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# Play Review: Comic production tackles absurdity of the stage with solid acting talent

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A few weeks ago, the Tutto Theatre Company's presentation of Mikhail Bulgakov's "Black Snow" premiered at the Salvage Vanguard Theater. In the play, a young, struggling writer is saved from a suicide attempt when he discovers his failed novel is to be turned into a stage play. However, he's met with great opposition from the slew of wacky characters he meets along the way. Nine people play over 50 different characters in this incredibly entertaining farce about the absurdity of producing a play. Even though you'll probably never remember anyone's name (What was that, Ismail Alexandrovich Bondarevsky?), this production is a sheer delight.



Tutto Theatre Company's production of "Black Snow" will be performed at the Salvage Vanguard Theater through July 12.

The lighting and scenic design worked very well for the production. The play begins with a mostly bare stage. A small writing table and chair rest downstage center; a murky green light pours in through a window that doesn't exist. Throughout the production, the actors use rolling doors to create new areas and portray the passage of time. These movements are creatively choreographed and give the audience a firm sense of place. Stage right is a huge tower of stuff; a kind of urban junkyard whose presence never imposes upon the action onstage but instead melts with it harmoniously. The actors utilize this pile of scrap in different ways. For some of the characters, it is their home, office or hangout, creatively brought to life by the clicking on of various lamps. Similarly, other characters pull props out of this structure, especially in Act II, when items like wooden swords and vintage bicycles are used to fantastic comedic effect.

Of course, good comedy (especially farce) requires good actors, which were undoubtedly present in this production. Gabriel Luna (as protagonist Sergei) does well at keeping the show going. Onstage he appears unfaltering and assured of himself. And while the entire show revolves around his character, which involves most of the other characters acting on him, he never falls victim to passivity. Instead, he is steadfast and passionate, lending purpose to his role in a way that makes us root for him more.

But the most entertaining part of this production is the supporting cast — if they could even be called supporting. These 30 or so characters are the true meat of the comedy here. Each

individual actor and actress brings his or her various characters to life so completely, making it very clear that a great amount of detail was placed in everyone, from the sly Rudolphi (see what I mean about those names?) to the lederhosen-clad actor who, in a sudden change of direction by the producer, awkwardly tries to profess his love onstage while riding that bicycle.

They were props people and stagehands, working together on the stage to create settings, new places to inhabit and act out their parts. This production had the amazing and reassuring ability to make you feel like you are watching people who know what they are doing. Put simply, this is good, intelligent farce done well. It would be nonsensical to miss it.

*“Black Snow” continues at the Salvage Vanguard Theater until July 12.*

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