

Time Out Chicago

Theater review

**Baal**

By Kris Vire

Brecht's first is undoubtedly problematic. The dramatist reportedly wrote the first draft of *Baal*, his response to German Expressionism, as a 20-year-old student but kept returning to it throughout his career, never satisfied; it's remained relatively obscure. Yet TUTA's is the second Chicago production of *Baal* this season. As I sat transfixed by director Djukic's stunning interpretation of the text, I wondered if I'd be as impressed if this were my first exposure. If I hadn't carefully read the script after seeing EP Theater's inscrutable production last September, would I be able to follow this one?

Djukic's mesmerizing production, however, succeeds in every needed way at tying together Brecht's stilted narrative about a self-destructive, nihilistic, hedonistic poet on a rampage of emotional abuse. From its use of Peter Tegel's poetic translation, to Brandon Wardell's gorgeously dilapidated set and Keith Parham's precise lighting, to the interpolation of new Weill-worthy cabaret settings by composer Josh Schmidt (*Adding Machine*, *A Minister's Wife*) accompanied by a multitalented cast, Djukic's choices unify and elevate the material. Perhaps most vital is Ian Westerfer's presence in the title role. Westerfer conveys the electromagnetic charisma that has men and women drawn to him to their peril.

Read more: <http://chicago.timeout.com/articles/theater/85971/baal-at-tuta-theatre-chicago-theater-review#ixzz0vaNPAPSW>