Thesis production of Uncle Vanya by Anton Chekhov

Suzanne Allyn Cook

The University of Montana

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THESIS PRODUCTION OF
UNCLE VANYA

BY
ANTON CHEKHOV

Directed by

Suzanne Allyn Cook

B.F.A., University of Montana, 1971

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

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A work of art cannot be but a corner of nature seen through a temperament.

Emile Zola

Every director makes his own "law." depending not only on his own temperament or artistic inclination, but on the circumstances of production.

Harold Clurman,
On Directing.

The director must be an organizer, a teacher, a politician, a psychic detective, a lay analyst, a technician, a creative being. Ideally, he should know literature (drama), acting, the psychology of the actor, the visual arts, music, history, and above all, he must understand people. He must inspire confidence. All of which means he must be a "great lover."

Harold Clurman,
On Directing.

I don't know if I am all of the things Clurman asks of a director; I do know I am a "great lover" of Chekhov. While it is always true that many diverse things contribute to the production, it is not within the scope of this thesis to explore the range of experience in the director's background nor to recount in full the process of its development through rehearsals and performance. For the sake of precision, the assumption will be made of the readers' familiarity with Chekhov and with the contemporary techniques often employed in productions of his plays; i.e. ensemble acting, improvisation, non-directional blocking, etc. Pre-production research and planning, the rehearsal process, and development during performances
are all fascinating but complex, and references to these developmental processes will necessarily be limited to specifics chosen to enhance the readers' perception of the final production and to clarify the essence of my contribution as director.

As to the "circumstances of production", the space used was the Great Western Stage, a new performance space opened for Drama/Dance Department use in the fall of 1978 in the Old Main building on the University of Montana campus. The addition of this auxiliary season to the regular season necessitated tightly controlled use of technical and design facilities and monies. Fortunately my impulse when I direct or design is often for simplicity and essence, well considered fundamentals with carefully selected details meeting the practical and poetic demands of the production.

The cooperation I received from the designers in arriving at design that supported the production without burdening it while helping to enhance the mood was in harmony with my basic philosophy; a production is a collaboration of many artists - playwright, actors, designer, director. The development of Uncle Vanya was a venture blending the contributions of undergraduate and graduate students and faculty members in the drama and other departments in a variety of areas.

Another fortunate "circumstance of the production" was the length of time available in which to develop and rehearse the show, eight weeks from the final night of casting to opening night. The luxurious amount of time and the nature of the show allowed extensive
and valuable opportunity to use improvisation and non-directional
blocking techniques that produced beneficial results: an atmosphere
of confident exploration for the actors and director that resulted
in a creative collaboration and ultimately in confident relaxed and
spontaneous performances. Non-directional blocking that fostered a
continuing sense of exploration making the performances a true period
of creative growth. With a design staff overburdened with other
projects, design contributions for Vanya were delayed: this afforded
us to work confidently for five weeks without floorplans. The mood
of cooperation fostered by this delay encouraged focus and efficiency
from the designers; and the coordinating of design and technical
elements with a substantially matured show was smooth and enhancing.
The ability to adapt was well developed on both sides.

The results of my efforts in bringing about the collaboration of
these diverse and talented artists was a rewarding and pleasing ex­
perience. It allowed a chance for the creative and confident appli­
cation of some of my most important convictions about the performance
of Chekhov, distilled from a fairly extensive and eclectic experience
of Chekhov. While research as such contributed heavily to my under­
standing of Chekhov, the primary contribution to my concepts of
performance came through exposure to his works during sixteen years
of exposure to rehearsals and production. Research as such tended to
confirm well-established convictions.

One of these convictions is that Chekhov is not boring and that
a great deal does happen in a Chekhov play, if one thoroughly and
persistently searches the play for humor and the dynamics of human relationships. To eliminate royalties the translation that I was to use had to be in public domain. I chose the Constance Garnett translation and as I began my pre-production analysis the limitations of the script quickly became apparent; the script lacked a flow and simplicity that I felt so necessary and dated British expressions made it stiff and mannered. The process of elimination and clarification went quickly and produced some unexpected benefits: the script was shortened by about one quarter which brought the play within a reasonable playing time for a diverse and broad based audience. The demands of careful, intense concentration on each character through line led me to a deeper analysis of all the characters including the supporting roles and clarified my concepts of characterization. Since then I have continued to find this technique valuable. This process of thorough analysis coupled with the process of the distillation contributed strongly to my understanding of the play and instilled confidence in my production concept.

Now armed with a strong clean script, I could put in action the dynamics needed to express the beauty and depth of Chekhov's characters, through the intricate interweaving of their loves, fears, and needs into complex and infinitely delicate relationships.
LIST OF CHARACTERS

ALEXANDER SEREBRYAKOV, a retired professor
YELENA ANDREYEVNA, his wife, aged twenty-seven
SOFYA ALEXANDROVNA (Sonya), his daughter by his first wife
MARIA VOYNITSKY (Marya), widow of a high official, mother of the professor's first wife
IVAN PETROVITCH VOYNITSKY (Vanya), her son
MIKHAIL LVOVITCH ASTROV, a doctor
ILYA ILYITCH TELYEGIN, an impoverished landowner
MARINA, an old nurse
LABOURER

TIME AND SETTING

The action takes place on the SEREBRYAKOV estate in Russia during the late Eighteen-Nineties.

ACT I  Early summer.  The garden.  It is mid-afternoon.
ACT II  Several weeks later.  The dining room.  It is just past midnight.
ACT III  September.  The drawing room.  It is just before one in the afternoon.
ACT IV  The same day.  Vanya's study.  It is late afternoon.
Key to Symbols for Character Names in Acting Model Book

M  Marina
A  Astrov
Se Serebryakov
Y  Yelena
S  Sonya
T  Telyegin
L  Labourer
V  Vanya
My Marya
Marina, "It has been so long since I've had noodles, sinner that I am."
The impression at the opening of Act 1 is of wood and trees. The edge of the porch of the Serebryakov house is visible upstage left. A wooden fence is seen in the background among the birch trees scattered about. Upstage in the center under more trees is a wooden table and stool. The table has a silver samovar and tea glasses on it. Telyegin's guitar is leaning against a tree left of the samovar. A wooden bench is stage center with a matching stool downstage right center and another stage right. It is a slow, warm, ordinary day. The trees cast dappled shadows. It is early summer.

Dressed in a light colored tweed traveling suit with the trouser cuffs tucked into a pair of high leather boots, Astrov is standing stage right with an empty tea glass in his hand. He is absent-mindedly staring at the ground. Marina, the old nurse-maid, stands near the samovar sipping tea. She is a good-natured, simple woman who has been with the Voynitsky family for most of her life. Marina wears a plain black dress with a white apron; her hair is tied back with a black scarf.

After a quiet moment, Marina notices the silence, looks up at Astrov and cheerfully offers him more tea. He says he doesn't care for any, but hands her his cup anyway. She fills it with tea and hands it back.

Astrov day dreams as he sips his tea. In an effort to snap out of his pre-occupied mood he turns to Marina and asks how long they have known each other. Marina is happy to resume their
ACT I

I. I

(The garden. It is around 2:30 pm. The day is hot and overcast. The edge of the veranda is seen upperstage. Under one of the trees a small table is set for tea.

MARINA is standing near the samovar and ASTROV is standing nearby. MARINA is serving tea.

MARINA

Please have more tea, my dear.

ASTROV

I don't feel much like tea, nurse.

MARINA

Perhaps you would like a little vodka?

ASTROV

No, thank you. I don't drink vodka every day. The weather is too hot anyway. Tell me, nurse...how long have we known each other?

MARINA

How long? Heaven help me! Sonya's mother, Vera Petrovna, was still alive. You came here two winters before she died. It must have been eleven years ago...or even more.

ASTROV

Have I changed much?

MARINA

Very much. Then you were young and handsome...Now you are not so young and not so handsome.

ASTROV

Yes, I have changed. I am not the same person. Why? I'm overworked, nurse. From morning to night I'm never off my feet...I never have a moment's rest. At night I lay awake in fear of being dragged out of bed to another patient. In all these years that you've known me I have not had one
flagging conversation and pleasurably recalls the years as she crosses with the tea downstage to the bench and sits comfortably. A little surprised at the passing of over a decade Astrov turns to Marina, lifts his arms from his sides in comic challenge and asks if he has changed. At her honest answer he feigns hurt and cringes.

Astrov wryly begins to talk to himself, moving about restlessly. This is a free movement section. The actor varied the blocking from night to night. In general he used the stage right area, moving from it when he circled the bench. He incorporated reactions to Marina as she sympathetically responded to his lines and moved more restlessly on the lines protesting his situation. When speaking directly to Marina he used tones of light self-mockery for its entertainment value. But when he is serious in his self-criticism he turns away from Marina, speaking in harsher tones. Astrov speaks to Marina with a special familiarity and Marina responds with maternal concern.

Astrov is behind the bench when he says he cares for no one. Then as if apologizing for his coldness he makes Marina the exception, putting his hands on her shoulders and affectionately kissing her on the top of the head. Pleased at this demonstrative gesture, Marina smiles, pats his hand, and offers to get him something to eat, as if consoling an unhappy child. Astrov laughs in delight at this spontaneous maternal reaction.

Astrov tries to pick up his previous line of thought, trying to understand his introspective mood. He speaks of the wretched
conditions of the epidemic and then hesitantly of the injured man. As he recalls the failed operation he speaks quickly and with emotion turning away from Marina. This is what is really on his mind and the memory pains him. When he says he felt as though he had killed the man guilt floods over him and he makes a gesture of rejecting the memory, tossing his head as if trying to rid himself of it. Then he takes a deep breath and crosses to the downstage right stool and sits with folded hands. He continues on a questioning note, wistfully asking if they will be remembered by future generations. Marina consolingly says men will not remember but God will. Astrov laughs gently at her simplicity and thanks her.

Vanya appears upstage from the porch. He is seen taking a tremendous yawn, stretching out his arms which causes the cuffs of his black suit jacket to catch halfway up his forearms. He fumbles at straightening his sleeve cuffs as he sees Astrov and Marina watching him in amusement, a little embarrassed at his rumpled state. Vanya murmurs, "Yes...Yes," vaguely, as if commenting on his condition. Marina goes to the samovar to get Vanya some tea and Astrov stands and enthusiastically greets his discom-bobulated friend, asking if he has had a good nap.

Vanya says yes and begins to explain his disarray by saying all their routines have been interrupted by the professor's visit. He rambles on self-deprecatingly patting his distended stomach, displaying his sensual weakness; he seems embarrassed but fascinated
single free day. I could not help but change. This life seems so dull, so stupid, and grimy. It swallows you up. Everywhere you look you find yourself surrounded by dull, stupid, and grimy people. Live amongst them for awhile and you soon find that without noticing you have become as bad as they are. Ugh, my moustache has grown huge. It's stupid...I'm just as crazy as the rest. I have not lost my intelligence though...not yet. But I am not as sensitive or as sympathetic as before. I don't want anything...I don't expect anything...I don't care for anyone. Except you maybe...I do care for you, nurse. (Kisses her on top of the head.) I had a nurse like you when I was little.

MARINA

Could I get you something to eat?

ASTROV

(Laughs) No...no thank you. (After a pause) In the third week of Lent I went to Malitskoe. There was an epidemic...Calves were lying on the ground with the sick...pigs, too...the smell! I worked all day...no rest...no food...no drink. Even when I got home they wouldn't leave me alone. They brought in an injured man from the railroad. I laid him on the table to operate, and...he died under the chloroform. I thought that I had lost my feelings, but...Oh, my God! I suddenly felt as though I had killed him. (After a pause) In one hundred or two hundred years will we have made any difference to those who live after us? Will they remember us? Will they have a kind thought...or even remember?

MARINA

Men will not remember...But God will remember.

ASTROV

Thank you for that, nurse...thank you.

VANYA

(Enters from the house, yawning and stretching.)

Yes...Yes.
by his indulgence describing it as if he just discovered it. Marina gives Vanya tea as he passes; not completely amused at his condition she clucks. Vanya crosses to the bench with his tea and sits, declaring, "It's sinful."

Marina welcomes the chance to add her criticism, stepping downstage to express her opinion on the chaotic state of affairs. She scarcely has an appreciation of how superficial her modest description is to Vanya. He reacts to her line about the professor demanding tea in the middle of the night by pounding loudly on the bench with his fist, mocking the petulant professor. Startled, Marina laughs and finishes her little story in gentle disapproval. She clucks and returns to the samovar.

Astrov ordinarily gets little relief from the demands of his work as a doctor and he enjoys watching the antics of his friend, Vanya. He encourages Vanya to continue, asking if the professor and his wife are going to stay long. Vanya farcically growls, "Forever!"

Talk and laughter are heard offstage from the upstage right woods. Vanya hurries to his feet and crosses behind the bench, straightening his unbuttoned vest and rumpled coat. Astrov stands by his stool.

The professor, Serebryakov, enters with Yelena, his beautiful young wife, on his right arm and Sonya, his cheerful but plain daughter, on his left arm. Telyegin follows them in. They have been walking around the estate. Serebryakov is bundled up warmly in a greatcoat with a large grey scarf. He is wearing a formal black suit
Welcome, Vanya! Did you have a good nap?

Yes...Very good, thank you. (Yawns again) Ever since the Professor and his young wife have come to live with us our daily routines have been turned upside down. I sleep at the wrong time, I eat everything in sight, I drink too much! It's not good for me. Before, I never had time...Sonya and I used to work constantly. Now Sonya works...and I eat, drink, and sleep. It's sinful!

(Gives VANYA tea) It is, you know. The samovar boils all morning for the professor and he gets up at noon. Before we always had dinner at one o'clock...now we have it at six...or even seven! The professor spends the whole night reading and writing, then suddenly at two o'clock in the morning he rings the bell! Good heavens, what is it? Tea! Then we get up in the dead of night to get him tea. Tsk, tsk.

Are they going to stay long?

Forever! The professor and his young wife have decided to settle here.

See? The samovar is ready and they have gone for a walk!

Lovely! Lovely, exquisite view!

Remarkable, your excellency!
with an old fashioned high collar and a black vest, and carries an umbrella. Yelena is dressed with more sophistication than Sonya; the train of her dress accentuates her height and her fluid, graceful movement. They pause upstage together and chat pleasantly about the view.

Vanya loudly clears his throat, bidding for their attention, and expansively gestures to the samovar, theatrically announcing, "Ladies and Gentlemen...Tea is served!" He grins broadly as if baiting the professor. However, his gesture for attention falls short, and Serebryakov although not unfriendly, doesn't notice Vanya and preoccupied, asks Marina for tea in the study, and excuses himself saying he must work. He moves to the left toward the house. Sonya skips ahead of the professor leading him by the arm and chatting happily. Yelena follows languidly with a self-conscious grace, not unaware that the men are watching her.

Eager to join Vanya and Astrov in some pleasant conversation, Telyegin crosses downstage to join Astrov and Vanya. Seeing that Marina is drawing him some tea, he crosses to her and takes the glass, smiling gratefully. Telyegin is thin and stands with a stooped posture which gives the impression of being humble and apologetic. His medium-grey suit is too short in the sleeves and too roomy in the trousers.

