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Fulton Street Sessions at TUTA Theatre Chicago | Theater review

TUTA's new collection of sketches and songs is eclectic and occasionally inspired. By Kris Vire



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TUTA Theatre Chicago at Chicago Dramatists. Conceived by the ensemble. Dir. Zeljko Djukic. With Kirk Anderson, Jaimelyn Gray, Trey Maclin, Stacie Beth Green, Jacqueline Stone. 1hr 20mins; no intermission. See complete event information.

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TUTA's Fulton Street Sessions

Photo: Anthony Robert La Penna

02/29/2012

TUTA bills this ensemble-devised creation—the company's first original work—as a “cabaret.” But it's not the kind of piece you'll find at Davenport's. A collection of sketches and songs ranging from Lionel Richie to Shakira to “Nearer, My God, to Thee,” Fulton Street Sessions is as adventurous and uneven as that assortment sounds.

Designers Brandon Wardell and Keith Parham turn the Chicago Dramatists stage into a sharply defined, starkly lit white box. Christopher Kriz's sound design, with prominent microphones and speakers that seem intentionally set to hum over silence, reinforces the sense that we're observing a tightly controlled environment. Indeed, as the show's five actors pinball among the set's many doors, they begin to look like laboratory specimens; in many of the sketches, it feels as though we're observing from behind a two-way mirror.

Program notes indicate Sessions was loosely inspired by last February's massive blizzard and the media frenzy that surrounded it—an early number has Jaimelyn Gray rattling off a long list of hoary snow-related neologisms (“Snowpocalypse! Snow-M-G! Snow-stradamus!”). The genesis of other interludes is less clear, though a running theme of feeling trapped can be traced back to that citywide flash-freeze. While some scenes

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overstay their welcome, the performers are engaging throughout, and there are moments of real brilliance.

March 8, 2012

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