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## Fritz and Froyim

June 1st, 2007 - June 16th, 2007  
The Turtle's Shell Theater  
300 W. 43rd St., 4th Floor

**TURTLE SHELL PRODUCTIONS**

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## Fritz and Froyim

Posted June 7, 2007, 12 PM

If you've ever been curious about the disruptive effect that a ghost might have on the life of a former German SS officer—especially if that apparition happened to be a Jewish comedian, *Fritz and Froyim* should answer all your questions and more. Turtle Shell Productions' second collaboration this season with maverick veteran playwright Norman Beim is an electroshock-driven musical of ironic pairings, *Cabaret-meets-The Twilight Zone*, where song and dance mix with wartime guilt to do some righteous spooking.



Matthew Hardy as Froyim's ghost

At play's opening we find ex-Nazi Fritz performing with a ventriloquist doll named Froyim (adorned with a doll-sized Star of David). Throughout the play, however, their roles reverse as Fritz dummies up for the specter of Froyim, a showbiz triple threat who not coincidentally was a victim of Hitler's extermination campaign. While losing his job, his wife and possibly his sanity, Fritz attempts to rid himself of Froyim, trying everything from a magic show exorcism to



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shock therapy to boning up on Jewish rituals in the *Tanakh*. In the end, Fritz can escape neither Froyim nor his guilty conscience, leaving the audience to ponder Fritz's unappeasable need to repent for his sins.



*T.J. Mannix as Fritz*

Froyim, played by wildly talented Matthew Hardy, manages to modulate the dramatic mood with jokes, soft-shoe and the delivery of witty songs (lyrics by Mr. Beim and music by Mark Barkan and Rolf Barnes). The musical director and accompanist, delightfully droll Tracy Stark, bolsters the ensemble of deft supporting players. Smart choreography by Cheryl Cutlip sends both the living and the dead hoofing blithely into the realm of surrealism.

The set, a series of darkened screens, is deceptively static, but once the ghost of Froyim appears, scenic designer Ryan Scott and lighting designer Eric Larson expertly transport us beyond the mortal plane.

While an overwrought trip down memory lane in act two doesn't quite balance with the crisp and bitter story of act one, director John W. Cooper manages to keep this musical afloat amid its serious subject matter. Sometimes sensitive, often profane, *Fritz and Froyim* turns the sad familiar face of genocide into something freshly abhorrent.

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*Up-To-The-Minute Review written by Callie Worsham, contributing columnist.*

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