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TUTA takes a surreal journey to ‘Fulton Street’

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Welcome to Absurdistan. Your passport to this decidedly off-kilter, tragicomic world comes courtesy of “Fulton Street Sessions,” the 90-minute romp devised by director Zeljko Djukic and five members of his 10-year-old ensemble, TUTA (The Utopian TheatreAsylum).

Their world premiere work might best be described as a surreal cafe, with nods to everyone from Lewis Carroll, Samuel Beckett, Antonin Artaud’s “theater of cruelty” and The Second City (by way of a decidedly Slavic imagination and visual sensibility). And it comes with a vibrantly live sound track that can leap (sometimes hilariously) from hard rock, to beautifully harmonized church hymn, to Stevie Wonder song, to raucous Serbian folk band finale, with everything from percussion, accordion and a toy piano part of the musical mashup.

This TUTA show grew out of improvisational sessions, but be assured there is nothing raw or unpolished in this subtly assembled, expertly performed collection of scenes that, at turns, suggest isolation, incomprehension, disorientation, lowgrade torture, erotic distraction, competition, forced conformity and many other trials and tribulations in that farce we call human existence. And the decidedly individualistic performers — Trey Maclin, Stacie Beth Green, Jamielyn Gray, Jacqueline Stone and Kirk Anderson — are ideally in synch with each other and the quirky material of their own making.

The show’s absurdist farce quality is reinforced by Brandon Wardell’s set (winningly lit by Keith Parham) — a gray room with six standard doors and a fearsome industrial pocket door that periodically opens up to the void (and a big drum set). And the whole show is set in motion as a man in a towel (Maclin) is hurled onstage, quickly bathed by the trio of women, and then just as quickly dressed in so many layers of winter clothing that he is rendered immobile. (The show grew out of memories of last winter’s February blizzard, but this is the only vague reference to that event.)

The women reappear with large piles of paper and books and enact a strange ritual of transfer. Maclin and Anderson later appear as office manager-types and stubbornly vie for control of a heavy, silvery safe, which is followed by the ladies singing about money and whorishness.

A suitcase is opened, filled with ancient toys that trigger an obvious joyful nostalgia. They dance like the Furies. They sing. They behave themselves when a bench turns into a pew and they are led by an officious male choir director. Anderson tells of being picked up by a transvestite. Green arrives at a party where two couples are in a semi-orgy state and she becomes the outsider who doesn’t know when to leave.

If all this sounds bizarre, be assured that it has its own internal rationale, with music overseen by Josh Schmidt and Wain Parham, zany apt costumes by Natasha Djukic and the keys to this kingdom of Absurdistan artfully jangled by the director.

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