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RUSSIAN RADIO NEVER SOUNDED SO GOOD - 'RADIO CULTURE' AT TUTA

Written by Ron Reis



(front right) Kevin V. Smith with (back, l to r) Wain Parham and Huy Nguyen in TUTA Theatre Chicago's U.S. premiere of RADIO CULTURE.

Photo by Austin D. Oie

This was an interesting production that oddly enough had very little to do with radio. 'Radio Culture' is a one act play with a somewhat unique concept where just one actor holds a speaking role.

TUTA's home theatre space (4670 N Manor in Chicago) is a small little place that makes you feel at home upon entering. I grew up in that neighborhood and the idea of having a small theatre in that area never even crossed my mind. I give a lot of credit to the people putting on these smaller productions since there isn't very much money coming in outside of donations that are crucial in keeping the theatre going. You gotta really love what you are doing when you work with small, or storefront, theatres.

The setting takes us to a Russian construction site. The small audience is literally in a room under construction. This is a plus as we get a true intimate theatre experience that is about as up close and personal as you can get.

Kevin V. Smith plays Volodya who lives in Minsk with his parents. He acts more as narrator to the events, speaking in the third person. The whole play basically takes place in a day in the life of the Russian

construction foreman who finds comfort in the classical music he listens to as the program Radio Culture is pushed across the airwaves. Natalie Ferdova does an impressive job in translating this story from Russian to English while Amber Robinson gets a nod for some very creative direction. Huy Nguyen and Wain Parham complete the ensemble with non-speaking roles.

This is one of those ideas that probably wouldn't work as well on the big stage since the intimacy of the production is one of the attributes that makes this play so special, though the story is engaging and peaks one's interest throughout. At times, the actors were right in front of you making eye contact, as if they were in your own living room.

The visuals don't exactly make or break the performance but get the point across while the dialog was written in such a way that it was very easy to follow. I really want to give a shout out to Smith for his ability to flawlessly rip out 70 minutes of very convincing dialogue. A true professional, there was never a hesitation in his delivery and he truly keeps your attention through the entire play.

I would without hesitation recommend going to see 'Radio Culture' at TUTA.

'Radio Culture' is being performed at TUTA Theatre through December 2nd. For tickets and/or more information visit www.tutatheatre.org.

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