Anton Chekhov's

The Three Sisters

in a new translation by Allen Fletcher

Directed by

Barta Heiner

January 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22,
25, 26, 29, 30, 31, February 1, 2, at 8:00 p.m.
Matinee Performance January 21, at 4:30 p.m.
Cast

Prozorov, Andrei Sergheyevitch ........................ ROBERT D. GODWIN
Natasha (Natalia Ivanovna),
his fiancee, later his wife ......................... BECKY REEDER
Olga (Olga Sergheyevna),
his sister ............................................. JAMIE PARKER
Masha (Maria Sergheyevna),
his sister ............................................. SUZIE UTKE
Irina (Irina Sergheyevna),
his sister ............................................. ELLEN JAYNE WHEELER
Kulygin, Feodor Illitch,
high school teacher, married to Masha ............ CLARK REEDER
Vershinin, Alexander Ignatievitch,
Lieutenant-Colonel, battery commander ............ RODGER D. McDONALD
Tusenbach, Nikolai Lvovitch,
Baron, Lieutenant .................................... JOHN AUDET SIEMENS
Solyony, Vassily Vassilitch,
Captain .................................................. BRUCE NEWBOLD
Chebutykin, Ivan Romanitch,
Army Doctor .......................................... DAVID SPENCER
Fedotik, Alexi Petrovitch,
Second Lieutenant ..................................... MILTON UPDEGRAFF
Rode, Vladimir Karlovitch,
Second Lieutenant .................................... GREG GREENWOOD
Ferapont,
porter from the County Council ..................... DAVID HAGAN
Anfisa,
the Prozorovs' former nurse ........................ ROBBIN OLSEN
Orderly ................................................ LEE BYERS
Maid .................................................... DARIA SMITH
Production Staff

Director .................................................. BARTA HEINER
Assistant Director ........................................ GENIA SHIPMAN
Assistant to the Director ............................... CHERIE BETH PURDUE
Scenic and Lighting Design .......................... GREGORY KEARNEY
Costumes ................................................. RORY R. SCANLON
Lighting Technician ..................................... CHERIE BETH PURDUE
Sound ...................................................... BYU SOUND SERVICES
Properties Mistress ..................................... LAURA CHILLOG BERRY
Set Construction Supervisor ....................... BRUCE DEURDEN
Stage Crew ................................................ SARAH GOURDIN
.......................................................... TRACI HAINSWORTH
.......................................................... KRISTY MERRILL
.......................................................... GENIA SHIPMAN
.......................................................... DARIA SMITH
Production Stage Manager ........................... GENIA SHIPMAN
Resident Stage Manager ............................... VAUGHN SCHUTZ
Technical Director ...................................... O. LEE WALKER
House Manager .......................................... MARK CLELAND BURDGE
Ticket Office ............................................. COLLEEN BIRD
Publicity .................................................... PETER WILT
Publicity Photographer ............................... RICK NYE
Publicity Assistant ...................................... JUDITH BLYTHE BANARD

Act I
May 1901

Act II
February 1903

Act III
August 1904

Act IV
November 1904

There will be a five minute intermission after Act II.
in the Pardoe Drama Theatre

HAMLET

William Shakespeare
Directed by Tad Danielewski
January 31, February 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.
Special Performance February 11, 1980.

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LAURENCE OLIVIER discusses one of his two favorite playwrights, Anton Chekhov:

Anton Chekhov wrote only six full-length plays. Of this small number, four are generally and properly accounted to be great ones. These were written between 1896 and 1904. . . . All are rich in symbolism but perhaps The Three Sisters a little more than the others; certainly it is the most prophetically insistent on the revolution which was only sixteen years away; but I think I find it now to be the most beautiful of all—and to the Chekhov worshipper that means the most beautiful play in the world.

In all the plays the greatest cunning is exercised in gently leading the audience by the most casual introduction of the characters to an involvement with them which by the time we say farewell makes them seem to be almost more our relations than our friends and our hearts are broken by their fates and our own inability to help them. . . .

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ANTON CHEKHOV reveals his feelings about the creation of The Three Sisters:

To A.L. Visnevsky
(actor Moscow Art Theatre and former schoolmate of Chekhov)

Yalta, August 5, 1900

...I am writing the play, have already written a great deal of it, but as long as I am not in Moscow I can form no judgment about the play. Perhaps what I am turning out is not a play but a wearisome Crimean fiddle-faddle. It is called Three Sisters (as you already know); for you I am readying the role of a high school inspector, husband of one of the sisters. You will be wearing your uniform and will have a decoration on a ribbon around your neck. Should the play not go into production this season I shall rework it next season...

