



K. BRIAN NEEL and 18TH & UNION present

# OROBORO

A COMEDY WITH LOOPS

Alice in Wonderland meets Franz Kafka in this madcap comedy slash conceptual theater piece. Made up of scenes that swirl and wrap around each other, OROBORO is brainy and physical, a psychedelic fractal of a show. 4 SHOWS ONLY! Saturdays, Jan. 21 - Feb. 11, 7:30pm.

## OROBORO:

OROBORO is a comedy with loops\*. Made up of scenes that swirl and wrap around each other, OROBORO is brainy and physical, a psychedelic fractal of a show.

Go on an infinite first date. Meet a literally soul-eating middle manager. Listen in on a phone call to the patron saint of his own lost cause. And become an imaginary friend.

Developed using math and improvisation\*\*, OROBORO is madcap comedy meets conceptual theatre. Alice in Wonderland meets Franz Kafka.

## K. Brian Neel:

K. Brian Neel has created seven award winning solo plays including the ukulele operetta VAUD RATS, the time travel trilogy THE 42ND FLOOR, the noir film on stage DOUBLE CLIMAX, and the fantasy epic PRYK. These shows have performed across the US, Canada, and Australia.

His dynamic, highly physical performance style has been called “Riveting” - *National Public Radio*, “Virtuoso” - *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, “Dynamic, engrossing, funny, heartbreaking, poignant, unique” - *Charleston City Paper*, and “Astonishingly great” - *Calgary Straight, Vancouver, Canada*. “Neel’s onto something.” - *Washington Post*.

\* Life is a cycle. A spiral, a circle. We see it in the smallest snail shell and the great Milky Way galaxy. We see it in our lives: birth to childhood to adulthood, dating to marriage to parenthood... the beginning of a new birth, etcetera onward. Yet we look for ends in everything. Ends to our weeks, months, years. Ends to our stories. Mostly we want that.

\*\* Just like Lewis Carroll’s work, OROBORO was created using using symbolic logic. Formulas were used to write core elements and scenes. Then in rehearsal, K. Brian Neel improvised around these loops to develop connective tissue to complete the final script.

## OROBORO

Written & Performed  
by K. Brian Neel

Directing Consultant:  
Meghan Arnette

Movement Consultant:  
Juliet Waller Pruzan

**Jan. 21 - Feb 11, 2017**  
**Saturdays 7:30pm**

Tickets: \$12 - \$25  
Runtime: 70 minutes

**18th & Union**  
1406 18th Ave.  
Seattle, WA 98122

Tickets:  
**18thandunion.org/oroboro**

Information:  
**kbrianneel.com**

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## More about K. Brian Neel

The inimitable K. Brian Neel has been amazing audiences around the globe for over twenty years. From his dynamic, highly physical performance style to his award-winning directing and published writing, Brian is sure to captivate and inspire.

While still a student at the University of New Mexico Brian began working with the experimental improvisation ensemble, Kings' Elephant Theater. This eventually led to his moving to Seattle, Washington in 1989 where he completed his studies at the University of Washington with a BS in Psychology. Since then he has performed and directed in numerous Seattle area theaters including Book-It Repertory Theater, Seattle Public Theater, Village Theatre, Empty Space Theatre, Annex Theatre, Live Girls Theater, On The Boards, and Intiman Theatre.

Brian's eclectic resume includes musical performances at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, stage directing Verdi's "Louisa Miller" for Puget Sound Opera, clown work for Teatro Zinzanni, writing and performing theatrical components for Carnegie Hall's educational concerts at the Seattle Symphony, doing performance art with Helsinki Syndrome at Ontological-Hysteric Theater in New York, and performing in the web based science fiction series, The Coffee Table. Brian was an eight-year ensemble member and director of the Seattle Mime Theater. He is a current ensemble member of Magic Circle Mime, regarded as one of today's premier family attractions, uniting the concert orchestra with visual theater.

Brian resides in Seattle with his wife and two daughters in a house that he largely designed and built himself - a holdover activity from his days as an architecture student in New Mexico.

