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Friday, 4th September 2009

## Theatre review: Couples counselling

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COUPLES COUNSELING

VENUE 13 (VENUE 13)

IF THERE was an award for most ellipses used in a play on the Fringe, then here's your winner. Dialogue skips and hesitates and tails off as characters reconsider what they say mid-sentence. Half-formed thoughts and implication

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s collide in staccato bursts and when one character or another does reach a full stop it's usually at the end of a disbelieving "f\*\*\* you". Carey Lovelace's script clearly owes a debt to the stylisations of Mamet, and some audiences may find such verbal mannerisms hard to penetrate.

Yet this comedic love triangle between a neurotic man (James B Kennedy), his unfulfilled wife (Anna Margaret Hollyman) and their ineffectual marriage guidance counsellor Dr Bob (Jack Gilpin) is subtly very amusing. Although the format and delivery is occasionally oblique, the series of two- and three-way conversations, and occasionally monologues directed at an absent other, draw attention to the fact that these oddballs' problems are as much with themselves as with others.

An entertaining black comedy of errors in itself, Gilpin's awkward, self-absorbed performance and a bravura three-way phone-call sequence near the end are reasons for recommending this show.

DAVID POLLOCK

Until 22 August. Today 5:45pm.

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