Yours, A. Chekhov
To Olga Knipper  
(leading actress in the Moscow Art Theater and Chekhov's future wife)  

Yalta, September 14, 1900  

My dear, my nice Olya, remarkable little actress. . . . I am ill. Fever, cough, a cold. . . . weakness and emptiness and disgust because I wrote nothing, didn't do a stroke of work. The play looks at me gloomily, lies on the table, and I think about it gloomily. . . .  

Yours, Ant--

To V.F. Komissarzhevskaya  
(a theatrical colleague)  

Moscow, November 13, 1900  

Dear Vera Fyodorovna,  
". . . .Three Sisters are already finished, but their future--their immediate future, at least--is veiled from me by the mark of uncertainty. The play has turned out to be boring, long-drawn out, awkward--awkward I say, since it has four female leads, for instance, and its mood, I am told, is gloomier than gloom. . . . It is now being read in the Art Theater (there is only one copy, no more); later I'll take it and make a fair copy, and only then shall we print several copies. . . .

Cordially yours, A. Chekhov

To Olga Knipper  

Nice, December 17, 1900  

". . . .My darling Olya, don't be lazy, my angel, write your old man more often. . . . Yesterday sent Act III of play to Moscow, and tomorrow will send IV. In III I changed only a little here and there, but in IV I went in for drastic changes. I fattened up your part a lot. (You are supposed to say "Thank you. . . .") And you, in return, write me how the rehearsals are going, what's what and how things are--write everything. Because you're not writing me I, too, don't want to write. Basta! This is my last letter. . . . I embrace you again, and again.  

Your Antoine

To Olga Knipper  

Nice, January 2, 1901  

". . . .Do describe at least one rehearsal of Three Sisters.
Ought anything be put in or taken out? Are you acting well, my darling? . . . Don't make a mournful face in a single act. Angry, yes, but not mournful. People who carry grief in their hearts a long time and are used to it only whistle and often sink into thought. So you may often be thoughtful on the stage during conversations. . . .

Your Toto

To Konstantin Stanislavski
(Director of Chekhov's plays and most productions Moscow Art Theatre)

January 2, 1901, Nice

Dear Konstantin Sergeyevich,
". . . I wish you a Happy New Year, and, if I may hope, a new theatre, which you will soon start building. And I wish you about five new and magnificent plays. As to that old play, The Three Sisters, reading it at the Countess' evening party is absolutely forbidden under any circumstances. For Heaven's sake, I beg of you, don't read it, not by any means, nor in any manner, otherwise, you will cause me a great deal of anguish. I sent Act IV off long ago, before Christmas. . . . I have made a great many changes. . . .

Yours, A. Chekhov

To M.F. Andreyeva
(actress Moscow Art Theatre--played part Irina Three Sisters)

Yalta, January 26, 1901

Dear Maria Fyodorovna,
". . . You write that during my last visit I pained you because I seemed afraid to speak frankly with you about Three Sisters, etc. Heaven forbid! . . . I was afraid of hindering you and on purpose I tried to hold my peace, and as far as possible restrain myself, precisely in order not to interfere with your work. If I had remained in Moscow, perhaps after the tenth rehearsal I would have made some remarks, and those only about details. They write me from Moscow that you are excellent in Three Sisters, that you play simply marvelously, and I am glad, very glad. . . . Consider me your debtor. . . .

Devotedly, A. Chekhov

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EVA LE GALLIENNE, founder of the Civic Repertory Theatre, recalls the first English-language production of The Three Sisters in America:

When we first produced The Three Sisters at the Civic Repertory in 1926, we had none of us played in a Chekhov play before. We fell in love with him and our audiences fell in love with him, too. The play was kept in the repertory for all seven years of the Civic's existence, and The Three Sisters performances were for us joyous and enriching experiences. I say "joyous" for there is as much joy as sadness in Chekhov's plays, in fact, there is everything in them—a complete sense of Life.

We soon discovered that one cannot act Chekhov's characters, one has to be them. Theatricality must be forgotten. One must "play true." Yet anarchy and self-indulgence cannot be tolerated. Performances must be strictly disciplined, there can be nothing slipshod about them. One must try and evolve a technique which conceals technique, just as Chekhov did in his writing, which Francois Mauriac compared to Mozart's music.

As to the opinion that Chekhov's plays are gloomy, pessimistic and depressing, this can only be held by people who are either unfamiliar with them or who have seen them in the kind of dreary, long-drawn-out, monotonous performances—all greys and muddy browns—which, unfortunately, have been presented here and there from time to time. His plays are no more monotonous than Life itself. They are full of contrasts, full of color. As to pace, Chekhov writes in a letter to Olga Knipper, dated 1904:

"How awful this is! An act that ought to take no more than twelve minutes lasts forty with you people. I can say one thing: Stanislavsky has ruined my play."

It is now well-known that Chekhov was not exactly whole-hearted in his admiration of the "Stanislavsky Method"! Yet the letter ends: "But, there—bless the man."

Dear Chekhov! Rare, tender, all-seeing.