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## THEATER LOOP

NEWS FROM AMERICA'S HOTTEST THEATER CITY  
BY CHRIS JONES

January 19, 2010

### T.U.T.A.: Everyone loves a lousy wedding

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THEATER REVIEW: "The Wedding" ★★★ Through Feb. 14 at Chopin Theatre, 1543 W. Division St.; \$25 at [www.tutato.com](http://www.tutato.com)

Whether on film, stage or TV, the nuptials from hell have proved to be one of drama's most popular set-pieces. The stakes are high, the characters are familiar and the situation imbued with natural tension. Plus, we like watching lousy weddings. It stops us from worrying about what happened (or will happen) at our own.

So you might say that Bertolt Brecht's "The Wedding" (also known as "A Respectable Wedding") was a prescient little dark comedy in 1919, except that Shakespeare surely got there first with "The Taming of the Shrew." This is, by the lofty standards of Herr Alienation, a minor bit o' Brecht. But it's an uncharacteristically jolly little look at a wedding collapsing.

Literally. Much of the amusement here comes at the expense of the groom, who built all the flimsy furnishings himself.

Chicago's T.U.T.A. is known around town for its fulsome, earnest, Euro-style takes on Chekhov and the like. But it is now embarking on an exploration of those typically neglected early Brecht plays. And while it misses some of the class conflicts in the original text, T.U.T.A.'s winter show is quite the enjoyably quirky 90 minutes.

Director Zeljko Djukic cast a clutch of droll Chicago character actors, from Ben Harris (who has a Blago-like ambience) to Laurie Larson, who consistently amuses despite saying, well, nothing.

These folks sit at a long table. They eat, drink, dance, speechify, celebrate, complain, copulate and collapse. The bride's sister (amusingly played by Jamielyn Gray) commits indiscretions. The bride reveals a secret. The groom reveals insecurity. The furniture falls apart. I don't know about you, but I've seen all of those things at real weddings. This anti-romance just stuffs them all together into the basement of the Chopin Theatre.

The show's best moments, though, come when people start to sing.

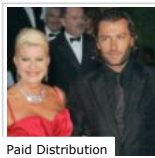
With the help of Jesse Terrill's deliciously original music, Djukic has fused into the text a variety of eclectic, contemporary ballads. They come off as a cross between the song stylings of Kurt Weill, "The Wedding Singer" and "Mamma Mia," and they are exceedingly funny -- especially when the guests form a variety of impromptu bands, replete with drums, accordions, cheap harmony and thinly veiled desperation.

Posted at 11:52:24 AM in TUTA (The Utopian Theatre Asylum)

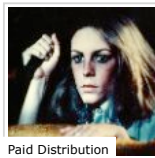
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### Comments

I just saw this on Saturday; brilliant play. The set is beautifully designed and the actors are just as good. Obviously, Chris Jones doesn't understand comedy or this playful take on Brecht, and with that said, this review is garbage. My husband and I took our conservative friends to the play and they absolutely LOVED it. Not to mention the musical scenes - so entertaining and beautiful. Zeljko Djukic might be on the way to becoming a music video director - haha! Very worth it - go see it if you can!

Posted by: Lacey | January 19, 2010 at 05:05 PM  
Lacey:

Since when do you interpret a three-star review as a pan? Chris liked the show, for God's sakes! How about reading his review again?

Posted by: A. Nonny Moose | January 19, 2010 at 07:36 PM

Yeah, Lacey, three stars from Chris is close to a rave! I am buying a ticket on the strength of this review--so relax!

Posted by: chaucerquest | January 20, 2010 at 06:39 AM

TUTA is awesome. Same director and three of the principal actors from "Uncle Vanya" last year (the best show I have seen in my ten years of going to Chicago shows) are in this production. But now, a slight rant on word usage. "Fulsome" takes on Chekhov and the like, the writer says. As in "obsequious"? No, he meant "thorough." I guess (even that meaning does not make much sense in context). Yes, I'm aware that the sloppy usage of "fulsome" to mean "very full" or "thorough" is acquiring acceptance by sloppy people. Next, "toothsome" will come to mean "very toothy."

Posted by: Cahill | January 20, 2010 at 06:46 AM

Where is the picture from the print edition? It adds a little more craziness to the review!

Posted by: amfiery2 | January 20, 2010 at 11:16 AM

Fulsome has more than one meaning. In some contexts it can mean "copious" or "generous in amount, extent or spirit", in others it can mean "excessive". The way Chris has used it here is not at all incorrect and it seems clear that he meant it as a compliment.

Posted by: Hamburg | January 20, 2010 at 11:18 AM

I see no Blago in Ben. He is certainly eye candy though

Posted by: Stefanie Nano | January 20, 2010 at 03:50 PM

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