Vanya has been watching Yelena cross the stage, gesturing to Astrov to look at her. Fascinated, he has drifted upstage and to the right. When Serebryakov has exited, Vanya begins to laugh,
I would like tea in the study please… I must do some work.

SONYA

We could go to the plantation tomorrow, father. You’d like it.

SONYA, SEREBRYAKOV, and YELENA exit to the house.

VANYA.

It’s absolutely suffocating today, and yet our great man of learning has on his coat, boots, gloves, and carries his umbrella.

ASTROV

Well, he won’t catch cold.

VANYA

How lovely she is… I have never seen a more beautiful woman.

TELYEGIN

I drive through the fields, walk in the garden, or even look at this samovar, Marina Timofeyevna, and I feel absolutely happy! The weather is fine, the birds sing, we all live in peace and harmony… What more could one want? (To all) I am truly grateful to you all.

VANYA

Her eyes! Marvelous!

ASTROV

Well, Vanya… entertain us!

VANYA

With what?

ASTROV

Anything new?
mocking the professor for being so overdressed on such a hot day. His laughter trails off and he speaks of Yelena's loveliness, ending with exaggerated comic desire as he rushes up the ramp a few steps and throws her a kiss.

In counterpoint to Vanya's desire for Yelena, Telyegin is happy right where he is and expresses his joy and satisfaction at being in their company. Responding to the general good spirits he bends at the waist and gestures to the trees, the birds, and the samovar. All is well with the world, and he drinks his tea with a happy, self-satisfied look at everyone.

Vanya comically growls out another desirous comment about Yelena, saying, "Her eyes! Marvelous!" He claps his hands together with relish and starts toward the others. Astrov sits back on the bench, spreading his arms along the back and asks Vanya to entertain them, relishing the company and conversation. This is a free movement section for Vanya, with a few specifics. Vanya begins the entertainments with describing his own weaknesses. While describing his mother's absurdity he crosses down until he is standing next to Marina. On "...an old hen," he squawks loudly and flaps his arms, startling Marina. They all laugh together. He mocks the pretention of the French usage of Mother, straightening up and bowing with hautiness.

Astrov encourages Vanya to describe the professor, which he does with relish, acting him out broadly and farcically, waddling around bent over like a cripple and strutting pompously. The others
Telyegin, "The weather is fine, the birds sing, we all live in peace and harmony..."
enjoy his comic descriptions; Astrov openly, Marina modestly, and Telyegin cautiously. Vanya's description is funny but has tinges of bitterness as he goes on, especially when he speaks of the professor's writings on matters of art.

Astrov lightly pokes Vanya on the shoulder and accuses him of being jealous of the professor and this challenges Vanya to continue. He enthusiastically agrees that he is jealous. Vanya criticizes with humor, but with such harshness and compulsion that it leads to the realization that he is bitter about the woman Serebrayakov has attracted. The professor's wife was Vanya's sister whom he adored. When he describes her he becomes gentle and expansive, describing her with airy gestures and a soft, warm voice. He looks at Astrov and laughs self-consciously at his own overt emotion.

To compensate for his self-exposure Vanya speaks of his mother, cringing sarcastically as he describes her fawning at Serebrayakov with "devout awe." He speaks of Yelena, the professor's second wife, lightly and then more strongly at the thought of the waste of her loveliness, ending up growling, "Why?"

Astrov lightly and ironically asks if Yelena is faithful to the professor. They have spoken of this before; it shows in Astrov's casualness and in his smug reaction when the question needles Vanya. Vanya replies with comic disgust. He pompously speaks of the hypocrisy of conventional morality, bending at the waist and describing each point with energy, and then asking with puzzlement if what Yelena is doing by remaining faithful to the professor is moral. He and Astrov laugh together.
No. Everything is old, including me. I'm the same as I always was, except that I've grown lazy. And I grumble like an old hen. My magpie mother... excuse me... "Maman"... cackles about the rights of women, and with one foot in the grave, rummages around in her learned books for the dawn of a new era.

ASTROV

And the professor?

VANYA

The professor? Ah yes... as usual, he sits in his study day and night: "With furrowed brow and racking brain, we write, and write, and write... And never a word of praise we hear, our labours to requite." Poor paper! He should be writing his autobiography instead. What a subject that would be: "The Retired Professor." An intellectual fossil, complete with gout, migraine and envy burning up his liver. He lives here on his first wife's estate, Sonya's mother's estate, against his will, because he cannot afford to live in town! He continuously gripes about his misfortunes, when in fact he is most fortunate. Oh God, how fortunate! Born of less than illustrious parentage, he has nevertheless risen to university distinctions and the chair of professor. He is "Your Excellency": His "Excellency" writes and lectures about art. For twenty-five years he has been chewing over other people's ideas about realism, naturalism, and all the other "isms". His "Excellency" writes and lectures about things intelligent people already know and stupid people don't care about. So for twenty-five years he has simply been wasting his time. But, what conceit... what pretentiousness! His "Excellency" has retired and not a soul knows a thing about him. For a quarter of a century he has simply been keeping a better man out of a job, but just look at him! He struts around here like a saint!

ASTROV

Oh come now, Vanya... I think you're jealous!

VANYA

You're damned right I am! Just look at his success with women! Don Juan himself was never so successful! His first wife... my sister... Sonya's mother... was a lovely, gentle creature. She was as pure as the blue sky, with more admirers than he ever had, and yet she loved him as only angels in heaven can love beings as pure and innocent
Insulted at this flippant talk of morals, Telyegin pulls himself up straight and as the laughter subsides he steps to Vanya and interjects, with his head up and his hands clasped behind his back. His words come out like those of a scandalized but ineffectual school teacher.

Vanya laughs, pats him on the shoulder, kisses his cheek, and tells him to dry up. Telyegin is flustered but smiles and tries to explain his concept of fidelity. His description of his fidelity to the wife who cuckolded him is extremely funny in contrast to his soft-voiced sincerity, and unable to stifle their laughter, Vanya and Astrov turn downstage in an effort to hide it. Telyegin tries to ignore their laughter, speaking more to Marina as he goes on. Vanya hears Sonya calling Marina and realizing that the women are coming he pokes Astrov, who stops laughing.

Sonya hurries in as if escaping something unpleasant and quickly crosses to the samovar, dismissing Marina to see about the villagers. Marina crosses slowly out above the fence through the trees. Sonya is wearing a simple being's skirt, with no train, which enhances her straight-forward movement. A long sleeved high-necked white blouse sets off her dark auburn hair, which although luxurious is not styled to set her face off. Sonya begins to draw a glass of tea and Telyegin crosses to her to replenish his glass.

Yelena has followed Sonya onto the stage. Her copper accented damask dress sets off her gracefully styled blond hair. A delicately worked lace blouse accentuates her long supple neck. Yelena
as themselves. My mother adores him. He inspires her with devout awe! And his second wife...you just saw her...is beautiful and intelligent. Yelena married him in his old age and sacrificed her youth, beauty, and freedom to him. Why? What for?

ASTROV

Is she faithful to the professor?

VANYA

Unfortunately...yes

ASTROV

Why unfortunately?

VANYA

Because that kind of sentimental fidelity is false from beginning to end. To deceive an old husband that you can't bear is immoral. But to sacrifice your youth, freedom and vitality? That's moral?

TELYEGIN

Vanya! I cannot bear to hear you talk this way! Please! Anyone who could betray a husband or wife cannot be trusted. Such a person might do anything:

VANYA

Waffles, dry up.

TELYEGIN

Forgive me, Vanya. My wife ran away from me with the man she loved the day after our wedding. I know that I'm not an attractive man, but I have never broken my marriage vows. I love her to this day and I am faithful to her. I gave all I had for the education of the children by the man she loved, and I still help her whenever I can. I still have my pride...But she? The man she loves is dead...her youth and beauty have gone. What does she have left?

(SONYA, YELENA, and MARYA enter from the house. MARYA sits on the bench and reads her pamphlets.)
Telyegin, "Vanya! I cannot bare to hear you talk this way."
sees the downstage stool empty and crosses to it gracefully, and evenly, fanning her face with her hand lazily, she sits and flares her skirts around the base of the stool.

Marya, Vanya's mother, marches in and purposefully crosses to the bench, not pausing to look at or greet anyone and sits to read her pamphlets. She is dressed in a black satin gown, well-made but severe in its lines. Her gray hair is tightly secured.

Vanya and Astrov have been entertaining themselves with Yelena's entrance, elbowing each other in the ribs and laughing softly, indicating Yelena. When everyone is settled, Vanya ribs Astrov, challenging him to address the aloof Yelena. Astrov collects himself and steps smartly to Yelena and speaks of having come to see her husband. She replies nonchalantly. Slightly taken aback at her lack of apology for the trouble he's taken, he takes a second to recover his poise and delivers his next line with exaggeration, sweeping his arm to indicate how he galloped there to tend to Serebryakov. He pauses for a reaction, but receiving none, he turns to Sonya upstage and says the rest of the lines to her as he moves to stand by her. Vanya is pleased by the lack of impact he has had on Yelena.

Sonya reacts to Astrov's address quickly and warmly. She then becomes self-conscious of her own eagerness and steps to the samovar, making a comment about the tea. Ever trying to be everyone's helpmate, Telyegin hops up to the samovar, bends over to touch it and pronounces it cold. Smiling at Telyegin's awkwardness, Yelena inadvertently addresses him by the wrong name. The others glance quickly at each other.
SONYA

(To MARINA) Nurse, some villagers have come. Would you please go see to them? I will see to the tea. (MARINA exits)

ASTROV

(To YELENA) I came to see your husband because you wrote that he was very ill...rheumatism and so on. But he seems perfectly well.

YELENA

Last night he was complaining of pain in his legs; but today he is all right.

ASTROV

And I galloped twenty miles at breakneck speed! But it's alright...It is certainly not the first time. I will stay with you all tonight! At least I will sleep "quantum-satis".

SONYA

That's splendid! You hardly ever stay with us. Have you had dinner?

ASTROV

No, I haven't.

SONYA

Then you must have dinner with us. We have dinner now at six. (Drinks her tea) The tea is cold!

TELYEGIN

Yes! The temperature in the samovar has dropped.

YELENA

(To TELYEGIN) Never mind, Ivan Ivanitch. We will drink it cold.
Telyegin laughs gently and crosses down toward Yelena a few steps and explains who he is. When he says that people call him "Waffles" he laughs a little proudly. The explanation is good natured, and as he speaks he unconsciously backs up a little until he is standing upstage left of the bench, looking around at the others for their approval. They giggle and Telyegin smiles, pleased with himself. Sonya helps cover the awkwardness by stepping to Telyegin, affectionately taking him by the arm and leading him back to the samovar for more tea.

Marya has been sitting on the bench totally absorbed in her reading. Now she slaps the pamphlets down on her knee in irritation. Stirently, she begins to talk about the pamphlets, oblivious to what has been going on. She has broken the delicate thread of their interchange, bringing the musty life of the professor back to them. Standing behind the downstage edge of the bench Vanya laughs and quickly tries to change the subject. This is the last thing he wants to talk to Marya about. However, Marya snaps her head toward him and imperiously says she wants to talk.

With growing irritation Vanya tries again to hush Marya, but she persists and they begin to argue more loudly. Marya goes on the offensive and criticizes Vanya directly. When she uses the word "enlightened," he answers in a low and angry tone leaning over her. He talks of his wasted life, pacing nervously about as if trapped, hitting his clenched fist into his hand, barely controlling his agitation and frustration.
TELYEGIN

I beg your pardon, ma'am, but I am not Ivan Ivanitch, but Ilya Ilyitch Telyegin, or as some people call me, Waffles, because of my pock-marked face. I am Sonya's godfather. His Excellency, your husband, knows me very well. I live here on the estate. Perhaps you have observed that I have dinner with you every day.

SONYA

Ilya Ilyitch is our helper...our right hand. Let me give you more tea, godfather.

MARYA

Oh!

SONYA

What is it, Grandmother?

MARYA

I forgot to tell Alexandr...I got a letter from Harkov. Pavel Alexeyevitch has sent his new pamphlet.

ASTROV

Is it interesting?

MARYA

It is interesting, yes...but confusing. He is attacking what he himself has been defending for seven years! It's dreadful!

VANYA

There's nothing dreadful about it. Drink your tea Mamman.

MARYA

But I want to talk!

VANYA

We have been talking about and reading those dreadful pamphlets for years!
Sonya is alarmed at the intensity of Vanya's anger. She quickly crosses to Vanya, puts her hand gently on his and with a soft voice begs him not to go on. She has an immediate calming effect on him. But Marya is angry now and she stands up and faces him, severely telling him that he should have been working to put his ideals to use. In light of his attitude towards the professor this is an unbearable insult, and he snaps back at her with a forced laugh and an insult for the professor. Sonya urgently appeals to the both of them to stop. A note of fear in Sonya's voice snaps Vanya out of his attack and he apologizes, a little surprised at the hurt on her face. Marya coldly sits on the bench glaring at Vanya in displeasure. Embarrassed at the incident, Sonya sits on the bench between Marya and Vanya. Her distress moves Vanya and he apologizes again to reassure her.

Astrov has turned upstage during the argument. He stands looking at the ground with his arms folded. Telyegin has melted away upstage and sits on the edge of the platform holding his guitar. Yelena has looked away in embarrassment.

After a long tense pause, Telyegin softly begins to tune his guitar. Marina crosses in slowly behind the fence, looking among the trees for a lost hen. The stage lights are imperceptively softening into late afternoon.

Yelena looks around trying to find something to change the subject. She makes a mundane, cheerful remark on the weather and Vanya answers what he feels is her superficiality with a laugh and an ironic comment. Sonya notices Marina wandering around upstage and speaks to her. They chat about the hen. The labourer
MARYA

You don't like to listen to me, do you, Jean? Forgive me for saying so, but you have changed so much in the last year...I hardly know you. You used to be a man of principle, an enlightened man.

VANYA

Oh yes! I was an enlightened man...and shed light on no one. My God! You could not have been more sarcastic! I am forty-seven years old. Until last year I somehow managed to blind myself with all that pedantic garbage to avoid seeing life as it really is. And I believed that I was doing the right thing. And now? I get so angry that I can't even sleep at night...So angry that I have so stupidly wasted my time. Now I am out of time! I have no time left to find the life I really want to lead!

SONYA

Uncle Vanya! Please do not go on and on...Please:

MARYA

(To VANYA) Are you really blaming your ideals for that? They are not to blame...you are! Ideals alone are not enough...you should have been working to put them to use.

VANYA

Working! I am sorry, Mamman...but not everyone is a writing machine like your beloved professor.

MARYA

And exactly what do you mean by that?

SONYA

Grandmother! Uncle Vanya! Please!

VANYA

I'm sorry...I'll be quiet. (To them all) I apologise.
(After a pause) It's a lovely day...not too hot.

VANYA
Yes...a lovely day to hang oneself.

MARINA
(Mumbling) Chick, chick, chick...

SONYA
Nurse dear, what did the villagers come about?

