

= Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike =

Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike is a comedy play written by Christopher Durang . The story revolves around the relationships of three middle @-@ aged single siblings , two of whom live together , and takes place during a visit by the third , Masha , who supports them . They discuss their lives and loves , argue , and Masha threatens to sell the house . Some of the show 's elements were derived from works of Anton Chekhov , including several character names , the play 's setting in a cherry orchard , and the theme of the possible loss of an ancestral home .

The play premiered at McCarter Theatre in Princeton , New Jersey in 2012 , followed by an Off @-@ Broadway production later the same year . It transferred to Broadway in 2013 . The original McCarter , Off @-@ Broadway , and Broadway casts included David Hyde Pierce , Kristine Nielsen , Sigourney Weaver and Billy Magnussen . Subsequently , the play has been produced in Tennessee , California , Indiana , Minnesota , Arizona , Washington , Massachusetts , Missouri , Wyoming , Georgia , South Carolina and the District of Columbia .

Critics praised Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike as a humorous adaptation of Chekhov themes that doesn 't require familiarity with Chekhov . The original Broadway production proved to be a commercial success , recouping its \$ 2 @.@ 75 million investment in under four months . In 2013 , it won the Tony Award for Best Play and the Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Play , among other awards .

= = Plot = =

Middle @-@ aged siblings Vanya and Sonia live in the family home in Bucks County , Pennsylvania . Named after Chekhov 's characters by their theater @-@ enthusiast professor parents , Vanya and Sonia have not had to grow up . After spending their adulthood looking after their now @-@ dead parents , neither has a job , and money is provided by their movie star sister Masha , who owns the house and pays the bills . Vanya (who is gay) and Sonia (who is forever reminding everyone that she was adopted) spend their days reflecting on their lost chances , debating whether the grove of nine cherry trees on their property constitutes an orchard , and bemoaning their rather Chekhovian lot in life . The only other resident of the house is their cleaning woman Cassandra , who , like her namesake , is prone to making dire prophecies that no one believes .

This static environment is disrupted when Masha returns home , bringing with her a flurry of drama , an endless litany of insecurity , and a much younger , gorgeous , dimwitted lover named Spike . Sonia 's resentments and Masha 's competitive nature begin to spark arguments , and while Vanya tries to keep the peace , he is repeatedly distracted by the preening Spike , who takes every opportunity possible to strip down and show off his muscular body . Masha 's fifth marriage has recently ended and her career is starting to stall . Spike 's career has never started , and his biggest claim to fame is nearly landing a part in the sequel to Entourage , Entourage 2 . Another interloper arrives , the neighbor 's pretty niece Nina , an aspiring actress who provokes envy in Masha , lust in Spike , and sympathy in Vanya .

Masha has returned home to attend a costume party at an influential neighbor 's house and insists that her friends and family dress as characters from Disney 's animated Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs , choosing to dress as Snow White . When told she will be going as one of the dwarfs , Sonia rebels and dresses up as the Evil Queen , imagining her as portrayed by Maggie Smith on her way to the Oscars . As they prepare for the party , Masha tells them she intends to sell the house , leaving Vanya and Sonia devastated .

Things come to a head the day after the party . As Cassandra uses a voodoo doll on Masha , trying to dissuade thoughts of selling the house , Sonia receives a phone call from a man she met at the party , requesting a date . Hesitantly , she accepts . Vanya , who is secretly writing a play inspired by Konstantin 's imagined symbolist drama in The Seagull , is convinced by Nina to let her read it in front of the others . During the reading (which stars Nina as a molecule and takes place after the destruction of the earth) , Spike rudely answers a text on his phone , and dismisses Vanya 's suggestion of a handwritten response . Vanya reacts by launching into an impassioned rant ,

criticizing America 's cultural regression in communication and media , while fondly and wistfully recalling the surroundings and memories of his childhood . Concluding that the intent of such progress seems to make people like him feel lost and forgotten , he retreats into the kitchen in tears .

Masha realizes that the person Spike is texting is her personal assistant , with whom he has been having an affair . She ends her relationship with him and kicks him out of the house , announcing she no longer intends to sell it . As the play ends , the three siblings , optimistic for the first time in a very long time , sit quietly together and listen to The Beatles ' song " Here Comes the Sun " .

