



## CRITIC'S CHOICE

## Uncle Vanya

Considering Chicago's fascination with in-your-face theater, where big and obvious is often mistaken for good, it's no surprise that Chekhov—the modern master of understatement and inaction—is routinely screwed up so badly. Thankfully Tuta Theatre Chicago director Zeljko Djukich understands that Chekhov's hilarious and harrowing drama rings true when it isn't forced, and he's assembled an astute, mature cast who let every innocuous silence and offhand gesture expose the aching hearts of their placid characters. As in *The Cherry Orchard*, a disgruntled group of relations, neighbors, and hangers-on dither on a provincial estate, nursing impossible dreams and hoping their mundane failings might at least achieve tragic stature. On a ballroom-size floor of bleached wood (by set designer Martin Andrew), Djukich arranges Chekhov's pathetic clowns like once treasured but now discarded figurines. The careful detailing of the group's dissipation, bitterness, regret, and failed idealism is at once heartbreaking and exhilarating.

► Through 4/13: Thu-Sat 8 PM, Sun 3 PM, Chopin Studio Theatre, 1543 W. Division, 847-217-0691 or tutato.com, \$17-\$25. —Justin Hayford