MARINA
Oh, the same thing...the vacant lots. Chick, chick, chick...

SONYA
Which one are you calling?

MARINA
The speckled hen's gone off with her chicks...the crows...might get them.

(MARINA wanders off looking for the hen. TELYEGIN softly plays the guitar.)

LABOURER
Is the doctor here? (Sees ASTROV) Excuse me, Milhail Lvovitch, but they have sent for you.

ASTROV
From where?

LABOURER
From the factory, sir.

ASTROV
Well, I suppose I must be going. Thank you for the tea. Damned annoying.
walks in from the trees upstage right. He takes off his hat, steps to Astrov and says they need him at the factory. Astrov looks up at the labourer's entrance then down again, bracing himself for the intrusion. After the labourer says he is needed Astrov drops his arms in irritation and turns away. He does not take the interruption well and is annoyed at having to give up his free day. Sonya sees his annoyance and stands, moving to him as she speaks.

Distracted, Astrov answers Sonya and begins to look for his hat. When he can't find it he claps his hands impatiently, then pauses to take a deep breath. To give himself a chance to compose himself and to delay his departure a moment, he turns to the labourer and asks for some vodka. Sonya motions the labourer to Marina and she leads him behind the fence to the house for the vodka. Astrov continues to look for his hat and finds it in a tree near the samovar. He gets it and turns downstage, seeing that the others are watching him in amusement. Vanya laughs at him and Astrov joins the laughter, telling a joke on himself. Vanya looks a bit smug at Astrov's discomfort, and Astrov sees this and pulls himself together.

Prompted by the need to extend his pleasure at their company Astrov steps down to the lovely Yelena and invites her and Sonya to visit him at the plantation. Pleased at Astrov's attention, Yelena lazily asks him the value of his work. He defends it cheerfully. Vanya sits at the bench with folded hands and interjects ironically, testing Astrov. Astrov throws a mock threatening gesture at Vanya. Yelena laughs and glances coyly at Astrov, first flattering him and then putting him down lightly. She turns away at the end of her
SONYA

I'm sorry! Can you come back for some dinner?

ASTROV

No...no thank you...It will be too late. (Looking for his hat) Now where did I...where...? (To the LABOURER)
Would you get me a glass of vodka? (The LABOURER exits)

Where in the devil did I...(Finds hat) Here it is. One of Ostrovsky's plays has a character with a sharp moustache and a dull wit, like me! Well...good afternoon to you all. (To YELENA) If you and Sonya ever care to visit me, I would be delighted. I have only a small estate, but if you're interested, I have a model garden and a nursery better than any for hundreds of miles. The government forest plantation is next to my land, but the forester is old and ill, so I actually take care of it for him.

YELENA

I've been told that you like forestry. I'm sure that it's very valuable work, but doesn't it interfere with your real work, as a doctor?

ASTROV

God knows what one's real work is!

YELENA

And is forestry such interesting work?

ASTROV

Yes, it is interesting work.

7ANYA

(Ironic) Oh, very interesting!

YELENA

(To ASTROV) You are a young man. No more than...thirty-six or thirty-seven? Surely it cannot be all that interesting. Nothing but trees, trees, and more trees.
line to straighten her skirts around the stool. Astrov rubs his jaw, not quite sure how to respond.

Sonya comes to Astrov's defense and crosses down to praise his work. Astrov counters upstage, a little modest at her unreserved enthusiasm. She begins talking with Yelena but then switches her focus; she is obviously a little uncomfortable with Yelena. She speaks animatedly to them, pausing to get each point correct as she has learned it from Astrov. In her overt admiration for everything Astrov has told her she is unconsciously revealing how deeply she cares for him. Uncle Vanya watches her with tenderness; Yelena with interest, sensing that what she says is not as important as how she is saying it. Sonya speaks of graceful and refined people, gesturing in demonstration, and sees that everyone is amused at her happy outburst. She claps her hands together, looking down in shyness and pleasure. She self-consciously hurries the end of her little speech crossing back to the samovar, glancing quickly at Astrov as she passes him. Throughout this speech, Telyegin has been playing the guitar softly, enhancing the mood of Sonya's speech.

When Sonya has finished her lines, Vanya yells, "Bravo!" and lovingly encouraging her extroverted outburst, he claps his hands enthusiastically. Sonya smiles shyly and looks down. Vanya makes a mundane remark about the woods to Astrov and looks at him in irony. Astrov answers Vanya angrily; he cares too much about the subject to enjoy the flippancy. After his first outburst he pauses
SONYA

Oh, but it is! Mikhail Lvovitch plants new trees and tries to keep old forests from being destroyed. He has already been awarded a bronze medal for his work. If you would listen to him you would understand. He says that forests beautify the country. They teach man to understand beauty and elevate his mind and spirit. Forests modify the climate and in countries where the climate is mild there is less struggle against nature and people are gentler, more beautiful and sensitive. Their language, their movement and demeanor are graceful and refined. Arts and learning flourish...their attitudes are cheerful and happy, and they are courteous to their women.

VANYA

Bravo! Well said! But, Astrov my friend. I am not convinced...so I will continue to burn wood in my stove and build with lumber.

ASTROV

Heat your stoves with peat and build your barns with brick! Alright...Cut down trees as you really need them, but why destroy the forests? The forests of Russia are being completely destroyed. Millions of trees, the homes of wild animals and birds, are perishing. The rivers are eroding the treeless slopes...and then are disappearing forever... And all because man is too lazy to stoop down and pick up fuel from the ground. To burn this beauty in your stove, to destroy what we cannot create is stupid. Man is gifted with the power of reason and the creative force to multiply what has been given to him...but he has not created, he has destroyed. There are fewer and fewer forests, rivers are drying up, our wildlife is becoming extinct, and every day the earth is growing weaker. (To VANYA) You are not taking me seriously, are you? You look at me as if I were a crank. Perhaps I am. But when I walk by a stand of timber which I have saved, or when I hear the wind rushing through young trees which I have planted with these hands, I realize that I may have a small positive effect on the climate. And I feel that if mankind is happy a thousand years from now, I may have had some purpose. When I plant a young birch and see it growing tall and strong, my heart is filled with wonder and pride. And I...(The LABOURER enters with the vodka) But, I see that it is time that I left. Perhaps I am a crank... (Drinks) In any case...I must leave. Thank you...Goodbye.

SONYA

(SONYA takes his arm and walks off with him.)
and softens his tone. He begins to explain the ecological conditions of Russia, gaining conviction as he goes and enthusiastically describing the destruction.

This is a free-movement section for Astrov. By the time Astrov accuses Vanya of not taking the matter seriously, he has crossed behind Vanya who is sitting at the bench. He leans over Vanya's shoulder on the back of the bench between Vanya and Marya. As he describes his young groves of trees Astrov crosses downstage to the right, gracefully moving his hands in the air as if drawing them. Telyegin accompanies the speech with the guitar, reinforcing the positive and negative aspects of the speech with corresponding shifts of musical mood.

Yelena is moved by Astrov's expression of the beauty of the forests and watches him intently, a slight smile on her lips. Astrov responds to her attention, delivering more of his lines to her as he nears the end of the speech. As he looks at her, her beauty affects him and he becomes more poetic. At the emotional peak of Astrov's description of his young trees, the labourer enters with the vodka on a small tray. Astrov sees him and drops his arm, saying he must go. The guitar stops. He crosses to the labourer and takes the vodka.

Astrov crosses downstage to Yelena who stands, as does Vanya. Astrov takes her hand and then bids everyone goodbye. Sonya looks at Vanya and he smiles at her and silently urges her to see the doctor off. She puts her hand on Astrov's arm and they exit through the
Sonya, "He says forests beautify the country..."
trees upstage right, speaking as they leave. The stage lights have adjusted and the afternoon light is lower and more golden as Yelena and Vanya watch Sonya and Astrov go. Marya continues to read her pamphlets and Telyegin tunes the guitar under the trees by the samovar.

Yelena turns downstage so that Marya will not overhear and chastizes Vanya's behavior. He is happy to be noticed by her. Yelena starts languidly upstage with Vanya watching and commenting on her indolence. She turns to him and sharply replys, then continuing upstage, gazing at the trees. Vanya follows her watching, but obviously not listening to what she says; they have had this conversation before. She hears him react to her words about sacrifice and turns to him protesting his sarcasm. Vanya reacts with embarrass-ment at the frankness of her appraisal of him, but also with pleasure because she is paying attention to him. He begins to speak to her, moving closer, but she turns away and continues crossing upstage. Vanya follows trying to change the subject.

Yelena becomes bored easily and now she changes the subject. She is gazing at the trees and they remind her of Astrov. She speaks of him and, enjoying the thought of him, she tilts her head to one side, emphasizing the graceful lines of her head and neck, and sways slowly from side to side in a languorous motion. Vanya is attracted to her and laughs uncomfortably. Yelena turns to Vanya and speaks of their being good friends, lightly touching Vanya's hand. She describes herself and Vanya as being tedious but Vanya only hears the
(As they are leaving) When are you coming to see us again?

ASTROV

I don't know.

SONYA

Will it be as long as a month this time...?

YELENA

(To VANYA) You have been behaving badly, Ivan Petrovitch. Why must you irritate Marya Vassilyevna with talk about a writing machine? And today you quarreled with Alexander again. How petty.

VANYA

But what if I happen to hate the man?

YELENA

There is no reason to...he is no worse than you or anyone else.

VANYA

If you could just see your own face...hear your voice! My dear, you are too indolent to live!

YELENA

Indolent...yes. And bored. Everyone abuses my husband and pities me. "Poor thing...she has an old husband."

How well I understand this odious sympathy. The doctor said you destroy the forests, that there will be nothing left when you are finished. In just the same way you recklessly destroy human beings. Soon there will be no purity, fidelity, or capacity to sacrifice left. You mock; these things to death with your insufferable sarcasm.

Why is it Vanya, that you cannot behave calmly to a woman who does not belong to you? Astrov is right! There's destruction in all of you. You have no sincere feeling for woods, birds, women, or each other.

VANYA

Please spare us the preaching...it's dull.
line about their being friends. His heart leaps with emotion. Sud­
denly she sees the adoration in his eyes and coldly snatches her hand
away and starts to leave. Vanya follows her protesting and sputtering
awkwardly. He gets in front of her, declaiming his love. She hurries
off in distress and Vanya trips and stumbles after her.

Marya continues to read and Telyegin plays the guitar as the
lights fade to black. The melody lingers and resolves in the dark.
The doctor has a tired but sensitive face. An interesting face. Sonya is attracted by him...perhaps in love with him. I can understand that. He has come three times since I have been here, but I am shy and have not even had a real conversation with him. He thinks I am disagreeable. Do you suppose that is why we are friends, Vanya? Because we are both such tiresome, tedious people? Yes, tiresome. Don't look at me like that...I don't like it.

VANYA

Let me speak! Don't drive me away! I love you. Just saving I love you gives me my greatest happiness!

YELENA

This is agonizing!

(VANYA follows her. TELYEGIN plays the guitar, and MARYA reads.)
ACT II
It is very late at night and the drawing room is dimly and coldly lit. Upstage right the platform leads off to the other rooms. A buffet upstage center is dressed with a table cloth and set with decanters of brandy and wine. Glasses and plates with food, cheese, bread and cold meat are sitting on the buffet. A cold, unlit stove is upstage and left. A chaise lounge with a short back and small arms is angled center stage, with a matching chair above it and below the buffet. A covered stool is downstage left. To the right of the stage is a small table with a dozen various prescription bottles on it. A chair stands upstage of the table. Downstage right is a window seat, indicating the presence of a window.

Serebryakov is lying asleep in the lounge with a laprobe bunched around his legs. He is dressed in a robe. The lounge is in a dim pool of light. Yelena is in semi-darkness in the chair above him, a fringed shawl around her shoulders. She is asleep. A watchman taps outside, quietly unseen, making his rounds.

After a long still moment, Serebryakov moves fitfully, pauses, and then struggles half up in the lounge trying to catch his breath. He is startled. At the sound of his voice Yelena stirs tiredly and slowly sits up. She stands and dutifully goes to him to straighten the laprobe over his legs. When he yells crossly at her she goes back upstage and sits, turned away from him. He notices her moving out of his sightlines and tries to reach her with his voice complaining of the pain in his legs. He gets no reply and fearful of
(The dining room, late at night. A watchman taps outside.)

SEREBRYAKOV is lying down on a chaise lounge. YELENA sits dozing in a chair.

SEREBRYAKOV

(Hearing a noise) Who's there? Sopya, is that you? (He sees YELENA) Oh, it's you, Lenotchka. I am in unbearable pain.

YELENA

Your robe has slipped. I'll shut the window, Alexander.

SEREBRYAKOV

No! I'll suffocate. I just dreamed that my leg did not belong to me...then I awakened with this unbearable pain. Rheumatism, I think. What time is it?

YELENA

Twenty past twelve.

SEREBRYAKOV

I must read some Batyushkov in the morning. Why is it so suffocating in here?

YELENA

You're tired. You haven't slept in two days.

SEREBRYAKOV

I've heard that Turgenev got angina from gout. I'm afraid I have it. Hateful old age! Damn! I've grown old and hateful to myself...and you all must hate the sight of me.

YELENA

You talk of your age as if we were all responsible for it.

SEREBRYAKOV

Most of all I am hateful to you. I'm not a fool. I understand. You are young, good-looking, eager for life. I am a

STOVE
the silence he asks the time, unconsciously marking his own mortality.

Serebryakov gripes and complains, moving around in the lounge trying to ease the aching in his body, but mostly trying to get attention from Yelena.

Yelena stands and turns away saying her ironic line about his age being her fault as a tired attempt to stop what she knows will probably turn into another recriminating argument. But instead of changing the subject Serebryakov speaks even more directly about dying. As he speaks he alternates between withdrawing into the painful knowledge that what he says about himself is true, and in trying to find her with his eyes to see what effect his words have on her. He wants her to say it isn't true. But after he begins to speak Yelena moves off into the upstage left corner by the cold stove to escape his words. The corner is dark and Yelena moves about tiredly by the stove as if seeking the warmth that has died out of it.

When Yelena pleads for him to be quiet, he goads her with his mock-cheerful comment about being the only one enjoying himself. He sits up a little straighter and pounds his fist exuberantly on the arm of the lounge. Yelena crosses to his left with clenched fists, pleading with him more strongly. He drops his chin onto his chest and speaks softly. She begs him to tell her what he wants, and he barks, "Nothing!" loudly. Yelena stubbornly leaves him and sits on the stool downstage left, turned away defiantly.
Serebryakov, "I just dreamed that my leg did not belong to me..."
Sereyakov begins light-heartedly saying how the others are allowed to talk but not himself. As he goes on he becomes irascible, picking impatiently at the laprobe with his hands. Then a tone of pleading comes into his voice; he asks if he doesn't have the right to be cared for by others in his old age. Outside the wind begins to blow with a hollow sound.

