



Actors Ensemble of Berkeley Presents



Anton Chekhov's
**UNCLE
VANYA**

Adapted and directed
by Stanley Spenger

Live Oak Theatre, Berkeley

April 18 – May 17

Fridays and Saturdays 8 p.m. \$12
\$10 students/seniors discount
Including a Thursday, May 15th show

ACTORS ENSEMBLE OF BERKELEY has been around the block (and just around the corner from you) since 1957, making us the longest running stage company in Berkeley. We began with seven UC Berkeley alumni from the World War II era. Their love of acting gave birth to a tradition that began with four plays in 1957, which were initially performed in a neighbor's basement. In 1965, AE began performing at the Live Oak Theatre — and has ever since.

Our mission is to enrich, entertain and improve our community through fascinating theatrical works. With social consciousness and an ensemble approach, we provide area residents with opportunities to attend, participate in and be helped through theatre. Our shows will be affordable, our opportunities enjoyable, and our community impact felt year-round.

As Berkeley's only true community theatre company, we depend on our volunteers to bring their energy and creative vision to each play we produce.

If you would like to volunteer in our theatre, give us a call or send us an email! We'd love for you to play a part in our next show!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: Alan Barkan, Eric Carlson, David Cohen, Margaret Gudmundsson, Bob Gudmundsson, William Martinelli, Jodi Maxwell, Rose Anne Raphael, Jerome Solberg, Stanley Spenger, Kim Stewart, Wendy Welch

UNCLE VANYA

By Anton Chekhov
Adapted and directed by Stanley Spenger

CAST

Scott Alexander Ayres
Maureen Coyne
Jose Garcia
Martha Luehrmann
Sarah Meyeroff
Aaron Murphy
Jennifer Rice
Jerome Solberg
Stanley Spenger

STAFF

Alan Barkan Assistant Director, Sound Design
Eric Carlson Assistant Director, Publicity
Jose Garcia Stage Manager
Shu Ping Guan Lobby Design, Graphics
Bob Gudmundsson Set Construction
Mark Keating Light/Sound Operator
Jodi Maxwell Makeup Artist
Karen Oakley Set Assistant
Rose Anne Raphael Set Designer, Props
Alecks Rundel Lighting Designer
Jerome Solberg Producer
Helen Slomowitz Costumes
Lauren Straub Light/Sound Operator

There will be one intermission.
Please no food or drinks in the theatre.
Please note that gunshots will be heard during the performance.

ABOUT THE PLAY

Uncle Vanya is a tragicomedy by the Russian playwright Anton Chekhov published in 1899. Its first major performance was in 1900 under the direction of Konstantin Stanislavski.

Uncle Vanya is unique among Chekhov's major plays because it is essentially an extensive reworking of a play published a decade earlier, ***The Wood Demon***. By elucidating the specific revisions Chekhov made during the revision process, including reducing the cast-list from almost two-dozen down to a lean nine, changing the climactic suicide of the ***The Wood Demon*** into the famous failed homicide of Uncle Vanya, and altering the original happy ending into a more problematic, less final resolution, critics such as Donald Rayfield, Richard Gilman, and Eric Bentley have sought to chart the development of Chekhov's dramaturgical method through the 1890s.

Uncle Vanya was published in 1899, but it is difficult to determine when the work was originally finished, or when the revision process took place. Rayfield cites recent scholarship suggesting Chekhov revisited ***The Wood Demon*** during his trip to the island of Sakhalin, a prison colony in Eastern Russia, in 1891.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Doing Chekov at this time, having done Ibsen's ***Hedda Gabler*** last year, and now considering Ionesco and Pinter for next year's season, it feels as though we are on a journey through the modern tragic/absurdist path; each step building on the last. Seen in that light, as a precursor to Beckett, Pirandello, et al, Chekov seems more our contemporary than ever..

I stepped into adapting/directing this show accidentally, after losing the director we chose for the show originally. After suggesting this show long ago for Shotgun Players and Subterranean Shakespeare (both companies I worked with then), and seeing the wonderful productions they did (not having been able to be involved in them at the time), it's a kind of homecoming of sorts for me, to fall into Chekov like this. It's a privilege to do so with such a wonderful cast and crew. Thank you for sharing it all with us.

NOTES

CHARACTERS

Serebryakov Aleksander Vladimirovich

Yelena Andreevna (*Lenochka* endearing)

Sofya Aleksandrovna (*Sonya* short/familiar; *Sonechka*, *Sonyushka*, both endearing)

Voynitskaya Maria Vasilyevna (*Marya** *Vasilyevna*, colloquial pronunciation)

Voynitsky Ivan Petrovich (*Vanya* short/familiar)

Astrov Mikhail Lvovich

Telegin Ilya Ilyich (*Vaflya* nickname, some English versions offer literal translation of the name as *Waffles*. Apparently in reference to his pockmarked face)

Marina (*Marina Timofeyevna* full first and patronymic names)

Yefim

OTHER NAMES (to which the characters refer in the play)

Vera Petrovna (Serebryakov's first wife)

Ostrovsky (an important playwright, Chekhov's contemporary, wrote 48 plays, some still performed in major theatres in Russia)

Batyushkov (a major poet of the 19th century)

Turgenev (Ivan Turgenev, playwright and novelist)

Grigory Ilyich (Telegin's brother)

Konstantin Trofimovich Lakedemonov (the last name is a made-up one and sounds pompous in Russian)

Dostoevsky (Fyodor Dostoevsky, novelist)

Ayvazovsky (a prominent Russian seascape painter of the 19th century)

GEOGRAPHIC NAMES

Kharkov

Tula

Kursk

Rozhdestvennoye

OTHER

Pestrushka (the name of one of Marina's hens)

Zhuchka (a common dog name)

* Chekhov is not consistent throughout in terms of rendering patronymic names of his characters. Most of those on the character lists, as well as in the dialogues, are rendered in their full literary form with the endings –ovich, –yevich. However, some names on the character lists and in dialogues are rendered in their colloquial pronunciation/contracted form, with the endings of –ych, –yich. Asterisks (*) indicate each instance of the use of such a form.

