. On his 69th birthday, Beckett's Krapp sits alone, becoming steadily drunk and revisiting tapes from his 30-years-younger self.

Disarmed by the Krapp of birthdays past, who shunted love and produced writing of value equal to his name, he struggles to affirm the sad direction his life has taken.

Krapp, 39 finds Laurence (the writer and sole performer) turning 39, planning to record the monologue Krapp recorded at the same age, in the hopes that he'll live to use it in a production of the Beckett one-act 30 years in the future. As Laurence ponders the imagined performance, he undergoes his own Krapp-like self-investigation: Wielding the same torturous honesty to which Beckett subjected his miserable anti-hero, Laurence videotapes himself in brutal close-up as he unearths old journals, a phone message from his dead mother, and other messy, primary-source

photo by Dixie Sheridan



Krapp, 39

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by Trav S.D.

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evidence of a life about which he's profoundly ambivalent. Using Beckett's play like a fun-house mirror, *39* presents a mesmerizing, distorted vision of Krapp's unwholesome solitude, melded with Laurence's own quirks and failings. With courageous candor and humor, Laurence enters into an eerie communion with *Krapp*, and the resulting work is a thing of startling, wounding beauty. RUTH MCCANN

Cycle

You can't tell what's going on half the time in Rose Courtney's *Cycle* (Spiegelworld), but you don't care. As staged by Craig Carlisle, this refreshingly sweet dream play moves so fast and fascinatingly that you're content to watch, trusting you'll catch up in a minute or two—and you generally do. Courtney plays a nebbishy, bespectacled young lonely-heart named Charlotte, who plans to kill herself if she doesn't achieve success before the sun sets on her birthday. Her salvation comes in the form of a lovable and mysteriously immortal vaudeville troupe: Having uttered the name of the Scottish play, as penance the company has been hurled into the future to help her.

The interplay of this FringeNYC piece's talented sextet—who sing, dance, juggle, scrape a fiddle, and even act Chekhov—calls to mind everything from Pirandello to *The Fantasticks*. Unable to think of any success but the theatrical kind, the troupers thrust themselves before Charlotte in countless guises, prodding her rung-by-rung up the ladder of stardom. In the end, true success proves to be of the "no place like home" variety. In other hands, this journey might have been nauseating. Here, it feels like an inspired, overdue, and rather brave counterweight to a decade of "edge." TRAV S.D.

Creena Defoouie

Years after her yodeling sister Mary Annabel met a grisly demise, psychotherapist Creena Defoouie is still looking for "the spoon-shape-headed bastard" who murdered her. But until she finds the culprit, Creena (the lustrous Charlotte Barton-Hoare) is killing time by killing patients at her very own counseling center, Rambey House—"the abode that homes half-wits who lack harmony and hormonal balance." In her feather-trimmed hot pants, thigh-high boots, and tailcoat, the shrink is a tad unbalanced herself. But if one is possessed of a sufficiently dark perspective on the humorous, it's nigh impossible to resist the perpetually grimacing Creena—that elastic face! Those lipsticked lips! Those thyridic eyes!

Visiting the Fringe Festival from the Isle of Wight, *Creena Defoouie* (Studio at Cherry Lane) is a vampy, pitch-black comedy that revels in the same twisted (but deeply satisfying) British sensibilities that make *Little Britain* and Mitchell and Webb so delightful. Musical numbers penned by costar-director James Hoare are polished and catchy, despite their unusual subject matter: The bucktoothed "nutter" Kenny sings away his dental worries, and Creena belts about her lost love Bertie ("Tell me why, oh, you moved to Ohio!"). Even as Superintendent Hardon (Hoare) comes ever closer to putting Creena behind bars, the piece keeps up its mesmerizing energy, with Creena dancing (and dildo-fighting) her way to the bitter, schizophrenic end. RUTH MCCANN

That Dorothy Parker


Carol Lempert's thin biographical solo show *That Dorothy Parker* (Soho Playhouse) begins in January of 1943 with the famously quick-witted writer struggling to compose a eulogy for critic and fellow Algonquin Round Table member Alexander Woollcott. Flashing back to their first Algonquin lunch in 1919, Lempert takes us through Parker's literary career—from her work at *The New Yorker* to her stint as a screenwriter in Hollywood to her time in Madrid during the Spanish Civil War—and all the lovers, marriages, suicide attempts, and bottles of Scotch in between.

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