Disturbed by the howling of the wind, Yelena stands and crosses to shut an offstage window, saying it will rain soon. She exits offstage left. The shutter slams; subdued, the wind continues. Serebryakov is left alone on the stage. He looks bleakly around and rubs his eyes and forehead with his hands. Yelena comes back in and sits in a chair as far away from Serebryakov as possible. She bows her head and leans it on her hand tiredly muttering that no one denies his rights.

Serebryakov hears how far she has moved away from him and droops his head. He begins to speak in his isolation; at first tired and defeated and fidgeting aimlessly with the edge of the laprobe; then with a feeble attempt at vitality, trying to sit up with more dignity...but failing. His last lines reveal the depth of his fear and loneliness as she laughs to ease the sting of his own words and rubs his aching leg. When he says, "They won't forgive me my age," his voice is soft and he sits very still. From upstage in the dark Yelena answers with fatigue and bitterness, that she will soon be old too. The two of them sit in silence, isolated from each other not only
old...almost a corpse. Do you suppose that I don't understand? It is stupid of me to go on living isn't it? But wait...In a little while I shall set you all free. I won't linger much longer.

YELENA

I am worn out! For God's sake be quiet!

SEREBRYAKOV

Oh yes, thanks to me everyone is worn out, depressed, wasting their youth...and I am the only one enjoying life!

YELENA

Please be quiet! You make me miserable!

SEREBRYAKOV

I make everyone miserable. Of course.

YELENA

It's insufferable! Tell me what you want of me!

SEREBRYAKOV

Nothing.

YELENA

Then be quiet, I implore you:

SEREBRYAKOV

(Pause) It's a strange thing. Vanya can speak, and that old idiot Marya, and everyone listens. But if I say a word everyone feels miserable. They dislike the very sound of my voice. I suppose I am disagreeable...egotistical...tyrannical. Haven't I the right? Haven't I earned the right in my old age? The right to be quiet...The right to be cared for by other people?

YELENA

No one is denying your rights. (The wind starts to blow)

S7 - WIND BEGINS TO BLOW

S8 - OFFSTAGE WINDOW SHUTTER BANGS

S9 - WHEN SHUTTER BANGS, LEVEL OF WIND DROPS AND CONTINUES

II-2

(The wind...I'll shut the window. It will rain soon.)

(She shuts a window) / No one denies your rights.

(WATCHMAN taps and sings quietly in the garden.)

S7/ \ Y RISE \ X USR
S8/ Y EXIT UL TO SHUT WINDOW
S9/ L ENTER \ X TO USL CHAIR ON PLATFORM AND SIT
by the physical distance but by the lack of understanding of each others needs and pain.

The storm begins, underscoring the humid and oppressive atmosphere that the household has been suffering. After a moment Sonya enters with a lantern and looks around, wearily seeing that her father is still awake. She crosses to the buffet and sets the lantern on it. The buffet and general lighting warm up. Sonya looks at Yelena sitting by herself and hurries by her, not speaking. She looks at her restless father and crosses to him. Astrov has been waiting and she speaks to her father gently but firmly about his refusal to see him. After his grouchy reply she turns from him to sit in the windowseat downstage right, impatient and blunt in her reply about not having time for his peevishness.

Serebryakov sulks for a moment and then asks the time again, impatient at his pain. Yelena answers from her chair without looking at the clock; she is aware of every passing moment. Serebryakov has trouble breathing again and begs Sonya to get his drops from the table. She goes to the table and picks up a small bottle and takes it to her father. In his irritation that Sonya has brought the wrong bottle he slaps out childishly at her hand. Sonya loses her temper with him and answers him sharply, going to the table and setting the bottle on it with a crack.

The lights brighten somewhat as Vanya, wearing a robe over his tie and vest, enters with a lantern. He looks around and sees that
After devoting one's life to learning, after growing used to the society of honorable colleagues, I spend every day around stupid people...hearing foolish conversation. I want life! I like success...I like fame and renown. Living here is like being in exile. Every moment to be grieving for the past...watching the successes of others...dreading death. I can't bear it. It's too much for me. But they won't forgive me my age.

YELENA

Wait a little...have patience. In five or six years I shall be old too.

SONYA

Father, you told us to send for Dr. Astrov yourself and now you won't see him. You have troubled him for nothing.

SEREBRYAKOV

What good is he? He knows as much about medicine as I do about astronomy.

SONYA

We can't send for all the great medical authorities to tend to your gout.

SEREBRYAKOV

I am not going to talk to that crank.

SONYA

Do as you please. It makes no difference to me.

SEREBRYAKOV

What time is it?

YELENA

Nearly one o'clock.
the professor is still awake and that Sonya and Yelena are waiting tiredly for Serebryakov to retire. To lighten the atmosphere he cheerfully comments on the storm. The thunder claps and he points to the ceiling and ad-libs, "See?" Vanya's behavior is somewhat manic; Astrov has come to see the professor and he and Vanya have been drinking and carousing together. Vanya gets no response to his joke about the storm as he looks from Sonya to Yelena. He sees how tired they are and coming to their aid he cheerfully offers to take over watching the professor. He shuffles to the buffet and puts his lamp down.

Serebryakov has heard Vanya's joke and sensing his manic mood he protests Vanya's presence, tossing feebly on the lounge and gesturing in the air. Vanya goes to him and tries to quiet him down, but Serebryakov protests more loudly. Vanya becomes irritated at the old man's childish behavior and backs away from Serebryakov, rolling his eyes and tossing his hands in the air. He stands below the stage left stool.

Marina comes in slowly, looking for things to clear away. She sees that everyone is still up tending the professor and purposefully goes about her work as if accepting the inevitability of yet more disruptions. She sees a teacup on the stage right table and goes to pick it up, answering Sonya and taking the cup to the buffet.

Serebryakov chimes in, gleefully pretending he is enjoying himself. Marina purposefully turns to him, ignoring his words and sensing his need, she tiredly goes to him speaking gently as though
SEREBRYAKOV

I'm suffocating... Sonya, fetch me my drops.

SONYA

Just a minute.

(SONYA goes to the table for the drops and brings them to him.)

SEREBRYAKOV

No, not these! It's no use asking for anything!

SONYA

Please don't be peevish! Some people may like it, but please spare me... I don't like it. And I haven't the time. I have to be up early in the morning... we are cutting hay.

VANYA enters with a candle.

VANYA

There's a storm coming. Yelena, Sonya... why don't you go to bed... I can take your place.

SEREBRYAKOV

No! Please! Don't leave me alone with him! He'll be the death of me with his talking!

VANYA

But you must let them have some rest! This is the second night they have had no sleep.

SEREBRYAKOV

Let them go to bed, but you go too. I beg you to go. We'll talk some other time. Don't leave me alone with him! He'll be the death of me with his talking!

VANYA

This is getting laughable.
to an exhausted child. Supporting him with an arm she helps him to his feet, lays the folded laprobe on the lounge, and puts his arm on her shoulder. They move upstage slowly and carefully, Marina clucking encouragement and Serebryakov grunting gratefully. Sonya stands and goes before them to pick up a lantern and to guide their way off. Yelena stands as they pass. Vanya crosses up to the stove, wondering at how well Marina has handled Serebryakov. The stage darkens a little.

Yelena watches them go, then turns away and glides slowly to the lounge, speaking with tears in her voice. She sits on the lounge, slumped and tired. Vanya goes quietly to her side. She speaks of the destruction in their lives, and pleads with Vanya to be a reconciler, looking intensely in his eyes and taking his hand. This moves Vanya and with a sudden burst of awkward passion he drops to his knees pulling her hand to him, kissing it and begging for her love.

Yelena snatches her hand away and turns from him telling him to go away. Vanya sits back on his heel as if she had slapped him then stands and giggles in embarrassment. He goes to the window and looks out. He talks about the storm connecting what he sees to his own turmoil and pent-up feelings. After a pause he quietly speaks of his wasted love. He moves slowly to her with his cupped hands held out to her. He kneels at her feet looking at his hands, then into her eyes, lifting his hands slightly in a gesture of giving a previous gift. Yelena is subdued and cannot answer him. Vanya sadly looks away on the line about fallen sunshine and drops his hands to his sides in a
SONYA

You ought to be in bed nurse! It's late.

MARINA

The tea things have not been cleared...can't very well go to bed.

SEREBRYAKOV

Everyone is kept up, everyone is worn out. I am the only one enjoying myself.

MARINA

(Comforting him) Well my dear, is the pain so bad? I've a grumbling pain in my legs too...such a pain. You've had this trouble for years haven't you? Sonya's mother used to look after you for days. How she loved you. But, the old are like little children...they want sympathy too, but no one feels their pain. Come to bed my dear. I'll give you some lime-flower tea and warm your legs, and say a prayer for you.

SEREBRYAKOV

(Moved) Thank you nurse...thank you.

MARINA

(As they go) I have such a grumbling in my legs too...such a pain. Careful now...that's right...

YELENA

I am worn out with him. I can barely stand on my feet.

VANYA

You with him; I with myself. This is the third night. I've had no sleep.

YELENA

It's dreadful. Your mother hates everything except her pamphlets and the professor. He is irritated and does not trust me, and is afraid of you. Sonya is angry with her father, angry with me. You hate your mother and my
Vanya, "Here you have my life and my love."
husband. I have been on the edge of tears all day. It's dreadful in this house.

VANYA

Please Yelena...no moralizing.

YELENA

You are an intelligent man, Vanya. You ought to understand that the world is not being destroyed through fire or flood, but through hatred, malice, and all this petty wrangling. Your work is to reconcile, not to grumble.

VANYA

(Reconcile me to myself first! My darling...(Kisses her hand)

YELENA

Don't! Go away!

VANYA

(After a pause) The rain will be over soon and nature will be refreshed and relieved. But the storm has brought no relief to me. Day and night the thought that my life has been hopelessly wasted weighs on me like a nightmare. My past was spent on nothing...the present is awful in its senselessness. Here you have my life and my love. What am I to do with them? My passion is wasted like a ray of sunshine fallen into a pit. I am utterly lost.

YELENA

When you talk to me about your love I feel stupid and don't know what to say. Forgive me...there is nothing I can say to you. Good night.

VANYA

(If you only knew how hurt I feel that another life is being wasted! Yours! What are you waiting for? What cursed theory holds you back? Understand! Please understand!

YELENA

(Looking at him closely) Vanya, you are drunk!
helpless gesture. He knows even before he has finished talking that she does not choose to accept him.

Yelena awkwardly tries to explain not being able to respond to his love, then tries to leave. Vanya stops her, begging her to understand. His unrelenting persistence in declaiming his love alarms her and she looks closely at him and bluntly dismisses his ardor by saying that he is drunk. She turns away from him, disgusted. Vanya stands confused for a moment then says, "Could be," and crosses left to the stove to get away from her critical eye. It thunders outside.

Yelena restlessly moves to the sideboard to ask of Astrov then turns to Vanya and asks him why he's been drinking. He answers with mock bravado, lifting his hands up then clapping them together with a little forward bow and a laugh. Yelena chastizes him again and turns away. Vanya rushes to her impulsively and once again declaims his passion, kissing her hand. Yelena stops cold, removes her hand from his and leaves the room quickly. Vanya is left looking foolishly after her. He throws his hands up in defeat and sighs.

The stage lights have subtly adjusted, dimming in the general areas of the stage and pooling on the lounge where Vanya will deliver his soliloquy. The subdued sound of the thunder continues. This is a free-movement section for Vanya. Generally he would cross to the lounge and play to the place where she had been, turning away when frustrated and kneeling at it with his arms around the top of the lounge touching the laprobe when speaking of the professor. He
VANYA

Could be. / Could be! /X TO DR

YELENA

Where's Astrov?

VANYA

He's in my room, staying the night. Could be...could be. /

YELENA

You've been drinking again. Why?

VANYA

A feeling that I'm living? /X A STEP TO

YELENA

You never used to drink. And you never used to talk so much. /Go to bed, you bore me. /X TURNS AWAY

VANYA

(Kissing her hand) / My precious, beautiful woman: / QUICKLY TO

YELENA

/Don't! This is horrible! (She exits quickly) / TAKES HER HAND AWAY & EXITUL

VANYA

She's gone. Ten years ago I used to see her at my sister's. / FREE MOVEMENT

She was seventeen. Why didn't I fall in love with her then? Now she would be my wife. What a wonderful thought! I would be so happy now! Just thinking about it makes me want to laugh! (Pause) My God, why am I so old? Why doesn't she understand me? (Pause) My God, I've been cheated! I adored Serebryakov, the "Professor". I worked for him like a horse. Sonya and I squeezed every penny out of this estate. We bargained over linseed oil, beans, everything... to save money and send everything to him. I was so proud of him... his learning. His writing seemed to be inspired by genius. He was my life! And now, my God, he is retired and what does his life amount to? Nothing! A soap bubble. Pop! I have been cheated... stupidly cheated. / SITS ON DL STOOL

II.6

(ASTROV and TELYEGIN enter noisily.) / ENTER UL
"Could be. Could be!"
"I worked for him like a horse."
stands in frustration on the last line and impatiently moves away to the down left stool. He sits and slumps over hiding his face in his hands.

Astrov comes in laughing drunkenly with Telyegin behind carrying his guitar. Astrov is wearing a smoking jacket over his shirt and tie and has on loose trousers with plain shoes. He waves his hand in the air as if batting flies away and then demands that Telyegin play the guitar. Astrov's mood is boistrous and playfully arrogant. Telyegin sits on the edge of the platform upstage and plays softly. Astrov glances around to see if Vanya is alone and asks, "Are you alone?" Vanya wryly looks around and nods. One gets the feeling the two bachelors have discussed "aloneness" in connection with the lady they both desire already this evening. Astrov saunters stage right talking about Yelena and glancing offstage. He sees the medicines on the table and comments on their number. Vanya answers listlessly and Astrov studies him. He crosses back to Vanya and needles him about his melancholia, leaning over him and faceciously asking him if he is thinking of Yelena. Vanya reacts indignantly and sits straight up. His "ideal love" is not to be sullied. Astrov delivers his lines about love and friendship to Vanya and Telyegin, enjoying his own wit and moving about drunkenly. He points out the stages of friendship with his hands, getting mixed up and miscounting his fingers. Vanya reacts with anger at his vulgarity and turns away from him.
Play something, Waffles!

But everyone is asleep!

Waffles, play! (He does, softly) Are you alone, Vanya? Have the ladies gone? The storm woke me up...damn fine rain! What time is it?

God knows.

I thought I heard Yelena.

She was here a minute ago.

A fine woman. (Examines the medicine on the table) Medicines...so many prescriptions! From Harkov, Moscow, Tula. The professor has bored every town in Russia with his gout. Is he really ill, or is he faking?

He's ill.

Why are you so melancholy today? Are you sorry for the professor or what?

Leave me alone.

Or perhaps you are in love with the professor's wife.
Astrov takes his whole speech about himself as he is sitting down in the lounge, slumping into it very slowly with unselfconscious caution and gesturing grandly with one hand. No sooner is he down on "Useless bugs," than he pops up again laughing and clapping his hands and shouting at Telyegin to play faster. Telyegin plays a folk dance and Astrov stomps about clumsily, trying to follow the fast rhythm. But he has had too much to drink. He gives up the dancing and wryly goes to get another drink at the buffet.

