

METRO/STATE

FACES & PLACES

Theater review

Charm and spirit of 'Trick Boxing' keep audience in its corner

By Camille LeFevre
Special to the Star Tribune

Since it premiered at the 2002 Minnesota Fringe Festival, "Trick Boxing" has been described by critics in three countries as "a knockout." And indeed it is. The pugilistic performance piece, choreographed and performed by Minneapolitans Brian Sostek and Megan McClellan, is as tight as a one-two punch, with timing that rivals Swiss clockwork, and brimming with a fleet-footed charm from beginning to end.

The story is simple, though not without some twists. A sweet, naïve immigrant apple seller dodges trouble, his footwork is noticed by a shifty boxing promoter, and David Danielovich is suddenly hustled into the boxing ring — with promises of fame and fortune — as Dancing Danny David. Meanwhile, the seductive Bella begins tutoring the young boxer in the intricacies of swing dancing, whose fancy footwork will come in handy.

All the male characters are played by Sostek, who is the prism through which the glimmering facets of this production shine. With a swift turn on his heel, he physically and verbally transforms himself from fast-talking street con to trusting Russian immigrant; from the hunched-over, torso-twisted, Darth Vader-breathing

Trick Boxing

What: By Brian Sostek and Megan McClellan

When: 8 p.m., Friday-Sunday.

Where: Southern Theater, 1420 Washington Av. S., Minneapolis.

Review: A 50-minute charmer, this show remains a knockout.

Tickets: \$20. 612-340-1725

fight fixer to the finger-fluttering bookie. He even announces the hilarious puppet-boxing matches — which had the audience cheering — in the classic nasal monotone of a boxing announcer.

Into the mix flits McClellan as Bella. With Sostek, she whirls through an ever-faster, patty-cake primer of boxing moves set to "Tea for Two." But Danny takes to dancing a lot faster than boxing under the swanky Bella's direction. The couple's Fred-and-Ginger duets are as smooth as a cinema dream and chock-full of dance bits that give the choreography a delicious texture.

The delightful 50-minute piece ends with an exuberant, high-stepping duet that celebrates Bella and Danny's good luck and leaves the audience with spirits soaring. Perhaps there's more to Danny's magical "Happy" watch than even time can tell.

Camille LeFevre is a St. Paul writer.