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# The Complete History of Comedy (abridged) (Review)

The Reduced Shakespeare Company's fast-and-furious foray is a dizzying night's entertainment  
By Rick Pender · November 15th, 2013 · Onstage



Complete History of Comedy (Abridged) - Photo: John Burgess

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### Critic's Pick

Having assembled satires that distill the works of William Shakespeare, the Bible, American history, Hollywood, sports and "Great Books," the Reduced Shakespeare Company has finally gotten around to its true subject, *The Complete History of Comedy (abridged)*. Their philosophy: "Get in. Get the laugh. Get out." They live by it.

This is their ninth fast-and-furious foray paying tribute to the subject and offering laugh-out-loud entertainment. We're getting the show's world premiere at the Cincinnati Playhouse, so a few bits aren't quite working yet (the performers are quick to point them out), but most of the material is fresh and funny — from top 10 lists with unexpected photos to a scene rendition of off-beat Chekhov (he considered his plays to be comedies) and a great piece of political satire, sending up the Supreme Court with puppets and tunes by the Supremes.

It's performed by three guys: co-authors Reed Martin and Austin Tichenor and rubbery-faced actor Dominic Conti, who came along in 2005, when RSC premiered *The Complete History of America (abridged)* at the Playhouse.

If you've seen other RSC shows, you'll recognize the three basic characters — Tichenor is an intellectual, Martin a kind of enforcer and Conti a manic man-child.

The three play numerous roles, making quick changes and sharp quips when things go awry, such as a wig falling off. Tichenor easily shifts gears from a stern, arch moderator to a sweet, ukulele-playing observer of all things comic. Martin is especially hilarious as "Rambozo," clown, philosopher and macho comedy guerilla wearing double bandoliers loaded with bananas. Conti's stand-up as America's funniest president, Abraham Lincoln, is memorable, but watch for his dead-on representation of a familiar character from *Seinfeld*.

Bottom line, *The Complete History of Comedy* is a dizzying night's entertainment, as it should be. Arrive early enough to peruse the timeline of comedy posted on the Shelterhouse Theater's walls: It's the work of some serious minds exploring the art of comedy.

If you've ever enjoyed *Shakespeare (abridged)*, this will be right up your alley. I've seen that one enough times to grow weary of it, so I'm glad to be reminded that these guys are truly adept jokesters, physical shtick, wordplay, music, improv — they can do it all and they are, right here in Cincinnati.

**THE COMPLETE HISTORY OF COMEDY (ABRIDGED)**, presented by the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, continues through Dec. 29.



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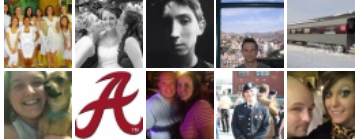
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