CAST AND CREW

SCOTT ALEXANDER AYRES (Serebryakov Aleksander Vladimirovich) returns to the Live Oak Theater stage, having played the role of Mike Dillard in Actors Ensemble of Berkeley's production of *Working*. Scott has been performing in the Bay Area for the past five years, having previously performed throughout the East Coast. He originally hails from New Jersey, but has made his home in the Bay Area for almost 20 years.

MAUREEN COYNE (Voynitskaya Maria Vasilyevna) Recent roles include Miss Tesman in *Hedda Gabler*, Mom in *True West*, and Mother/Stagedoor Keeper in Strindberg's *A Dream Play*, all with Actors Ensemble; also, Cara in *Morning's at Seven* at the Altarena Playhouse in Alameda and, most recently, Nell in Beckett's *Endgame* with the Cutting Ball Theatre in San Francisco.

JOSE GARCIA (Yefim) was involved in every production of AE's 50th season, which were *True West*, *Lysistrata*, *A Dream Play*, *All in the Timing*, and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. He recently appeared on stage as the Delivery Man, while stage managing AE's production of *Barefoot in the Park*.

MARTHA LUEHRMANN (Marina Timofeyevna) Actors Ensemble of Berkeley audiences may remember me as the murderess in Agatha Christie's *A Murder Is Announced*. Others may know me as Abby Brewster (another murderess) in *Arsenic & Old Lace*. I am happy to say that I am NOT a murderess in this play. I'm delighted to be in this play with this cast and director. The ensemble is the best I've worked with. You are in for a treat!

SARAH MEYEROFF (Sofya Aleksandrovna) is honored to work with the Actors Ensemble of Berkeley again after appearing in *A Dream Play* last summer. She is also a proud member of the Precarious Theatre Ensemble and was in their most recent production of *Chemical Imbalance* at the Exit Theatre. In a time when truly good people are difficult to come by, Sarah is grateful for this opportunity to play Sofya and share her innocence, sincerity, and optimism with all of you.

AARON MURPHY (Astrov Mikhail Lvovich) has appeared in AEOB's *Hedda Gabler*, as well as local productions of *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *Ashes to Ashes*, *Afterplay*, *American Buffalo*, *The Homecoming*, *Private Eyes*, *Real Inspector Hound*. He graduated with a B.F.A. in Acting from U.C. Santa Barbara.

ROSE ANNE RAPHAEL (Set Designer, Props) This green set mostly reuses materials from AE's stores, and all will be saved for reuse in future productions. Rose Anne's now designing sets for *They're Playing Our Song* in Rohnert Park and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Novato, both directed by Hector Correa. Thanks to all who worked on this set.

JENNIFER RICE (Yelena Andreevna) is pleased to be making her debut at Actors Ensemble with *Uncle Vanya*. She last performed in *And Then There Were None* at CCCT, and has performed in theatres in Tennessee and North Carolina. Past shows include Edward Albee's *Three Tall Women* and Tennessee Williams' *A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur*.

ALECKS RUNDEL (Lighting Design) is well known for his fractal art work, which can be seen at www.fractalecks.com. He has recently designed lights for *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, *Chicago* and *Candide*. He is very happy to be working with the wonderful people at the Live Oak Theatre, and wishes to thank his family and friends for all their support. Thanks for supporting your local theatre.

JEROME SOLBERG (Telegin Ilya Ilyich) is having a good time with his third show with Actors Ensemble in the last year. He wants to thank the cast and crew for their excellence, and you, the audience, for your laughter and applause.

HELEN SLOMOWITZ (Costumes) is thrilled to be working with AE in this production filled with so many talented and loving individuals. Helen has had the opportunity to design costumes for many Bay Area theatre productions. She has also dabbled in the film realm as well, in many different aspects of production, in the Bay Area as well as Los Angeles. Helen wishes to thank the cast & crew for their extraordinary support & input.

STANLEY SPENGER (Voynitsky Ivan Petrovich) is a busy man. He is reading in this month's series of Subterranean Shakespeare's staged readings (the company he founded 20 years ago, and was Artistic Director of for 15 of those 20), and will be seen in this summer's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for North Bay Shakespeare. If he is not able to stop himself, there may be more.



ACTORS ENSEMBLE 2008 SEASON

Barefoot in the Park

by Neil Simon

January 18–February 16

The Matchmaker

by Thornton Wilder

July 18–August 16

Uncle Vanya

by Anton Chekhov

April 18–May 17

Doctor Faustus

by Christopher Marlowe

October 24–November 22

We are offering a mid-season ticket package for \$27.00 (3 shows).
Inquire at the box office during intermission.

Special thanks to:

UC Berkeley Department of Theater, Dance & Performance Studies

Jon Wai-keung Lowe

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