

# Birbiglia brings funny look at relationships

'My Girlfriend's Boyfriend' enjoyed successful off-Broadway run

By Paul Hyde

Arts Writer

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Mike Birbiglia, 33, brings his hit one-man show, "My Girlfriend's Boyfriend," to the Peace Center on Thursday at 7:30 p.m.

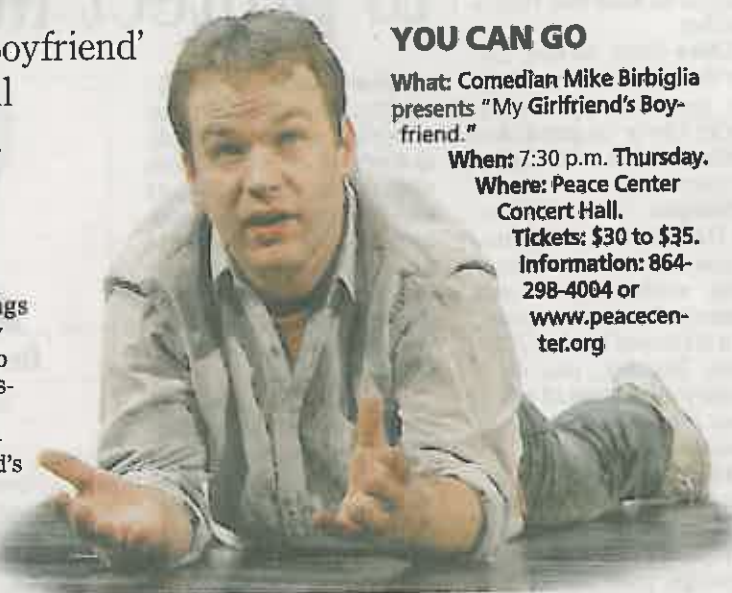
The popular off-Broadway run of "My Girlfriend's Boyfriend" won praise from the critics, including *The New York Times*' Neil Genzlinger, who called Birbiglia "ridiculously enjoyable to listen to."

Birbiglia has appeared on numerous TV shows, including ABC's "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" and will be familiar to fans of Chicago Public Radio's "This American Life."

*The Greenville News* caught up with Birbiglia via e-mail at the Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah, where the comedian was premiering "Sleepwalk With Me," a film he wrote and directed.

**The Greenville News:** Tell us about "My Girlfriend's Boyfriend."

Birbiglia: "My Girl-



Mike Birbiglia's "My Girlfriend's Boyfriend" comes to the Peace Center on Thursday. /CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

## YOU CAN GO

**What:** Comedian Mike Birbiglia presents "My Girlfriend's Boyfriend."

**When:** 7:30 p.m. Thursday.

**Where:** Peace Center Concert Hall.

**Tickets:** \$30 to \$35.

**Information:** 864-

298-4004 or

[www.peacecenter.org](http://www.peacecenter.org)

friend's Boyfriend" is a one-man show that ran off-Broadway at the Barrow Street Theatre in 2011 for about 100 performances. It's basically about all of the painful romantic experiences I've had in my life and how those affected my relationships as an adult — how it led to me having a deep fear of marriage, to the point where I didn't believe in marriage at all — and how, despite that, I decided to get married.

**GN:** Does your show take an optimistic or pessimistic view of relationships?

**Birbiglia:** What I try to do is take the funniest and most pessimistic view of the subject I'm coming at — in this case, marriage — but I try to come at it hard from the direction of optimism as well. So in that sense, it's a fierce battle. Who wins? The audience I hope!

**GN:** How does it feel to relive all those "painful romantic experiences," as you say, on stage every time you perform the show?

**Birbiglia:** Well, a lot of times I'll start laughing at the audience's response to the material. In other words, if people notice me laughing on stage, I'm not laughing at my jokes, I'm laughing because if someone laughs particularly hard at one part, I know that she's had the exact same experience. And it just makes me laugh. It's kind of the reason that I do it.

**GN:** Now that you're taking the show nationwide after its New York run, do you find audiences across the country laugh at the same material? Or do they respond differently?

**Birbiglia:** We kicked off the tour in Salt Lake City a couple weeks ago and I found that actually the response there was bigger than it has ever been. It was explosive and I think it's because when I'm in New York, I'm performing seven, sometimes eight, shows a week and people can kind of count on me to be there whenever and they can kind of nonchalantly pick up tickets. But when I come to Greenville, it's just for one night and there's this sense of, "Mike Birbiglia's coming to our town and it might not ever happen again." I assure you it will, but for the sake of this article, let's just say

**GN:** Tell us about your upcoming projects.

**Birbiglia:** Right now I'm touring "My Girlfriend's Boyfriend" around the country and around the world — to the U.K and Australia. I'll probably do about 50 dates ... and I'm really excited about taking it on the road — can't wait to come back to Greenville. And then after that, I'm possibly going to start working on a new movie, a feature film adaptation of "My Girlfriend's Boyfriend."

■ Arts Writer Paul Hyde can be reached at: 864-298-4004.

that it might not.

**GN:** Tell us about the premiere of your feature film "Sleepwalk With Me."

**Birbiglia:** I wrote, starred in, and directed "Sleepwalk With Me," which just premiered at the Sundance Film Festival! It's something I always wanted to do. I always wanted to direct a movie, and similar to my career in standup comedy, people kept telling me that I couldn't direct a movie. But I think I'm delusional enough to believe that I could and here we are! And people seem to really like it so hopefully it will come to theaters sometime this year. I'll keep you posted on Twitter!