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[Review: Fulton Street Sessions \(TUTA Theatre Chicago\)](#)

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Fulton Street Sessions

Conceived by [TUTA Theatre Chicago](#)
 Directed by [Zeljko Djukic](#)
 at [Chicago Dramatists](#), 1105 W. Chicago ([map](#))
 thru March 25 | [tickets: \\$30](#) | [more info](#)

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TUTA blends music, absurdity and empathy into a raucous night of theater



[TUTA Theatre](#) presents

Fulton Street Sessions

Review by [K.D. Hopkins](#)

What am I doing here and what is going to happen to me? It is the question of the archetypal Everyman, no matter the gender, in our disconnected American culture. [TUTA Theatre Chicago](#) crafts a beautiful collection of answers to these questions. *Fulton Street Sessions* is an assemblage of sketch and song; a fresh and sometimes disconcerting take on how we communicate and try to make sense of this often insane world.

The play starts with a birth of sorts. [Trey Maclin](#) stands alone under harsh florescent lights. Some ideologies would call his character a soul about to be born and, indeed, he is given a literal baptism in an Absurdist sketch on following protocol. The rest of the ensemble appears in parkas and carrying what he will need to participate in their society. No words are spoken and yet hilarity ensues. There are no clues to what he is supposed to do but he discerns what the rules are through a series of rewards and disciplinary measures.

The learning curve for this Everyman includes a dose of American excess in the armor needed for facing the day. The news bombards us with warnings, threats and color alerts to the point of where we are either inured or follow like automatons. Both are extremes that artificially connect us or forcibly disconnect us into a state of horrific expectancy. Yes, this is a dark comedy that is also brilliant and hilarious because there is so much truth embodied in it.

[Jamielyn Gray](#), [Stacie Beth Green](#), [Jacquelyn Stone](#), and [Kirk Anderson](#) fill out the TUTA ensemble with Maclin. They take the audience on a confrontational journey through fear mongering and the pithy titles that scream from the headlines. The TUTA ensemble is immensely talented and well rounded. They sing all of the songs and play instruments. The music is beautifully done and glowing with raw emotion. I would love to have the soundtrack for this show. Just the rap rendering of the blizzard of February 2011 is worth experiencing this show. Gray, Green, and Stone are an electric trio, singing and rapping off the names for the storm. Snowzilla! Snowageddon! The visuals of the trio in stark black and white wearing hats and one Mardi Gras-type mask while slamming out this tune is a great recall of the disaster mongering done by the news; this was the end of the world and everyone better clear the stores of products – all the the better to set off a chain reaction of fear and mistrust.

The comedy in *Fulton Street Sessions* often erupts out of the blue – often the inappropriate stuff we all would like to have the guts to say. (Or perhaps you have been on the receiving end of someone telling the story of how they had unsuspecting sex with a post op transgendered woman.)

I love the truthful way the sketches are presented so that the comedy is sometimes uncomfortably true. It is possible that an orgy can begin spontaneously. It's no big deal until a woman named Betty with OCD just walks in mid orgy and tells you that she sprained her ankle on your messed



up sidewalk. She sits down in front of people who are having wild sex and stops them cold with her crazy rambling story. The reactions are priceless as she explains that their house is exactly half way between her job and her house according to her pedometer.



I had an unexpectedly emotional reaction to the sweet sketch involving childhood memorabilia. The spinning top, baby piano, and secreted note from school felt straight out of my youth. The time then was simpler, and no one was so caught up in the tiny private screenings available on their smart phones. This is also nicely illustrated with a crazy karaoke of Stevie Wonder's "I Just Called To Say I Love You". The sketch takes place in what appears to be a public street and everyone is minding their own business until one person steps forward to sing a verse. Then everyone steps up to take a turn at the microphone. The crazy sincerity of what would be everyday people who should only sing in the shower makes this sketch spin like a top.

The gorgeous singing of the classic hymn "Nearer My God To Thee" is impressive. Ironically, the singing occurs in a sketch that lampoons the deception and hypocrisy of sexuality in traditional religion.

Fulton Street Sessions is a great night of theater. The blend of music, comedy, and empathy makes for a challenging and exciting night. Go see it and take a friend. Those easily offended should be the first to go! This lays bare all of the fake B.S. that engenders such delicate sensibilities. Loved it!

Rating: ★★★★★¹/₂

Fulton Street Sessions continues through March 25th at [Chicago Dramatists](#), 1105 W. Chicago Ave. ([map](#)), with performances Thursdays-Saturdays at 8pm, Sundays at 3pm. Tickets are \$30, and are available by phone (800-838-3006) or online at [brownpapertickets.com](#) (check for half-price tickets at [Goldstar.com](#)). More information at [tutato.com](#). (Running time: 80 minutes, no intermission)



All photos by [Anthony Lapenna](#)

artists

cast

[Kirk Anderson](#), [Jaimelyn Gray](#), [Stacie Beth Green](#), [Trey Maclin](#), [Jacqueline Stone](#)

behind the scenes

[Zeljko Djukic](#) (director); [Wain Parham](#) (music director); [Brandon Wardell](#) (set design); Natasha Djukic (costumes); [Keith Parham](#) (lighting); [Christopher Kriz](#) (sound design); Joel Lambie (props); Shannon Reilly (stage manager); [Anthony Lapenna](#) (photos)

12-0246

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