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event: The Wedding

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Theater review

The Wedding

By John Beer

TUTA Theatre Chicago at **Chopin Theatre**. By Bertolt Brecht. Trans. Martin and Rose Kastner. Dir. Zeljko Djukic. With ensemble cast.



BLAST SUPPER TUTA serves up a good time.
Photo: Heather Stumpf

The young Brecht (21 when he wrote this satire) compared his ideal theater to a sporting event, one in which the audience would not be lulled into reverie but shocked into enthusiastic engagement. In Djukic's skilled hands, *The Wedding* has the raw energy of a boxing match; this riotous production manages to be at once thrilling, tender and very funny.

The story is, to be sure, almost transparently thin. A young man (Trey Maclin), who takes an odd pride in designing and building his own furniture, and his pregnant bride (Jennifer Byers) host a wedding reception for friends and family: her doddering father (Kirk Anderson); his lecherous friend (Andy Hager), who, invited to sing a song, offers a brazenly sexual ditty; and a company of eccentric and loutish characters. "Go to hell!" the young man shouts after them once they leave.

What makes the production such a joy is the accumulation of stunning theatrical moments offered by this tightly chaotic ensemble. Maclin gazes mournfully at the couples dancing around his unmatched figure. One drunk, cuckolded guest (Christopher Popio) tries fitfully and vainly to finger the chords of "I Can't Help Falling in Love," while the bride's father gleefully launches into "Deutschland Über Alles" on the piano. Meanwhile the groom's furniture collapses around the group. Brecht's play may not have the charge it once did; the bride's pregnancy, for instance, seems less of an unmentionable scandal. But like a deranged, avant-garde episode of *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, *The Wedding* offers a vertiginous look at the comical depths to which a social gathering can plunge.

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Posted by **Vesna Zafirovski** on Wed, Jan 20, at 02:14pm

Pitch-perfect ensemble cast doing what comes naturally; director Djukic knows just how to inspire that sparkling moment of boisterous hilarity tottering on the brink of desperation. Multi-talented actors sing, dance, play instruments and romp about with enormous energy and abandon, delighting us and leaving us wanting for more. Another TUTA gem.

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