= = Characters = =

According to Durang , " My play is not a Chekhov parody ... I take Chekhov scenes and characters and put them into a blender . " Although the characters in the play , named by university professors , share names with Chekhov characters , they are not the same characters . They share some elements but are fully imagined . Durang mentioned that Masha is more like Madame Arkadina in *The Seagull* than any of Chekhov 's characters named Masha . Rather than mimic *Three Sisters* , his play has a sister , brother and adopted sister , with the latter two being the most Chekhovian of the title characters . Durang has described Nina as most like a Chekhov character , and related to the character of the same name in *The Seagull* . After five marriages to her contemporaries , Masha has taken up with Spike in a May ? December relationship . Durang says that " Cassandra , who 's a cleaning woman and soothsayer , is like the Greek @-@ tragedy Cassandra . In some ways , she 's like the nanny in *Vanya* , but she doesn 't reflect Chekhov as much . "

= = = Principal roles and original cast = = =

= = Production history = =

Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike was commissioned by the McCarter Theatre , Princeton , New Jersey , in association with the Lincoln Center Theater . The play , which was originally a one @-@ act play , ran at the McCarter Theatre from September 7 , 2012 , to October 14 , 2012 .

The play opened Off @-@ Broadway at Lincoln Center 's Mitzi E. Newhouse Theater on November 12 , 2012 , after previews from October 25 , and ran until January 20 , 2013 . The show 's run at Lincoln Center was sold out . On January 29 , it was announced that the show would transfer to Broadway for 17 weeks beginning March 5 with its original cast under the production of Joey Parnes , Larry Hirschhorn , and John O 'Boyle , in association with McCarter Theatre and Lincoln Center Theater .

It opened on Broadway on March 14 , 2013 , at the John Golden Theatre , after previews beginning March 5 . The Broadway engagement , originally announced to close on June 30 , was extended to July 28 , 2013 and again to August 25 . On July 1 , the show recouped its \$ 2 @.@ 75 million investment . The play closed on August 25 , 2013 , after 201 performances on Broadway . " The house expanded with each of the play 's moves , first from McCarter Theatre 's proscenium stage to Newhouse Theater 's thrust stage , then to the Golden Theatre 's proscenium stage . The actors had to make adjustments to compensate for the changes . Nielsen and Pierce both said that the proscenium accentuated their comedic performances .

The original Off @-@ Broadway and Broadway casts featured Pierce as Vanya , Weaver as Masha , Magnussen as Spike , Nielsen as Sonia , Angelson as Nina , and Grant as Cassandra . The play was directed by Nicholas Martin with the set designed by David Korins and costumes by Emily Rebholz . On July 28 , Weaver left the cast and was replaced by Julie White as Masha . Magnussen departed the cast on August 4 and was replaced by understudy Creed Garnick as Spike .

Following its Broadway run , the show ran at Berkeley , California 's Berkeley Repertory Theatre in September and October 2013 with Anthony Fusco as Vanya , Sharon Lockwood as Sonia , Lorri Holt as Masha , and Mark Junek as Spike . Hyde Pierce reunited with the show to direct the January

29 ? March 9 , 2014 , production at Los Angeles ' Mark Taper Forum by Center Theatre Group . The cast was Mark Blum , Christine Ebersole , Grant , David Hull , Nielsen and Liesel Allen Yaeger .

In September / October 2013 , a separate production ran in the Phoenix Theatre , Indianapolis , produced by Bryan Fonseca . In 2014 , the show ran at the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis , and in Tucson and Phoenix , Arizona . The show was produced in Seattle at the ACT Theatre from October 17 ? November 16 , 2014 .

= = Themes = =

Although Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike is a comedy , it has some darker elements that pervade its themes . Ben Brantley of The New York Times described the play as a " sunny new play about gloomy people " . Patrick Healy of The New York Times described it as a " black comedy about unhappy siblings " .