His solo shows have taken him all over the United States, Canada, and Australia. They include the following:

**THE 42ND FLOOR:** Merging science fiction with physical theatre, The 42nd Floor is an hilarious, mind-bending trilogy inspired by the work of Philip K. Dick, Ambrose Bierce and John Collier. One story plays out a riveting psychological dilemma, another revolves around a dizzying time-travel enigma, and the last is a zany tall tale of the most absurd variety; all joined by themes of paradox and fate. "Combines the monologue skills of Spalding Gray with the physical comedy of Mr. Bean." - Vancouver Review, Canada "A compelling mixture of awe and horror." - The Stranger, Seattle

**DOUBLE CLIMAX:** K. Brian Neel's third solo play, is noir film live on stage. The story of an innocent man caught between an insurance scam and bizarre love triangle. A mystery where deviance is submerged beneath lies, and friendship is a way to manipulate treachery. Neel glides seamlessly from character to character revealing twists and turns with lightning speed, even reciting shot descriptions to complete the cinematic experience. **CRITIC'S PICK** - Chicago Reader, Seattle Weekly "Hollywood doesn't need to spend millions making a film; not when it can be done by a bloke in a shirt with two chairs as props. This cinematic story, appropriately performed in a cinema, is memorable, pure, live theatre." - Adelaide Advertiser, Australia

**PRYK:** K. Brian Neel seamlessly juggles over 35 characters in this fantasy epic. The fantasy writer met success early with his imaginary land, Werndoald, and bought his dream home. Now, with his fourth book due and the advance money gone, he has writer's block and must bring in boarders to pay his mortgage. The eccentric renters initially inspire further adventures in Werndoald, but soon the worlds merge, threatening the writer's sanity, and possibly his life. "No other actor in Seattle is better at bringing to life multiple characters and myriad settings on a bare stage than the dazzlingly virtuosic K Brian Neel. His newest offering showcases his skills admirably." - Seattle Stranger

**VAUD RATS:** "Neel rocked! I never imagined that a guy and a uke would hold my attention for 90 minutes. But -- I was riveted." - National Public Radio Cecil B. DeUkulele was Big Time. He played the Palace and the Hippodrome and every ritzy Vaudeville\* house on the Keith-Albee circuit. From the time he was a kid hoofing a song-and-dance, to the comedic headlining patter-man\* he became, Cecil was born to trod the boards and always knocked 'em bowlegged. But then one bad business move puts him on the blacklist. His agent has no option but to sign him to a small small time nine-act of washed up deadbeats touring Odd Fellows halls and community auditoriums in midwest stix U.S.A. The silver lining: our hero falls head over heels for a brunette midget sidekick in a strong man routine. The tragedy: the strong man is the husband. Cecil finds himself singing to the rats in an abandoned warehouse in an unknown whistlestop in the middle of... without a circuit, without an agent, without a cent. He's just rearing up for the wow finish! "You gotta love the sweat on K. Brian Neel's face as he perform his one-man ukulele operetta... With his gangster smile and that wee little instrument together throwing off a kind of gritty sentiment, Neel's onto something." - Washington Post

## OROBORO Began as a Math Experiment

### A note from the playwright

I've always been interested in symbolic logic. In high school I stumbled upon a book in a second hand book shop in New Mexico: Symbolic Logic and the Game of Logic by Lewis Carroll, writer of Alice in Wonderland. The book begins with an invitation: it's easy as pie this symbolic logic thing, anyone can understand it. In reality this was not the case. It was just as you'd expect: densely cryptic, neigh on incomprehensible without a degree in something dense and cryptic. But my curiosity was piqued, and I have always been one for a challenge. In college I took a few logic and symbolic logic classes, read other books, and reached a point where I could read the Lewis Carroll tome. (I mean, I still haven't really read it, but I probably could now.)

Cut to fifteen years later: I'm dabbling at some writing one evening. (I don't know maybe I was drunk or something.) I get to wondering if there's a way to write dialogue from a symbolic formula. Further, I wonder if it's possible to write it with infinite parameters -- infinite regress, the Droste effect (infinity mirrors), stuff like that. Other fiction writers have done it. Jon Scieszka did it in the children's book *The Stinky Cheese Man*.

I wrote out a simple formula (a bastardization of Hypothetical Syllogism):

if A, then B  
if B, then C  
C is A  
so  
If C then B  
If B then A  
A is C  
etc.