Alarmed by the loud stamping and playing, Sonya has entered and is standing above the buffet. Telyegin stands when she comes in and quickly crosses to the right with his guitar. As Astrov arrives at the buffet he finally sees Sonya and drops his arms. Embarrassed, he excuses himself and motions for Telyegin to follow. They exist upstage right together, stumbling and giggling with their arms on each others shoulders.

Sonya watches them go and then turns to Vanya. She talks of his drinking, crossing down to him. Vanya answers softly with his head bowed. Sonya is worn out from the late-night chaos and is nervous about Vanya's condition. She scolds Vanya for drinking and for not helping her cope. He begins to cry silently as she chastizes him for living on dreams. The lights adjust subtly isolating them at the downstage left stool. Sonya pauses, observing him closely, realizing that he is crying. She kneels at his feet, tenderly taking his face in her hands. Vanya takes her hands and kisses them
VANYA

She is my friend.

ASTROV

Oh! Already?

VANYA

What do you mean "already"?

ASTROV

A woman can become a man's friend only in the following sequence: first...agreeable acquaintance, second...mistress, third...friend.

VANYA

That is a vulgar theory.

ASTROV

What? Yes...I have become vulgar. I'm drunk too. Usually I get drunk like this only once a month...or so. When I'm drunk I become rude and insolent. I don't stop at anything: I carry out the most delicate operations without a flinch, and I do them well. I make grand plans for the future. I don't think of myself as a crank, and I feel that I am making great contributions to mankind. And, at such times I feel that everyone else, including yourself, are no more than insects...useless bugs. I want us to have a drink! I think there is some brandy. And as soon as it is light we will go to my place...right? (SONYA has entered and he sees her) Oh. Excuse me, I'm not properly dressed.

SONYA

Uncle Vanya, you have been drinking with the doctor again. He has always been like that but why do you do it. It's unsuitable at your age.

VANYA

Age does not matter. When your life falls apart you live on dreams. It's better than nothing.
many times, talking of his sister. He is overcome with anguish and hastily rises, crossing to the right. Sonya stands as if to follow but he stops her with a gesture and backs offstage with hushed protests.

Sonya stands for a moment looking after him. She makes up her mind to speak to Astrov about drinking with her uncle. She is distressed at Vanya's state and although inwardly excited by the thought of talking to Astrov, she is also hurt and angry. She crosses to the buffet and picks up the lantern. She hesitates and then lifts the lantern and moves to the wings upstage right and softly calls Astrov. He answers from offstage and Sonya nervously turns and walks to the buffet and sets the lantern down. She steps off the platform and stands with her hands clasped before her with a faint primness.

Astrov comes in, his coat on and straightening his tie. The stage lights have adjusted, isolating the buffet and general stage right area. Sonya turns to Astrov and more harshly than she first intended tells him not to drink with her uncle any more. Astrov blinks in surprise at the strength of her emotion and stands for a second unsure how to react. Then he pulls himself up a little straighter. He is insulted, and says he is leaving. Sonya softens, regreting her hard words. Not wanting him to leave she asks him to wait until the rain is over.

Astrov insists and moves to 9°. As he steps by her he stops and turns, speaking sharply of her father's demands that he come
SONYA

The hay has been cut and is rotting in the rain, and you live on dreams. You have given up looking after things. I have to work alone, and I'm exhausted. / (She sees that he is crying) Uncle! You have tears in your eyes.

VANYA

Tears? Nonsense! Just now you looked at me... and you looked so much like your mother. My darling... (He kisses her hands) My sister, my dear sister... where is she now? If she knew... if only she knew...

SONYA

What, uncle? Knew what?

VANYA

It's too painful... useless. / Never mind. Afterwards... It's nothing! I'm going. Excuse me. / (He exits)

SONYA

Mikhail Lvovitch, are you asleep? Could I speak with you for a moment?

ASTROV

(Offstage) I'm coming. / (Enters) What may I do for you?

SONYA

Drink yourself, if it does not disgust you, but I implore you, don't let my uncle drink. It's not good for him.

ASTROV

Very well. We won't drink anymore. I am just leaving. It will be light by the time they get the horses hitched.

SONYA

But it's raining. Please wait until morning.
and then refusing to see him. Sonya knows that he is right and shyly nods her head. She says that her father is spoiled with a little laugh of apology. Astrov relents at her embarrassment and a bit regretful at his own sharpness. They stand together for an awkward moment and then Sonya hopefully asks if he would like something to eat, gesturing to the buffet. Comforted by her warm and friendly tone, Astrov accepts.

Sonya goes to the buffet chatting brightly and fixes a small plate of food and offers Astrov cheese. He accepts and begins to relax. He speaks of the atmosphere of the house and of its occupants with their petty obsessions. Irritated again he lifts the bottle of brandy asking her permission. She blinks at his drinking but hides her feelings and simply smiles shyly and nods. Astrov pours himself a drink and continues his speech about the people in the house.

When he mentions Yelena she asks him what he means and moves to the small table with the plate of food. Astrov follows with his drink, criticizing Yelena's idleness. As Sonya sits at the window-seat Astrov sits in the chair above the table and takes more cheese. Astrov mocks himself for being so critical and says he is peevish and dissatisfied with life. Sonya reacts in disbelief: to her his life is beautiful. He describes his lack of purpose. Sonya listens with her hands folded. She loves Astrov with an idealized love and doesn't really understand what he is going on about: She is just happy to be in his presence. She doesn't understand the depth or importance of
ASTROV

The storm is passing by. We'll only get the end of it... 4 TURNS TO EXIT
I'm going. And please don't send for me to see your
father again. I tell him he's got gout... he tells me it's
rheumatism; I ask him to stay in bed... he sits in a chair.
And today he would not speak to me at all.

SONYA

I'm sorry... he's spoiled. / (Looks at the sideboard) Won't 5 TO BUFFET
you have a little something to eat?

ASTROV

Well... perhaps.

SONYA

I like eating at night. (Gets things from sideboard) They 6 TURNS TO BUFFET
say that my father was a favorite with the women... that they
spoiled him. Here, have some cheese.

ASTROV

I haven't had anything to eat all day... just drink. Your
father has a difficult temper. (He takes the bottle) May
I? / (Drinks) No one is here so I can speak frankly. You 7 POURS A DRINK
know, I don't think I could live in this house for a single
week. I would be choked by the atmosphere. Your father
is obsessed by his gout and his books... Uncle Vanya by his
melancholy... your grandmother with her pamphlets... and your
stepmother...

SONYA

What about my stepmother?

ASTROV

A human being should be beautiful in every way: Face, 8 FOLLOWS TO SR
dress, ideas, and soul. She is beautiful, but does
do nothing but eat, sleep, walk about... fascinating everyone
with her beauty... nothing more. She doesn't work... People
work for her. An idle life cannot be good. Am I being too
harsh? I'm dissatisfied with life, like Vanya, and we are
both growing peevish.

SONYA

You are dissatisfied with life?
his restlessness and dissatisfaction. Her attention is on her joy rather than his need.

Astrov rises restlessly, protesting how hard he works. He speaks of a light in the distance, standing by Sonya and twisting his glass in his hand, looking out of the window behind Sonya as if searching for something. He turns away from Sonya saying he is miserable and then laughing at himself, laughter eases the sting of truth in his words. Sonya looks down. She wants to be sympathetic but does not understand how to help. With increasing impatience at his lack of expectations Astrov paces around the lounge. Saying he cares for no one, he stops by the darkened lounge and stares away in loneliness and pre-occupation.

When Sonya, looking at her hands, softly asks if he cares for no one, he is unaware of her meaning. He answers that he does feel affection for Marina but not for the others and grows angry as he describes the lack of feeling and depth in the intellegensia of the district. Trying to lighten the mood a little he moves to Sonya and describes with humor the intellegensia's attempts to pin people down like moths, acting it out with his hands. He humorously describes what people say about him behind his back and Sonya finds him very entertaining. She is thrilled to find herself the object of his performance. She does not sense the pain behind his joking.

Astrov says his line about people having no feelings. It jolts him after he has said it; it's the same thing he said when he was talking to Marina about the injured man who died while on the
Oh not with life itself, but with our everyday provincial life here in Russia. As for my own personal life...I find it dull...hopeless. (/I work, I believe, harder than anyone /ROES, then in the district. (Drinks) When you walk through a forest /GESTURES TO on a dark night, if a light gleams in the distance, you /DR OR WINDOW don't notice how tired you are, or how dark it is. I have no light in the distance. I am unbearably miserable. (/He LAUGHS X SL laughs gently) I don't much like my fellow man. I don't look forward to anything. I expect nothing. It's been years since I cared for anyone.

SONYA

You care for no one at all?

ASTROV

Oh, I feel affection for your old nurse. But the others? /FRE MOVEMENT No. The peasants are all alike...unlearned, living in dirt. The educated people around here are tiresome. Our friends are petty in their thoughts and in their feelings. They are simply stupid. Those few who are more intelligent are hysterical, morbidly introspective, and are forever whining about this or that. They are full of hatred and slander. They maliciously gossip about everyone and play at pinning people down, like moths on a board, with labels such as eccentric, unacceptable...or crank. When they could not make up a suitable label for me they said, "How strange...He is very strange!" I love forestry...that's strange. I don't eat meat...that's strange. (Pause) They have no genuine feeling for nature or people. None...None whatever. (/He is about to take a drink)

SONYA

/No, please! I beg you, don't drink anymore! /RIS RISES

ASTROV

Why not?

SONYA

It's not like you! You are so refined...you have such a warm voice. More than that even...you are unlike anyone I know. You are wonderful. Why then do you want to be like ordinary people who drink and waste their time and health? (/Oh, don't do it...I entreat you! You always say /KNEEL AT HIS FEET that people don't create but only destroy what heaven
operating table. This memory disturbs him and he becomes distracted and angry. Trying to throw his depressing thoughts aside he groans in exasperation and picks up his glass from the table. It is empty. He starts toward the buffet to fill it again.

Sonya jumps up in alarm and quickly runs to him, begging him not to drink anymore. He laughs off-handedly and backs away from her. Sonya thinks she has offended him and pauses, then decides to go on. Astrov slumps tiredly at the chair holding the empty glass in his hand. He needs comfort, not chastizing.

Sonya crosses down to Astrov. She emotionally tells him how different he is from anyone else. He turns away putting his head in his hand. Sonya kneels at his feet urgently pleading with him not to destroy himself. She becomes increasingly desperate and clutches his arm, trying to reach him. Astrov holds still a moment and then, moved by the strength of her concern for him, he takes his hand away from his face and lifts his head. He quietly tells her he won't drink anymore. A little unsure, Sonya asks him for his word. He gives it. He hands her his glass and says "Done", meaning it. She looks from him to the glass in her hand and back at him and says "Thank you," in quiet surprise. Astrov laughs gently.

Astrov stands up cheerfully, swaying unsteadily as he happily proclaims he is sober. Sonya smiles and stands. As he returns to the subject in renewed tones of bravado, Sonya sets his glass on the table and sits at the windowseat fondly watching his every move with wide eyes. Reiterating his verdict on himself he moves to the window
gives them. Then why do you destroy yourself? Why? You
mustn't! You mustn't. I beseech you; I implore you!

ASTROV

(Holds out his hand to her) I won't drink anymore!

SONYA

Give me your word?

ASTROV

My word of honor.

SONYA

(Pressing his hand) Thank you!

ASTROV

I have come to my senses. You see. I am quite
sober. And will stay this way! But what was I saying?
Oh yes...I've run out of time, I've grown old and I work
too hard. I have become vulgar. My feelings are numb...
I am not able to love and often feel that I never will
again. Beauty still affects me, however...It does move
me. I imagine that Yelena Andreyevna could catch me in a
snap...if she wanted to. But that's not love...that's not
affection...(He covers his face with his hands and shudders)

SONYA

What's wrong?

ASTROV

Nothing...nothing. (Pause) During Lent one of my patients
died under the chloroform...

SONYA

You really must forget about that. (Pause) Tell me,
Mikhail Lvovitch...if I had a friend or a younger sister and
you found out that she...well, suppose that she loved you?
How would you react?

ASTROV

I don't know. I wouldn't, I suppose. I would make her
understand that I didn't feel the same way...that I was...preoccupied. Anyway..if I am going I had better start.
beside Sonya. As he looks out the window he becomes introspective, saying he can't love any more. Breaking the mood, he sits by Sonya on the windowseat remarking that beauty still moves him. He is unaware that he is hurting Sonya. He jokingly speaks of Yelena. Sonya looks down self-consciously. Then almost angrily he rejects these thoughts, breaks off and leans over, his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands, shuddering.

Alarmed, Sonya touches his arm asking what is wrong. He pauses and has trouble saying what it is; his patient dying during Lent. Not sensing how very painful this subject is to him, Sonya absent-mindedly says that he should forget. Astrov slowly puts his hands down and stares blankly forward. In Sonya's preoccupation with her relationship with Astrov she has not been sensitive to his deep need to express his innermost pain: She has missed the moment during which she could have truly reached him, and she doesn't realize it.

Sonya realizes she is still touching Astrov's arm and shyly takes her hand away and folds it in her lap. She is trying to find words for what is really on her mind. After a quick glance at him she steals herself and asks if he could love someone who loved him, say a younger sister. She means herself. She holds absolutely still, breathlessly waiting for his reply.

Astrov is still pre-occupied with his own distress and is a little puzzled about her question. Not understanding her meaning,
he replies lightly saying he is pre-occupied. He is not prepared for the question and in his turn he has missed a crucial moment in understanding Sonya. Astrov takes a deep breath and says he must go. Standing up, he turns to Sonya, takes her hand, says good by and leaves quietly.

As Astrov is leaving, the lights carefully dim, isolating the windowseat in a pool of light. The wind and thunder have been fading away during the scene. Sonya watches Astrov leave. She stands quietly for a moment and then turns downstage.

Sonya's soliloquy is a free movement section. After her first lines, she laughs, asking herself why she is so happy, clasping her hands together and twirling around. She recounts her words to Astrov, checking herself momentarily on, "Was I too bold?" and then babbling happily on. The actress playing Sonya was, at this moment, radiant with the animation of being in love with love. She turns to the window; it reminds her of being with Astrov as if she sees him there. Suddenly she pauses, seeing her own reflection. She slowly lifts her hand to her face, her smile fading. Silently she looks at her reflection and then pauses and tears come into her eyes. Turning away in pain she sits on the windowseat with her hands in her lap and her head up. She quietly and breathlessly says, "How awful it is not to be beautiful." She drops her head slowly and continues. When she recounts what people said about her plainness when coming out of church she lifts her head again as if facing the truth. On her last line she lowers her eyes slowly to the floor, sitting very still, locked in loneliness.
SONYA

(Alone) He said nothing to me really... his heart is still locked away from me. But... why do I feel so happy? (She laughs softly) I said "You are refined... you have such a warm voice!" Was I too bold? His voice caresses one... I can still feel it in the air. And when I spoke to him about a younger sister he did not understand. Oh, how awful it is not to be beautiful. How awful it is. And I know that I am not. I know it. Last Sunday as people were coming out of church I heard them talking about me, and one woman said, "She is a sweet, generous girl... it's a pity she is so plain!" Plain...

