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[Review: The Silent Language \(TUTA Theatre Chicago\)](#)

[Scotty Zacher](#) | April 26, 2013



The Silent Language

Written by [Miodrag Stanisavljevic](#)
 Directed by [Jacqueline Stone](#)
 TUTA Studio Theatre, 2010 W. Fulton
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 thru June 9 | [tickets: \\$25](#) | [more info](#)

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Sensual, innovative theatre for the whole family



[TUTA Theatre Chicago](#) presents

The Silent Language

Review by *Keith Glab*

[TUTA Theatre Chicago](#) prides itself on producing works from obscure European playwrights. *The Silent Language* fits the bill, as it's an adaptation of *Nemusti Jezik*, an old Serbian folk tale that depicts a young man who learns to understand the language of nature. This play has never been seen before in the United States, and it has been scarcely produced elsewhere.

When Poor Gasho ([Max Lotspeich](#)) saves a snake ([Carolyn Molloy](#)) from a fire he built, the Queen of Snakes ([Laurie Larson](#)) rewards him with the ability to understand “the silent language.” This allows him to communicate with not only the creatures of the forest, but also plant life and the wind. He first learns that there is gold buried nearby, but quickly dismisses that information as trivial once he hears that the princess (Molloy) has been captured by an evil Elf ([Aaron Lawson](#)). Poor (yet noble) Gasho embarks upon a quest to free the princess from the elf, using knowledge that he gains from the nonhuman entities he converses with along the way.

TUTA elevates this straightforward story with a cast full of energy and some of the most imaginative staging I've ever seen. It's no exaggeration to say that every inch of the space is utilized by [Jacqueline Stone](#), TUTA's newly-appointed artistic director. The cast spends time climbing onto platforms, posts, and stacked crates, highlighted by Lotspeich free climbing over a doorway for a good five minutes as Gasho approaches the Elf's lair. They go behind curtains that surround the performance area, both to provide offstage sound effects and to create silhouettes for effect. The dancing, chasing, and stylized combat occurs practically in the laps of audience members at times. By the end of the evening, the cast of seven is out of breath and drenched in sweat.

As visually stimulating as the performance is, your auditory senses are hardly ignored. [Zoran Paunovic](#)'s translation uses rhythmic language with frequent rhyme. [Wain Parham](#)'s music makes you want to join the cast onstage in a dance. Most notably, the cast does a fantastic job of weaving animal noises into their speech patterns as appropriate. Snakes hiss, wasps buzz, and birds tweet, with Lotspeich matching the rhythmic intonation of whichever actor/animal he is speaking to.





There are too many strong performances and memorable characters to mention them all, but [Jaimelyn Gray](#)'s demanding fledgling, [Laurie Larson](#)'s eccentric Sorceress, and [Angela Bullard](#)'s inspired personification of Wind rank among my favorites. Kids are sure to delight in the campy evil triumvirate of the Elf, the Bogeyman ([Sean Ewert](#)), and Gray's Ironjaw Hag.

The Silent Language provides exceptional sensory delight for children and adults alike. While the story of a man traveling through a forest to rescue a princess certainly isn't groundbreaking, certain elements of the story are unique, such as three-letter words having magical properties. All in all, TUTA provides an experience you can't get anywhere else. It's well worth a trip to the West Side Industrial Corridor to take part in this innovative and dexterous theatrical event.

Rating: ★★½

The Silent Language continues through ~~May 19th~~ **June 9th** at TUTA Studio Theatre, 2010 W. Fulton ([map](#)), with performances Wednesdays-Saturdays at 8pm, plus Saturdays and Sundays at 4pm. Tickets are \$15-\$25, and are available by phone (800-838-3006) or online at [BrownPaperTickets.com](#) (check for half-price tickets at [Goldstar.com](#)). More information at [tutato.com](#). (Running time: 90 minutes, no intermission)



Photos by [Anthony Robert La Penna](#)

artists

cast

[Jaimelyn Gray](#) (Ironjaw Hag, Raven, and Fledgling), [Angela Bullard](#) (Mocking Witch, Goose, and Wind), [Sean Ewert](#) (Boogeyman, Gander, and Wasp), [Laurie Larson](#) (Queen of Snakes, Sorceress, Bird, and Horse), [Max Lotspeich](#) (Poor Gasho), [Aaron Lawson](#) (Elf, Dog, and Frogs), [Carolyn Molloy](#) (Princess and Snake), [Hilary Holbrook](#) (Female Understudy), [Logan Hulick](#) (Male Understudy)

behind the scenes

[Jacqueline Stone](#) (director), Zoran Paunovic (translation), [Wain Parham](#) (original music, musical direction), [Michelle Lilly](#) (set design), [Branimira Ivanova](#) (costumes), [Keith Parham](#) (lighting), [Joe Court](#) (sound design), [Oliver Todd](#) (props), [Allison Raynes](#) (stage manager), Kirk Anderson (fight choreography), [Helen Lattyak](#) (production manager), [Mel Gill](#) (asst. stage manager), [Milan Pribisic](#) (dramaturg), [Anthony Robert La Penna](#) (photos)