According to Robin Pogrebin of The New York Times , " The play sets characters and themes from Chekhov in present day Bucks County , PA . " The characters Vanya , Sonia and Masha are middle @-@ aged siblings named after Chekhov characters . Their deceased parents were " college professors who dabbled in community theater " . The character names are borrowed from Chekhov plays . Vanya is the protagonist in Uncle Vanya and Sonia is his niece . Meanwhile , Masha comes from Chekhov 's Three Sisters . Other characters also embody the themes and characters from Chekhov works , such as Nina from The Seagull . The play depicts a home of siblings who have quarreled their entire lives .

According to Charles Isherwood of The New York Times , not only are the character names derived from Chekhov , but also " The country @-@ house setting is also borrowed from the work of that Russian master , as are the self @-@ delusions and self @-@ pity that plague the central characters , all of whom have reached the difficult age when life ' s path has narrowed uncomfortably , and there is little point in turning around and looking to take another , more rewarding course . "

= = Critical review = =

Knowledge of Chekhov will increase the enjoyment of this work 's in @-@ jokes , but not as much as an understanding of Durang 's absurdism , according to Theatermania.com 's Brian Scott Lipton . Brantley noted that the work was suitable for any audience : " Even if you ' ve never read a word of Chekhov , you ' re likely to find plenty to make you laugh : Mr. Hyde Pierce ' s skillfully low @-@ key comic discomfort ; Ms. Nielsen ' s segues from manic eruption into glazed smiling stupor ; Ms. Weaver ' s game sendup of every self @-@ loving , self @-@ doubting movie queen there ever was . " He noted the play does not compare with some of Durang 's most absurd work , calling it " blander and thinner " . Brantley said there was comfort in an evening of deliverance of Chekhov 's " lost souls " , by Durang .

Isherwood noted that as Nielsen demonstrated her ability to lighten the play 's stream of Chekhovian themes , " broad comic acting [was] raised to the level of high art . " He also noted that in Durang 's plays , " heartache is generally fodder for belly laughs " and that Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike had plenty . Lipton noted that the show was quite funny , but also belabored and " scattershot " . Several reviewers agreed that the show was " a bit of a patchwork " .

According to the New York Post critic , Elisabeth Vincentelli , the show improved with its transfer from Off @-@ Broadway to Broadway , especially Weaver 's performance , which Vincentelli deemed the weakest . Weaver portrayed a movie star who was " overindulgent , self @-@ centered and unaware she ' s on the decline . " Mark Kennedy of The Washington Post suggested Durang , with whom Weaver graduated from the Yale School of Drama in 1974 , may have written the role for her . Both Hyde Pierce and Nielsen exhibited mastery of their monologues , according to Vincentelli : " Hyde Pierce is a master of the slow burn , while Nielsen ' s wild @-@ eyed Sonia often looks as if her train of thought has a loose caboose . " Vincentelli also noted that Weaver 's character had " turned her life into a performance . "

= = Awards and nominations = =

The play received six Tony Award nominations for the 67th Tony Awards , winning the Tony Award for Best Play . Magnussen earned his first Tony nomination for his role . Grant also earned her first Tony nomination . The play won the 58th Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Play and the 2013 New York Drama Critics ' Circle Award for Best Play . Grant received a Theatre World Award for Best Debut Performance . Emily Rebholz earned a 2013 Lucille Lortel Award nomination for Outstanding Costume Design of the Off @-@ Broadway production .

The Off @-@ Broadway and Original Broadway productions were jointly recognized with Drama League Award nominations for Outstanding Production of a Broadway or Off @-@ Broadway Play and with Distinguished Performance Award nominations for both Nielsen and Pierce ; the play won for Outstanding Production of a Broadway or Off @-@ Broadway Play . The production received four Outer Critics Circle Award nominations : Outstanding New Broadway Play , Outstanding Director of a Play (Martin) , Outstanding Actor in a Play (Pierce) , and Outstanding Featured Actress in a Play (Nielsen) , and won the awards for Outstanding New Broadway Play and Outstanding Featured Actress in a Play . The production won the 2013 Off @-@ Broadway Alliance Award for Best New Play . The show received an Artios Award from The Casting Society of America for Outstanding Achievement in Casting , New York Broadway Theatre ? Comedy .

= = = Original Broadway / Off @-@ Broadway productions = = =