Then I equated plot concept elements to the symbols in the formulas:

A = X's love, B = Z's beauty, C = Z's love

And wrote the scene which follows:

X: I love you.  
Z: Why?  
X: Because you are beautiful.  
Z: I'm beautiful because I love you.  
X: Why?  
Z: Because you are beautiful.  
X: I'm beautiful because I love you.  
Z: Why?  
etc...

I continued to write more formulas, more equated elements, all of which bore more loops. Over the years the scenes and monologues piled up. I put some on my web site, and figured that's that. I mean, what could be done on stage with this weirdness? Performing them would be, not impossible, but fruitless in a way.

Cut to a few years later. I'm working on my next full-length solo show, a three hour political intrigue epic, when Scotto Moore asks if I'd like to perform for Annex Theatre's cabaret, *Spin The Bottle*. I say "heck yeah. I'll do a ukulele song" (My last solo show was the original ukulele operetta, *Vaud Rats*.) He says, "The evening has way too much music. Do something else." I pulled two solo loops out of the drawer. The response was wonderful. I put the epic solo show I'd been working on to the side, and went to see if I could make a greater evening out of these loops.

Most of my early work is very improvisational. I was in an improv company for nine years -- Kings' Elephant Theater. We did full-length, non-traditional stuff. And my first several solo shows were developed through improv. I'd been wanting to return to this kind of process. So I set up some of my loop solo scenes as anchors and started improvising around them.

OROBORO is what spewed out the other end.

At first it may seem like sketch comedy. In a way it is. (Have you ever seen The Cody Rivers show? Or the work

of Seattle solo performer and singer from the 90's Steven Rappaport?) But it's more than that. By making a play comprised of scenes with no end, it begs the question: Does a play need an end?

Through the process of creation, this piece has become an exploration in cycles. Our experiences are cycles -- spirals and circles. Yet, we look for ends. We need ends. We feel unsatisfied without them. Especially in our stories.

Stories like the one that is OROBORO.

## The Plot (?)

**SPOILER WARNING! This gives away the entire show.  
(Helpful to those who've seen it already, perhaps.)**

A man rises up from the audience and debates whether it would be better to be the center of attention in paradise or purgatory. He then starts a whisper chain through the audience and ends up taking someone in the audience on a "first date". Thing is, he can't decide what the date should be and ends up going through every permutation. There's an aside where someone talks about a happy friend giving a sad friend advice, that ends up looping over and over. The audience date goes to a restaurant, ending up with a hernia burst on the table. Our hero then drives and sees someone continually appear on the sidewalk. After passing this person several times, he pulls over the car, approaches the man, opens a door in the person's chest and his own as well. The impossible date moves on to an art gallery opening. He's pulled into a painting of an old lady. She leads him toward a tree house, and calls him imaginary. Interspersed in that journey, a little boy tells the origin story of how Myrtle (the old lady) invented an imaginary friend (Ethy) who eventually became more popular in town than she, so she escaped to live in a treehouse. The imaginary boy (the man from the first date?) being led by Myrtle collapses. Myrtle sings him a lullaby, but he fades into thin air. She calls Saint Jude, who ends up going on and on and on about how he's fed up with people praying to him, how the human race is lost, and how the twelve apostles were misunderstood mere-humans led by a man who had no idea his preachings would eventually become the opposite of what was intended. (In here we get a glimpse of a god, maybe, who holds a demonic position as a middle manager, continually eating the souls of his employees over and over again.) Then our hero discovers game cards hidden all over his body that seem to explain the extent of his crazy life, how it's gotten out of his control. He's sucked into a movement piece going through the monotonous work-a-day drudgery, day after day after day, then full stop. The date has turned into something unplanned and kind of wrong, it's become an unintended life together. Comfortable yet claustrophobic. So he undermines it by destroying the man he blames for it all: the man in the mirror. A thoroughly modern destruction -- internet identity theft, credit card theft, undermining his marriage, etc. Our hero ends up in a seedy motel without a penny, ready to destroy the person who destroyed him -- himself. Yet... he steps through the bathroom mirror, back into the theater. He takes the audience member on a final first date. They attend a theater performance. This very one. They sit and he asks why we need endings to our stories, when there is no end to life? Lights fade. Not the end.