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Trick Boxing

"That show kicked ass," one audience member said to a friend as we left the theatre, neatly summarizing this wonderfully charming piece from Minnesota actors Brian Sostek and Megan McClellan. It was one of the big hits at the Minnesota Fringe last summer, and it's likely to repeat the success here if the reaction on the weekend is any indication. Word will get around fast about this show.

An affectionate send-up of Hollywood movies of the 1930s and 40s, the show tells the story of an immigrant apple seller played by Sostek who is transformed into a boxer by a shifty boxing promoter.

Along the way, the boxer meets Bella, a classy dame who wins his heart on the dance floor.

Sostek and McClellan get the jargon and tone of the movies of the period exactly right. Sostek plays several different characters, effortlessly switching voices and accents (movie buffs will love Sostek's ace impression of character actor Ed Wynn).

In a particularly clever stroke, Sostek enacts the climactic boxing scenes by manipulating puppets on a tiny boxing ring and offering the play-by-play himself.

The actors are also professional dancers, and they offer several winning swing-dance sequences on the tiny stage that recall Fred and Ginger at their most playful. The actors will teach a dance workshop today at 1 p.m. at Arts Court's Dance Studio. (\$10).

Trick Boxing continues at Arts Court Library Thursday at 7 p.m., Friday at 9 p.m., Saturday at 10:30 p.m. and Sunday at 5:30 p.m.

— Steven Mazey