

*Hedda Gabler: A Play with Live Music* shows us a woman fighting for her voice  
TUTA gives Ibsen's classic a contemporary musical update.



Austin D. Oie*Hedda Gabler: A Play with Live Music*

Lauren Demerath rages, leers, screams, flirts, and, best of all, sings her way through an unforgettable turn in the title role of Jacqueline Stone's unique new musical adaptation of the 1891 Henrik Ibsen play, *Hedda Gabler: A Play With Live Music*. A newly-married woman returns from a honeymoon abroad already bored with her milquetoast academic of a husband (Huy Nguyen) and plots to wreak havoc in the lives of acquaintances and old loves just to feel alive.

Hedda Gabler is a selfish schemer but it is impossible to not feel sympathy for her situation. She's a woman who is chafing under the constraints of a staid

conventional society and justifiably enraged (from our contemporary viewpoint, anyway) to be losing her maiden name, and, thus, her own identity. Her complicating others' lives as a way of fighting the prospect of becoming an invisible appendage to a dull man's life may be wrong but it is also completely understandable.

Kevin V. Smith nearly matches Demerath's intensity as one of Hedda's old suitors, but this is Demerath's show. Her best allies are the versatile trio of musicians, led by the production's composer, Wain Parham. They play in eerie white death masks for much of the running time, but emerge to the forefront once the inevitable tragic end nears. Ibsen's original intent might have been to explore mental illness, but in this evocative reframing, it is the story of a woman fighting just to have her voice heard. It is a story which is sadly all too familiar in 2020. v