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The Most Excellent and Lamentable Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet

When: Thursdays–Sundays. Continues through Dec. 21 2008

Price: \$20–\$25

tutato.com

Eastern Europeans seem to have an advantage over native English speakers when it comes to directing Shakespeare. I've seen loads of wonderful productions by Americans, Brits, and so on, but two of my three all-time favorites were created by artists from the former Soviet bloc. And now, with Zeljko Djukich's TUTA Theatre staging of *The Most Excellent and Lamentable Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, it's three of four. Djukich, once of Yugoslavia, doesn't exhibit the contempt familiarity breeds in anglophone directors, who often feel compelled to search for novelty in the Bard by taking him apart onstage. Maybe just reading Shakespeare in the original is deconstruction enough for him. Instead, Djukich and his talented cast--most particularly Matthew Holzfeind, who adds Romeo to a string of extraordinary performances--engage the tale of star-crossed lovers completely, and what they come up with can be astonishing. Little things like identifying Juliet's father as physically abusive make a great deal clear. The big thing, though, is Djukich's recognition that this play, no less than *Hamlet*, is about words: their misuse, overuse, and failure. In fact, he reveals *Romeo and Juliet* as a kind of rough draft for *Hamlet*, and his beautiful final scene gets to the heart of the earlier play's tragedy by way of a profound strategy echoing a line from the later play: "The rest is silence." --Tony Adler

Chopin Theatre

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★★★★★ (based on 18 user reviews)