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By Laurel Graeber

## 'CUT TO THE CHASE'

At the start of Parallel Exit's latest production, you may be reminded of "Let's Make a Deal." Three closed doors face the audience with enigmatic promise. But while the shows have other similarities -- crazy costumes, squealing and placards held aloft -- no one is asked to make a fateful choice among doors. At the end of this hour everyone goes home a winner.

The doors, slammed open and shut, are the shifting gears in a comedy that's largely wordless (except for a few songs). Inspired, as are all the company's works, by the films of Buster Keaton and Charlie Chaplin, this vaudeville is actually about vaudeville. It presents a ragtag troupe: Dilly (Laura Dillman), a diminutive usher; Dobson (Mike Dobson), a percussionist; the Great Jeske (Joel Jeske), impresario and M.C.; Julietta Massina (Juliet Jeske, married to Mr. Jeske), the singing diva; Kasper (Ryan Kasprzak), a gentle buffoon; Little Angela (Andrea Kehler), an overgrown Shirley Temple; and Roland Derek (Derek Roland), a suave magician. The similarity between the characters' names and the actors' makes you suspect that the performers have a certain cozy closeness with their fictional personalities.

Mr. Jeske conceived and wrote the show, named for the silent-film resort of "cutting to the chase" when the audience might be bored. And as he demonstrated with Mr. Kasprzak in 2005 in "This Way That Way," Parallel Exit is gifted not only at sight gags, but also at sound gags. Dilly and Julietta, romantic rivals, turn the singing of "Shine On Harvest Moon" into a duel, and in one inspired moment Dobson plays an instrument that looks like a xylophone but whose keys are inflated balloons. You have to see it -- and hear it.

The performance, directed by Mark Lonergan, also includes bravura tap dancing, nifty magic tricks and speed-demon hat juggling. And never a need to cut to the chase.