YELENA

The storm is over. The air is so fresh! Where's the doctor?

SONYA

He's gone.

YELENA

How long are you going to be angry with me, Sonya? We have done no harm to each other. Why should we be enemies? Let's make up.

SONYA

Oh, I've wanted to! / Let's not be angry anymore.

YELENA

Yes! (They embrace)

SONYA

Has father gone to bed?

YELENA

No. He's in the study. We haven't spoken to each other for weeks... Why? (She sees the wine) What's this?
"I said, You are refined...you have such a warm voice!"
After a silent moment Yelena enters quietly. Sonya turns to the window and looks out, hiding her tears. The lights are slowly adjusting, coming up around the buffet and lounge areas. Yelena looks around and sees Sonya alone. She pauses hesitantly for a moment and then speaks softly and gently to Sonya, trying to be casual; she is troubled by her relationship with Sonya and senses an opportunity to remedy it. When Sonya answers Yelena studies her for a moment trying to gather her courage to speak, moving downstage to the table. Yelena sincerely asks Sonya not to be angry with her anymore. Her voice is filled with gentleness and concern. Full of emotion from her encounter with Astrov, Sonya responds to Yelena's plea after a moment's lonely indecision. She rushes to Yelena saying she has wanted to make up. They embrace like sisters.

They look at each other, then Sonya again becomes shy and drops her eyes, afraid that the depth of her emotions will show too clearly. To change the subject to something a little safer, she asks about her father. Yelena answers her and then asks why they haven't spoken to each other for such a long time. Not knowing what to say, Sonya turns away, shyly touching a bottle on the table with her hand. Yelena's eyes follow Sonya and she sees the wine-glass that Astrov was drinking from on the table. Changing the subject she asks about it. Glowing with the memory of Astrov, Sonya replies shyly.

Yelena looks at Sonya with a mischievous smile and they cross to the buffet together. Yelena lets her shawl drop from her
SONYA

There's some wine. Astrov was having a little to eat.

YELENA

Let's have some! We will drink to our friendship... out of the same glass! (Fills glass) Now we are friends?

SONYA

Friends! (They drink together) I have wanted to talk to you for so long, but I felt shy... ashamed. (She cries) Why are you crying?

YELENA

Oh, it's nothing.

SONYA

There, there. (She cries too) I'm a silly creature... I'm crying too. You are angry with me because you think I married your father for his money. If you will only believe me I will swear that I married for love. I was attracted to him because of his intelligence... his learning. Oh, it was not real love, but I felt at the time that it was. And ever since our marriage you have been punishing me with your clever, suspicious eyes.

SONYA

Oh please... Let's forget.

YELENA

You mustn't look like that, Sonya. It doesn't suit you. People like you must believe in everyone, or you will be miserable. (Pause)

SONYA

Tell me honestly as a friend... are you happy?

YELENA

No.
shoulders and tosses it on the lounge. Yelena pours the wine and proposes a toast to their new friendship. They take turns sipping the wine. Sonya eagerly begins to talk, then overcome with emotion and tension, begins to cry and turns away crossing left of the lounge. Yelena follows her in concern. She lifts Sonya's head gently with her hands and begins to cry herself. Sonya sits on the stool and Yelena kneels at her feet. Sonya takes Yelena's face in her hands, comforting her. After a pause Yelena urgently tries to tell Sonya why she married Sonya's father knowing that Sonya holds it against her. Sonya tries to stop her and rises, crossing to the foot of the lounge. Yelena tells Sonya that she must believe in everyone if she is to be happy.

Sonya softly asks Yelena if she is happy. Yelena sadly replies "No". Sonya pauses sympathetically. Sonya tries to think of how to ask Yelena her next question, and crosses a step to the right of the lounge. Yelena stands still and braces herself, knowing that they must be truthful with each other.

Sonya hesitantly asks if Yelena wouldn't have liked to have married a younger man, not daring to look at her. Yelena pauses for a moment and then, relieved, she laughs. She is charmed at Sonya's naivete and sits happily on the lounge inviting another question. Sonya sits on the lounge with Yelena and they giggle together like sisters. The wine has begun to affect both women who seldom drink at all.
Yelena, "Oh, it was not real love, but I felt at the time that it was."
Sonya chatters away happily about Astrov, crossing to the window as if seeing his face again. She catches herself speaking too loudly and crosses quickly back to Yelena taking her hand. Yelena responds, speaking exuberantly of Astrov. This is a free movement section for Yelena. As Yelena moves about describing Astrov and his life, Sonya counters downstage to the window, catching Yelena and enjoying her uninhibitedly romantic description of Astrov. Yelena moves gracefully about talking in the air with her hands. When Yelena says of Astrov, "It's a hard life", she wistfully crosses to Sonya to wish her happiness. She contrasts herself with Astrov saying she is tiresome, and crosses off to the left toward the cold stove, sunk in her thoughts of her own worthlessness.

Sonya looks out of the window, thinking of Astrov and does not hear Yelena. When Yelena is at the stove she drops her hands, becoming sad and defeated. She faces away upstage left in the dark. Sonya is looking out the window at the opposite end of the stage, downstage right in silhouette, facing downstage. Sonya cannot contain her happiness any longer and bursts out laughing.

Startled, Yelena turns and asks Sonya what she is laughing about. Sonya skips happily to the lounge and claps her hands in delight. Yelena is infected with Sonya's joy and rushes to her and takes her hands. Feeling a need for an emotional outlet, Yelena wants to play the piano. Sonya enthusiastically agrees. Yelena sends Sonya to
SONYA

I didn't think so. /One more question...Tell me frankly, wouldn't you have liked to have married a younger man?

YELENA

Oh Sonya! You are so young! Of course I would have! (Laughs) Well, ask me another question.

SONYA

Do you like the doctor?

YELENA

Yes, very much.

SONYA

(Laughs) Do I look silly? He has gone but I still hear his voice and his footsteps, and when I look at the dark windowpane I can see his face. I must not speak loudly... I feel embarrassed. /Come to my room where we can talk. Tell me something about him!

YELENA

What should I say?

SONYA

That he is clever, he understands everything! He can do anything! He doctors people and plants trees?

YELENA

It's not just a question of forests and medicine. He is gifted, bold, with freedom of mind. Perceptive. He plants a tree and is already seeing it in a thousand years. He has visions of the happiness of mankind. Such people are rare. One must love them. Oh, he drinks a little. He is sometimes a bit coarse, but that does not matter. A gifted man cannot be perfect in Russia. Think of his life: Impassable roads, mud, frost, snowstorms, immense distances, poverty and disease all around. It's a hard life. (She kisses SONYA) / I wish you happiness with all my heart... you deserve it. /As for me, I am a tiresome creature... a minor character, in music, in my husband's life, in love affairs, everything. When I think about it, Sonya, I have never been happy. There is no happiness for me...none. (SONYA laughs happily) Why do you laugh?
"As for me, I am a tiresome creature."
ask permission from the professor. Sonya skips eagerly out of the room.

   Alone, Yelena stretches her arms out in yearning for the emotional release to be found in playing and crying at the piano. She turns in a whirl. Then she hears the tapping of the watchman making his rounds, and crosses left, hushing him. With her hands to her smiling face, she crosses to the stool. Sonya returns slowly. Yelena hears her step and turns expectantly. Sonya quietly says they must not play. Yelena shudders as if cold, then freezes, and they stand still looking at each other, their fragile moment of sharing crushed. The lights fade to black, punctuating the silence.
SONYA

I am so happy! So happy!

YELENA

I have a longing for music! I would like to play something.

SONYA

Do play something! I'm not a bit sleepy!

YELENA

Your father is not asleep. Music irritates him when he is ill. Go and ask him! Then if it's all right, I'll play!

SONYA

Oh yes! (She runs off)

YELENA

It's been such a long time since I played! I shall play and cry...cry like a little girl. (She hears something) Is that you tapping Yefim?

YEFIM

Yes, Ma'am. (Offstage)

YELENA

Please don't tap...the master is not well.

YEFIM

I was just going. (Whistles) Hey there, good dog! Come on boy. Good dog.

(SONYA enters.)

SONYA

We must not.
ACT III
It is early in the afternoon on a bright September day and the lights flood Vanya's study/bedroom evenly. A large desk with papers, pens and ledgers is upstage right on the platform with a desk chair behind it. A map of Africa is hanging on the wall behind the desk. The entrance to the room is upstage left. Downstage, above the edge of the platform hangs a swag curtain partially setting off the desk platform from the rest of the room. Matching straight-backed chairs are placed with their backs to the platform edge, one upstage center and one upstage left, indicating the entrance to the downstage part of the room. Stage right is a small round table with two matching chairs, one upstage and one downstage of the table. Sunshine pours in through the window downstage left. The presence of the window is indicated by a windowseat covered with fabric. A stool covered with the same fabric sits downstage right by the windowseat.

Sonya is sitting on the windowseat working on a few papers. Yelena is strolling aimlessly about the stage. She sighs with boredom and Sonya looks up at her, smiles and returns to her work. After a moment Vanya enters and crosses quickly to the edge of the platform. He is dressed neatly, and is in an energetic and playful mood. He loudly claps his hands to get their attention and announces the professor's meeting. Yelena answers lethargically and continues to wander around. Vanya happily criticizes the professor as he crosses down to peek over Sonya's shoulder to see what she is doing. Sonya protests and Vanya apologizes with a quick light tone.
L16 - STAGE LIGHTS UP,
6 SECOND COUNT

ACT III

(The drawing room. Early afternoon. YELENA is walking about. VANYA and SONYA are sitting.)

VANYA

His "Excellency" has graciously expressed a desire that we all gather together here in this room at one o'clock today. It is now fifteen minutes until one. He wishes to make some pronouncement to the world.

YELENA

It's probably some business matter.

VANYA

He has no business. He spends his time writing garbage, grumbling, and being jealous.

SONYA

Uncle Vanya!

VANYA

All right! I'm sorry. (He looks at YELENA) Just look at her. She's so lazy she almost staggers as she walks. Very charming!

YELENA

You keep yapping away all day! Don't you ever get tired of it? (Sighs) I'm bored to death. I don't know what I'm going to do.

SONYA

There's plenty to do, if you cared to do it.

YELENA

For example?

SONYA

You could help us run the estate, teach the children, or look after the sick. There's plenty to do. When you and father were not here Uncle Vanya and I used to go to the market ourselves to buy and sell.
Vanya silently watches Yelena stroll about, then smiles impishly and criticizes her laziness. Yelena turns on him impatiently and snaps at his chatter. She continues to wander around in boredom. Sonya rises and goes to put her papers on the desk. She helpfully suggests things Yelena could do to keep busy; but Yelena is not cheered. She bluntly rejects Sonya's suggestions as she wanders to the stool by the windowseat and sits. Vanya sneaks to her right side and stands staring at Yelena appreciatively.

Sonya tries to encourage Yelena by coming to her and hugging her gently. She then sits on the windowseat next to her. When Sonya mentions Vanya following Yelena around all day, he is in the center of the stage listening. He turns upstage in embarrassment, laughs and crosses to the chair upstage center and sits. By the time Sonya has finished speaking, Vanya has decided he can cheer up Yelena with his good-natured clowining. He hops up and studies Yelena. He takes her hand and begins to kiss it, then does a double take pretending to read her palm, surprised at seeing "mermaid's blood." Kneeling at her feet he overdramatically waves a hand in the air as he tells her to let herself go and plunge headlong into the abyss. Sonya smiles at Vanya's waggish antics, but Yelena is hurt. She is melancholy and is incapable of taking positive action to dispel it. She snatches her hand away, stands and crosses away from him.

Vanya is embarrassed at perhaps having gone too far in his joking. He crosses haltingly to Yelena and apologizes. He kisses her hand
YELENA

I don't know how to do those things. Anyway, they are not interesting. It's only in fairy tales that people teach and doctor the peasants. How am I, of all people, knowing nothing, going to do those things?

SONYA

I don't see how you could help but get involved. Wait dear... be patient. You'll get into it. (She puts her arms around YELENA) Don't be depressed. You are bored and idle and don't know what to do. This boredom is catching! Look at Uncle Vanya... he does nothing but follow you around. I have left my work to come and talk to you. Astrov used to come to see us once a month and now he drives over every day, neglects his forestry and his patients... you must be a witch!

VANYA

Why should you be miserable, Yelena my dear. Come my splendid one, be sensible! You have mermaid's blood. Let yourself go! Fall headlong in love with some water sprite... plunge into the abyss! Live recklessly.

YELENA

(Angry and hurt) Leave me alone! How cruel you can be!

VANYA

I'm sorry... forgive me... I apologise. (He gently kisses her hand) Peace?

YELENA

You could drive an angel mad.

VANYA

As a sign of peace and harmony I'll bring you roses! I gathered them this morning. Autumn roses... exquisite, mournful roses. (He exits)

SONYA

Autumn roses, Exquisite, mournful roses... (They look out the window)
"Look at Uncle Vanya...he does nothing but follow you around."
Yelena, "How am I, of all people, knowing nothing, going to do those things?"

Vanya, "Come my splendid one, be sensible!"
and smiles, saying, "peace?" He is very winning and she can't remain angry with him for long. To further placate her he says he will bring her roses from the garden. As he leaves, Vanya pauses in the doorway and with his hand on his heart says, "Exquisite, mournful roses," then laughs impishly and exits. Sonya turns to look out the window and wistfully repeats Vanya's line about the roses. Yelena joins Sonya and looks out the window with her.

There is a small melancholy pause. Reaching for something to break the mood, Yelena asks where Astrov is. Sonya answers and moves a few steps away from Yelena. Then her need for recapturing the sisterly openness with Yelena overcomes her reticence. She turns to Yelena and quickly rushes to her taking Yelena's hand in hers and clasping it emotionally to her heart and urgently saying that she must talk to her. Yelena is pleased that Sonya confides in her. She responds with tenderness.

Sonya looks at Yelena intensely, trying to speak, and not able; then turns away in shame, hiding her face and not knowing how to begin. Yelena puts her arm around Sonya as a sign of her close understanding. Sonya recovers enough to speak of her agony, saying that his is not beautiful. Yelena sincerely but unthinkingly remarks that Sonya has beautiful hair. Recognizing this as a confirmation of her own judgment of herself, Sonya moves slowly to the stool, continuing to speak with difficulty. She sits and begins to talk of her agonizing love for Astrov. Yelena watches carefully and quietly moves to the window-seat to sit near her. Sonya speaks gently and quietly with her hands
YELENA

It's September already. How are we to get through the winter? (Pause) Where is Astrov?

SONYA

In Uncle Vanya's office. He's writing. I'm glad that we are alone now... I need to talk to you.

YELENA

About what?

SONYA

(She hides her face) About what?

YELENA

(Comforts her) Come, Sonya...there, there.

SONYA

(Softly) I'm not pretty.

YELENA

You have beautiful hair.

SONYA

No! No. When a woman is plain she is always told, "You have beautiful eyes... You have beautiful hair." I have loved him for six years. I love him more than life itself. Every moment I am aware of him. I feel the touch of his hand, I watch the door, waiting for him to come in. I keep coming to you simply to talk of him. Now he is here every day, but he doesn't look at me... doesn't see me. It's agony. I have no hope at all... none. (In despair) Oh my God, give me strength. I have been praying all night. I couldn't keep it in any longer and told Uncle Vanya yesterday that I am in love. Everyone knows.

YELENA

(Gently) And he?
Sonya, "...but I felt shy... ashamed."
in her lap and stares belindly forward. She begins to break emotionally, fighting her tears but finally cries "It's agony!" She tired to recover, fails, and then leaps up and urgently rushes to Yelena and kneels at Yelena's feet. Desparately clinging to Yelena's hands she speaks faster and more compulsively. Then, overcome, she covers her face with her hands and buries her head in Yelena's lap in utter anguish.

Yelena softly murmurs to Sonya, stroking her hair. She gently asks of Astrov's response with a tone of hope in her voice. Sonya falters and then says, "No," in quiet defeat. Yelena resonates to Sonya's desparate sorrow and finds relief from her own melancholia in trying to help Sonya. After a moment of struggling for a solution she gets an idea and eagerly offers to question Astrov on Sonya's behalf. The thought of such an action frightens Sonya. She stands and quickly steps away. Yelena rises and follows after her speaking gently and with encouragement. Sonya silently looks at the floor, then slowly nods her head in consent. Happy at having made a concrete move, Yelena turns Sonya to face her, telling her not to be frightened and trying to give her confidence. Sonya nods her head again.

Sonya cannot run from the truth no matter how painful; she now looks up at Yelena and pleads with her to tell her the truth. Yelena promises confidently but naively, and tells Sonya to ask Astrov to come to her. Relieved, Sonya eagerly beings to exit. She hurries to the platform and then hesitates once more in doubt. Yelena has moved
SONYA

No. He doesn’t even see me really.

YELENA

He is a strange man. I’ll tell you what Sonya...let me speak to him? I’ll be very gentle...hint at it. How much longer can you bare it? Not knowing? Let me do it... (SONYA is quiet for a moment and then quietly nods her head in consent.)

YELENA

Darling...it won’t be difficult to find out whether he loves you or not. Don’t be frightened, Sonya. I’ll question him so carefully he won’t even notice. All we want is a yes or no. (Pause) If it’s no it would be best if he did not come here again...do you agree?

(SONYA nods her head.)

SONYA

You’ll tell me the truth?

YELENA

Of course, dear. The truth, no matter what, is better than not knowing. I’ll do it right now. He was going to show me some charts. Go tell him I want to see him.

SONYA

Yes, I’ll go. (She starts to) No! Uncertainty is better! At least one can hope...

YELENA

What dear?

SONYA

Nothing. (She exits)
Yelena, "Come Sonya...there, there."

Sonya, "Everyone knows!"

Yelena, "I'll tell you what Sonya...let me speak to him?"
downstage and when she hears Sonya's fearful hesitation she turns around and asks her what is the matter. Sonya quietly says, "Nothing," and goes out with her head bowed, meekly submitting to Yelena's plan.

Yelena's soliloquy is a free movement section toned by the actress' intuition and mood, but with prescribed dynamics. In the first part of the speech Yelena is pained and defeated by what she knows is Astrov's lack of love for Sonya. She tries to justify a relationship between Astrov and Sonya.

Yelena speaks with sympathy for Sonya and then with protest at the dullness of both of their lives. She goes on to speak of Astrov, describing him with joy and flair, moving easily and gracefully. She reminds herself of what Vanya said of mermaid's blood and lets herself go in a moment of angry protest and yearning for escape, moving about quickly with her arms spread out as if to fly away from it all. No sooner has she become expansive than she stops in defeat, drawing her arms closely to her body in a protective gesture. She confesses her inability to really do the very thing she longs for the most... escape. She faces herself in a moment of painful truth, speaking of her cowardice and of her chronic sense of guilt.

Remembering her intention to speak to Astrov for Sonya and catching herself thinking of him, she is overcome with remorse. Urgently she begins to run off in a headlong rush to find Sonya and to beg for her forgiveness. When she is almost at the door, Astrov walks in. Yelena is startled. She stops suddenly and turns away
be a fine wife for a country doctor of his age. She's sensible, kind, and pure-hearted. (Pause) I understand her. In the midst of desperate boredom with nothing but shadows for people, dull people who do nothing but sit, eat, drink, sleep, and make the most boring conversation imaginable...he arrives on the scene: Interesting, fascinating, like a bright moon on a dark night. How easy to respond to such a man...to forget oneself...to yield to his charms! I believe I am a little fascinated myself! Even now I smile when I think of him. Vanya said I have mermaid's blood. "Let yourself go!" Oh, if only I could fly free as a bird away from all of you, from your sleepy faces, from your talk...forget your existence! But...I am cowardly and shy. My conscience troubles me, and I suddenly feel guilty. I am ready to throw myself on my knees before Sonya, to beg her forgiveness, to ask her pardon...to cry...
flustered. Attempting to compose herself, she hides her face by straightening her hair with her hand.

Astrov cheerfully greets her and marches to the desk with his maps. He moves the desk chair to the left end of the desk for her to sit on and spreads his maps carefully out on the desk. As he is setting them in order, talking amiably to Yelena, she recovers, taking a deep breath and calmly folding her hands. She moves to the desk. Enjoying the prospect of showing the lovely Yelena the maps that mean so much to him, he gestures to the chair and she sits.

Astrov carefully begins to explain the maps, then becomes more and more engrossed in them as he goes on avidly explaining each facet of them. When speaking of the environmental decay of the district, he becomes intense and begins to focus more on the maps and less on Yelena. As he progresses from one map to the other he becomes more angry at the waste they reveal to him. Yelena tries to show interest in the maps but she is pre-occupied and cannot maintain her concentration. Her focus shifts. She begins to study Astrov, watching his hands and gestures, and then slowly moving up with her eyes until she is staring at his face. She is fascinated by the man, if not his work.

Astrov emphatically makes his final point and looks at Yelena for confirmation. He sees that she has not been listening. He is hurt and angry and turns back to the maps and quickly begins to gather them up. Yelena is embarrassed and tries to apologize with a lame excuse. Insulted, Astrov brushes aside her explanation and takes his
Now... This is a map of our district as it was fifty years ago. The dark and light greens indicate forest. The net­work of red over the green represents the habitat of elk and wild goat. On this lake there were swans, geese, and ducks. The old people tell us there were thousands... they flew in clouds. Besides the villages and hamlets, little farms, monasteries, and water-mills are dotted about. Domesticated cattle and horses are shown by the blue...they are also quite numerous. Now...look at the second chart. That's how the district was twenty-five years ago. Already only a third of the area is forest. There are no goats left, and few elk. The green and blue areas are fainter. And so on. Let us pass to the third chart, a map of the area as it is today. There is a little green here and there, but only in patches. All the elk are gone and the swans have disappeared. There is no trace of the old settlements. It is a picture of grad­ual and unmistakable degeneration which will apparently, in another ten or fifteen years, be complete. It may be said that it is the influence of civilization...that the old life must give way to the new. Yes, I can under­stand that, if there were roads, railroads on the sites of these ruined forests. If there were schools, hospitals, or public works, the peasants would have work. They would be healthier...more intelligent. But as you see, there is nothing of the kind! The same swamps and mosqui­toes, the same lack of roads, poverty, typhus, and diph­theria plague the district. Degeneration due to inertia, ignorance, and the complete lack of understanding. A man, cold and hungry and sick, simply tries to save what is left of life, to keep his children alive, and unconsciously clutches at anything to satisfy hunger and to warm the body. As a result he destroys. Almost everything has been destroyed, but nothing has been created to take it's place! Nothing. (Looks at her) But I can see from your face that this does not interest you.

YELENA

But...I understand so little about all that...

ASTROV

There's nothing to understand. It simply doesn't interest you. (Begins to roll maps up)

YELENA

To be frank, I was thinking of something else...Forgive me. I would like to ask you some questions. I am troubled...
Astrov, "The dark and light greens indicate forest."
"It is a picture of gradual and unmistakable degeneration..."
maps, crossing behind her to the chair upstage left. He carefully straightens the maps and sets them out of the way on the floor leaning against the back legs of the chair upstage left. He moves away from her to the small table stage right standing with his arms tightly folded and his jaw set. Yelena hesitantly follows him until she is center stage, trying to explain her pre-occupation. She tries to get her courage up, nervously twisting her wedding ring around on her finger. She indicates the downstage chair for him to sit. He does, and she sits in the upstage chair. The table is between them.

Yelena pauses, trying to find the right words, then rushes on, saying she will speak frankly. Again, she hesitates, unable to find the subtle words promised to Sonya. Quietly she plows ahead, having decided to be straight-forward. Watching Astrov carefully she hopefully asks him if he is attracted to Sonya as a woman. He pauses uncomfortably with his hand covering the lower part of his face, then drops his hand and emphatically answers, "No." This reply saddens Yelena. It confirms her worst fears. She pauses, staring at the floor. Her mission is more difficult now. She asks if Astrov has noticed anything. He straightforwardly says, "No," with a low pitched and level tone.

Halfway through her next speech she stands and quickly crosses away from him to the left. Unhappy for Sonya and painfully exasperated at the position she has gotten herself into, she explains Sonya's agony and asks him not to come again. She is unable to look him in
ASTROV

Questions?

YELENA

Not very difficult ones. Let's sit down. (Pause) It concerns a young lady. (This is very difficult for her) We'll speak honestly and frankly, and then forget all about it afterwards. All right?

ASTROV

All right.

YELENA

It concerns my step-daughter, Sonya. You like her don't you?

ASTROV

Yes. I respect her.

YELENA

Does she attract you...as a woman?

ASTROV

(Pause) No.

YELENA

One more question please, and then we're finished. Have you noticed anything?

ASTROV

No.

YELENA

You do not love her...I can see it in your eyes. (She is in despair. Please understand...and don't come here again.)

ASTROV

So. I have overstayed my welcome. Well...I have too much to do. I...I don't have time for these things.
the eyes. Astrov answers. He shifts uncomfortably in his chair and glances around the room. Yelena accepts his reply, now anxious to change the subject. She turns to speak to him. Suddenly she becomes flustered by her own conflicting emotions and blushes deeply, finally turning away in confusion. She puts one hand to her cheek and fans her face with her other hand.

Astrov watches her carefully. He is puzzled and rubs his chin thoughtfully. He looks at her speculatively and then lowers his hand from his face as he determines his course of action. Slowly swinging his crossed leg, he asks her why she became involved. Yelena turns to him in mild surprise. He accuses her of being sly. She self-consciously asks him what he means. She does not understand his look but senses its import from his insinuating tone and the smug look on his face. Astrov goes on and when he asks her again why she got involved she attempts to interject. He stops her with a raised hand, saying, "Don't look surprised." Then, confident of himself he playfully accuses her of being coy with him. He laughs and leans forward in his chair watching her every move. Yelena answers him in confusion and steps toward him with a protesting gesture. Reassured by her blatant confusion, Astrov cuts her off again and delivers the speech about her being a fluffy weasel with comic arrogance. He stands and says, "Devour me," spreading his arms in mock submission.

Yelena suddenly understands that he fully believes that she has questioned him about his feelings for Sonya because she wants him
YELENA

Very well. What a depressing conversation! I'm trembling! Thank God that's over! Let's forget it. But...you will remember? You will go away? /It's warm in here:/

ASTROV

A month or two ago I might have been able to consider... but now? If she is unhappy...then of course. But there's one thing I can't understand. What made you go into it? (He looks into her eyes) You are a sly one!

YELENA

/What do you mean?

ASTROV

Sly! Sonya is unhappy, I am ready to admit that. But why did you get involved? Don't try to look surprised! You know perfectly well why I am here every day, and you are very pleased about it...very! You know perfectly well. You are charming at the hunt, but don't look at me like that. I am an old fox.

YELENA

Hunt? I don't understand.

ASTROV

You are a beautiful fluffy weasel. You must have a victim! I have done nothing but follow you around for a whole month, and you are awfully pleased about it. /Well...I am con- quered. You knew that before. I submit! Come! Devour me.

YELENA

You are mad!

ASTROV

You are modest?

YELENA

But it's not what you think! I swear! '(Tries to exit)
for herself. He is very pleased with the idea and smiles confidently at her. She is surprised and indignant with him for his presumptions, but subconsciously she is susceptible to his open, gleeful self-assurance.

On his next ironic comment about modesty, Astrov begins to move closer to her. Yelena tries to convince him he is mistaken in his judgment of her. He pays no attention. They are both above the stool, Astrov having slowly and subtly moved to her side. After he says he won't come again he gently takes her hand and his voice grows warm and mesmerizing; his manner is soothing and cautiously subductive. Yelena is intuitively affected by his magnetism and becomes weak and breathless in face of his advances. She protests faintly and attempts to move away, but instead becomes limp and dizzy laying her head on his chest. Astrov embraces her, driven by his frustrated desires of the past months.

Vanya enters happily with a bouquet of autumn roses and bounds in a few steps before he sees Astrov and Yelena in their passionate embrace. He freezes in shock and surprise. Vanya is not seen by Astrov and Yelena. Yelena softly protests but Astrov kisses her anyway, sweeping her objections away. She helplessly submits to his kiss for a moment, lifting her hand to his arm, and then recovering, she catches her breath and looks upstage. She sees Vanya standing there with the roses in his hands and struggles out of Astrov's arms with a stunned cry. Humiliated and frightened, she puts her hand to her
"Sonya is unhappy, I am willing to admit that."

"Where shall we meet each other?"
face and stumbles away from Astrov downstage crying out, "This is horrible!"

Astrov coolly straightens up as Yelena breaks away. Vanya is still in shock. Feeling that he must say something but having no idea what to say, he inanely mumbles "Never mind," as if these words will cancel what he has seen the moment before. He realizes the foolishness of his remark and recovers his senses enough to cross to the upstage chair, excusing himself. He looks at the roses in his hands and quickly lays them in the chair as if embarrassed to be seen with the flowers he has brought Yelena.

Astrov crosses boldly to Vanya's left. As if nothing has happened, he ironically comments upon the weather and then confidently strolls out the door. With his mouth ajar, Vanya watches him leave.

Yelena partially recovers from her confusion, pleading with Vanya to help her leave the estate. When he does not answer she runs to him. Vanya blankly looks at her and then suddenly turns on her with an angry accusation, saying he saw it all and pointing off to where Astrov exited. She desperately begs for help. They both hear someone coming and break apart quickly. Vanya turns away facing stage right and Yelena crosses downstage to the windowseat with her hand to her mouth.

Dressed formally in his black vested suit, Serebryakov bustles in with Telyegin at his heels. Telyegin is chatting amiably at
ASTROV

I'm going home today. I won't come here again. But, (He slowly takes her hand) where shall we see each other? Tell me quickly...where? (Passionately) How wonderful, how magnificent you are!

YELENA

But I assure you...

ASTROV

Why assure me? There's no need! How beautiful you are! Lovely hands! (Kisses her hand) (He puts arm around her waist) It's inevitable...we must meet.

YELENA

Go away! You're forgetting yourself.

ASTROV

Tell me! Where will we meet tomorrow? (He puts his arm around her waist) It's inevitable...we must meet.

YELENA

Don't do this to me! (She tries to exit) Let me go... (She lays her head on his chest) No! (Tries to exit again)

ASTROV

(He kisses her. VANYA enters during the kiss with the roses in his hand. He stands still.)

YELENA

(Holds her) Come to the plantation tomorrow. Yes? You'll come?

YELENA

(She sees VANYA) Let me go! (In confusion she goes to the window) This is horrible!

VANYA

Never mind. (In confusion he lays the flowers on a chair)
Serebryakov about his physical complaints, knowing this is a subject Serebryakov enjoys. Telyegin is vastly enjoying the rare opportunity of speaking with the learned professor. But Serebryakov is anxious to get to the meeting and his concern is to get everyone gathered and in place. Marina has followed Telyegin. As soon as Vanya sees Serebryakov he crosses downstage right, facing away impatiently. Serebryakov has some papers in his hands and crosses to the desk to set them in order. Marina crosses down and goes to the upstage center chair and adjusts the chair for the meeting. She sees the roses on the chair and picks them up, taking them to the small table stage right where she puts them down; then she stands by the upstage right chair. Yelena stands downstage left turned away from the others.

Sonya hurries in anxiously looking for Yelena. She crosses quickly to her and asks her about Astrov. Yelena tries to put her off, but Sonya touches Yelena's hand searching her face for the truth. Sonya feels Yelena tremble. She senses the negative answer but persists with quiet desperation until Yelena silently nods her head. Sonya stands absolutely still with shock in her wide eyes. Then she looks down, folds her hands, and crosses below the stool. She stands very still, looking blindly at the floor.

Oblivious to the tensions in the room, Serebryakov continues complaining to anyone who will listen. He commands them to sit. Telyegin sits on the chair upstage left. Yelena sits at the
ASTROV

(With bravado) The weather is not bad today Vanya. It was cloudy this morning, but now it is clear. Autumn has turned out splendidly. Trouble is...the days are getting shorter. (/He exits)

YELENA

(To VANYA) You must help...my husband and I must leave here today! Do you hear me?

VANYA

What? Oh yes...very well. I saw it all Yelena! I...

YELENA

Do you hear? I must get away from here!

(SEREBRYAKOV, TELYEGIN, and MARINA enter talking.)

TELYEGIN

I don't feel quite well myself, your Excellency. I have not been very well for the last couple of days...a small ache in the head...

SEREBRYAKOV

Where is everyone? This house is a maze...too many rooms...people wander about and get lost. Ask Marya and Yelena to come here.

YELENA

I'm here.

SEREBRYAKOV

Please sit down friends.

(SONYA enters and goes to YELENA.)

SONYA

What did he say?

YELENA

In a moment...
"I don't feel quite well myself, your excellency."

"I saw it all, Yelena!"
windowseat and looks out of the window, afraid to look at Sonya or Vanya. Sonya does not hear or respond to her father. Marina sits in the chair upstage right. Marya enters, marches to the upstage center chair, and sits.

Serebryakov goes on to make his little joke about the "nail of attention" and laughs. Anxious to escape the professor and Yelena, Vanya jumps up and interrupts Serebryakov's laugh with, "may I leave?" Serebryakov stops Vanya with a gesture. Marya gives him a severe look for interrupting. Angry, Vanya crosses back to the far down-stage right corner chair, grabs it up and turns it around, slamming it down in the far down right corner and sitting in it. He sits facing away sulking with his arms tightly folded and his jaw set.

The disruption has jolted Sonya out of her daze and she dutifully sits down on the stool facing her father. Her head is bowed. When the professor makes his Inspector General joke Marina and Telyegin are still looking at Vanya in mild surprise. Serebryakov gets their attention by saying, "A joke!" and they turn back to him and laugh belatedly. Serebryakov fiddles with his papers as he continues.

Serebryakov is free to move about the desk. He generally stays close to the desk, moving or turning to various people to emphasize different points in his speech. Marya, Telyegin and Marina listen to Serebryakov. Sonya quietly stares at the floor. Vanya sits impatiently, occasionally glaring at Yelena.
SONYA

You're trembling! (Looks into her eyes) I understand...

He said he won't come here again. Yes? (Pause) Tell me...Yes?

(YELENA nods. SONYA turns slowly away.)

SEREBRYAKOV

(Straightening his papers) One can put up with being ill...
What I can't stand is the whole manner of living in the country. I feel as though I have been exiled. Sit down friends, please! Sonya? (SONYA stands with her head down) Sonya? She doesn't hear me. You sit down too, nurse. I beg you my friends, hang your ears on the nail of attention, as the saying goes. (He laughs)

VANYA

If I am not needed, may I leave?

SEREBRYAKOV

No! We need you most.

VANYA

What do you want?

SEREBRYAKOV

What? Why are you so touchy? Excuse me. Am I to blame?

VANYA

Drop that tone! What do you want?

SEREBRYAKOV

(MARYA enters.)

Here is Maman... I will begin. I have invited you, gentlemen, to announce that the Inspector General is coming! (Laughs at his joke) A joke! Yes...ah, excuse me; this is a serious matter. I have called you all here to ask for your advice and help, and knowing your inexhaustible kindness, I hope to receive it. I am a studious, bookish man, and have very little to do with practicality. I cannot dispense with the assistance of those who understand it, and
"...May I leave?"
Serebryakov is presenting his proposal for selling the estate. From his point of view it is a sound plan to insure a happier life for himself and his young wife and to increase the income for them all. Better this than letting the estate dissipate in a family with no future generations to insure its continuance. When Serebryakov mentions an unmarried daughter, the others surreptitiously glance at Sonya.

It takes a moment for Serebryakov's suggestion about selling the estate to penetrate Vanya's preoccupation. He interrupts Serebryakov, not sure if he has heard him correctly. Sensing something is desperately wrong Vanya is puzzled, and with an apologetic laugh he stands and asks Serebryakov to repeat what he said. Not getting the right answer, he persists, crossing to stage right center. Serebryakov repeats the line about selling the estate and Vanya laughs in disbelief, crossing to center stage and looking around at the others for confirmation that Serebryakov is joking.

This section is free movement for Vanya and restricted movement for the others. Until otherwise indicated they remain seated, increasingly anxious about the growing confrontation between Vanya and Serebryakov, but unable to have any effect on it. Vanya uses practically the entire stage at will, restricted only in not being able to displace or physically attack Serebryakov at the desk where he holds his ground.

Vanya doesn't get any confirmation from the others that
I beg you, Vanya, and you, Telyegin, and you, Maman...The point is "Manet omnes una nox"...that is, we are all mortal. I am old and ill. I think it is time to settle my worldly affairs in so far as they concern my family. I am not thinking of myself...I have a young wife and an unmarried daughter. (Pause) It is impossible for me to go on living in the country. I am not made for country life. But to live in town on the income we receive is impossible. If we sell the forest, for example, that is a measure we cannot repeat. We must take steps that will insure us a permanent income. I have an idea on this and would like to submit it for your consideration. I will outline it: Our estate yields not more than two percent on the capital. I propose to sell it. If we invest the money we could get four or five percent, and I think we might even have a few thousand to spare for buying a small villa in Finland...

VANYA

Excuse me, I don't think I understand...what did you say?

SEREBRYAKOV

To invest the money and purchase a villa with...

VANYA

Not that. You said something else...

SEREBRYAKOV

I propose to sell the estate...

VANYA

That's it! You propose to sell the estate. Superb...a grand idea! And just what do you propose to do with me...and your old mother, and Sonya here?

SEREBRYAKOV

We will settle all that in time. I can't do everything at once.

VANYA

Wait a minute! Am I feeble-minded? I was under the impression that the estate belonged to Sonya. My father bought this estate as a dowry for my sister, Sonya's mother. Have I been simple? I thought that my sister's estate passed to Sonya.
"...Just what do you propose to do with me, my old mother, and Sonya here?"

"I thought that my sister's estate passed to Sonya."
Serebryakov is joking about selling the estate. He tries to laugh it off, ironically asking if they are to be left homeless. Serebryakov answers his question brusquely and tries to continue. Vanya interrupts again, joking about the absurdity of the idea. Serebryakov doesn't respond. Vanya can see he is serious. The others are silent. Vanya, haltingly, tries to use reason with Serebryakov. Serebryakov answers Vanya, saying he is selling the estate for Sonya's benefit. The callousness of this logic astonishes Vanya. He reacts nervously noting that Sonya is also obviously surprised at the proposal. Marya tells Vanya to shut up and to listen to the professor. Vanya retreats in disbelief, obviously upset, but unable to absorb what is happening fast enough to counter his mother's remark.

Serebryakov has won the first round of the argument and as a concession he superficially invites response from the others. Telyegin has a stake in the handling of the estate; it is his only home. He attempts to be helpful by responding to Serebryakov's invitation, but he is shy and clumsy and can only apologize in confusion, trying to express his respect for the professor without making his point. Vanya stops Telyegin's babbling and then realizes he can use him as a witness to defend his stake in the estate; the estate was bought from Telyegin's family.

Irritated at the interruptions of his line of thinking, Serebryakov is not listening to them. Vanya becomes more urgent. He makes a personal appeal to Serebryakov's sense of decency, speaking
SEREBRYAKOV

Yes...the estate belongs to Sonya. Who disputes it?
Without Sonya's consent I wouldn't venture to sell it.
Besides, I am doing it for Sonya's benefit.

VANYA

It's inconceivable! Inconceivable! Either I have gone out of my mind...or...or...

MARYA

Jean! Don't contradict Alexandr! He knows better than we do.

VANYA

Oh, excuse me! Say what you like...say what you like...

SEREBRYAKOV

I don't understand why you are so upset. I don't say my plan is ideal. If everyone thinks it unsuitable I will drop it.

TELYEGIN

(In confusion) /I cherish learning your excellency. I have a reverence, and a kind of family feeling...my brother Grigory's wife's brother has a Master's degree...

VANYA

/Stop, Waffles! We are talking business...later. (Indicates TELYEGIN to SEREBRYAKOV) Here, ask him! The estate was bought from his uncle for ninety-five thousand. My father paid only seventy thousand and twenty-five thousand was mortgage. Now listen...the estate would never have been bought if I had not given my share of the inheritance to my beloved sister...your dead wife! I worked for ten years like a slave and paid all the mortgage...

SEREBRYAKOV

I regret that I...

VANYA

The estate is free from debt and in good condition by my and Sonya's efforts...and now we are to be kicked out of it?
of his dead sister for whom he gave up his inheritance. Serebryakov reacts with impatience. Angry at the professor's lack of understanding, Vanya speaks of his and Sonya's work to keep the estate solvent. He plaintively appeals to the professor's sense of fairness, asking if they are to be kicked out in spite of all their work to save the estate. Serebryakov softens somewhat at Vanya's tone, saying he doesn't know what Vanya is trying to say. Encouraged by Serebryakov's gentler tone Vanya again tries to reason with him, appealing to Serebryakov to understand the work he has done for him and the years he has been dedicated to him. As he continues, the professor figets at the desk, bored and impatient at Vanya's emotional insistence. This goads Vanya into anger. He shames Serebryakov as a miser. Serebryakov defends himself by putting the responsibility on Vanya for not raising his own salary.

Vanya reacts to Serebryakov's statement with disgust, taking it as a suggestion that he was expected to steal. He laughs absurdly, amazed. Marya sternly reprimands Vanya. Telyegin tries to calm him, sensing Vanya is losing his self-control. Vanya answers him in extreme agitation and frustration, crying out that he has been buried there like a mole. Telyegin silently sympathizes, patting Vanya's arm.

Vanya stops and fights for control. Vanya speaks to Serebryakov slowly and painfully, speaking of his long years of sacrifice. Suddenly something snaps inside Vanya; he swerves from the subject of
I don't understand what you are going on about!

VANYA

I have been managing this estate for twenty-five years! I have worked and sent you money like the most conscientious steward... and you have never once thanked me in all these years! All that time, both when I was young and now, you have given my five hundred a year as a wage... a beggarly wage! And it never occurred to you to add a thing to it.

SEREBRYAKOV

Vanya, how could I tell? I am not a practical man... I don't understand these things. You could have added to it!

VANYA

Steal! Do you propose that I should have been stealing?

MARYA

(Sternly) Jean!

TELYEGIN

Don't, Vanya! Don't... I can't stand it... I am afraid! Don't spoil our good relations! You mustn't...

VANYA

For twenty-five years I have been buried within these four walls like a mole! All our thoughts and feelings belonged to you. Day and night we talked of you, were proud of you, and spent endless hours reading books and magazines for which I now have the deepest contempt!

TELYEGIN

Please Vanya! I...

SEREBRYAKOV

(Wrathfully) I don't know what it is you want!

VANYA

You were a god to us! We knew your work by heart! But I'm not blind anymore. I see it all! You write about art but you know nothing about it. All the works of yours I loved are nothing! You have deceived us!
"This estate is free from debt."

"I might have been a Schopenhauer...a Dostoevsky!"

"Mother...I am in despair."

"Never mind...I know what I must do."
the estate to his deep personal animosity for the professor. Losing control, he drives home the line about the professor's writing with furious contempt. Telyegin tries to stop Vanya once again, but Serebryakov also loses his temper and begins to shout back at Vanya venomously.

Striped of his illusions and naked with emotion, Vanya tells Serebryakov that he is a god to them. Vanya laughs with infinite sadness at the discovery of his own terrible naivete. Nothing will stop his revenge now. He turns on Serebryakov furiously accusing him of deception. Serebryakov explodes at Vanya's insult. He threatens to leave and begins to pick up his papers from the desk. Yelena angrily demands that Vanya be silent. Vanya turns on her, and then seeing the professor trying to exit, he turns on him even more fiercely, arresting him with his voice and pointing at him with his hand trembling.

Serebryakov stops, fearing Vanya's wrath. Everyone freezes at Vanya's intense pain as he cries out that his life has been ruined. Losing the last vestige of self-control, he gives a heart-rending cry and wracked with sobs he turns and stumbles downstage and falls on his knees. Marya stares at him in disbelief, rising to her feet. Yelena yelps with fright and turns away. Seeing Sonya crying in a panic, Marina stands and cautiously skirts around Vanya as she goes to Sonya, taking her in her arms. Telyegin bursts into tears and unable to bear Vanya's agony, he rushes out of the room.
SEREBRYAKOV
Stop him! / I will leave!

YELENA
Vanya, you must be silent... do you hear?

VANYA
I will not be silent! (Stops SEREBRYAKOV) Stay here!
I have not finished! You have destroyed my life! I have
not lived! The best years of my life are finished... finished:
You are my deadliest enemy!

TELYEGIN
(Exiting) I can't stand it... I can't...

SEREBRYAKOV
What do you want? What right do you have to speak to
me like this? You fool! If this estate is yours, take it! I wouldn't have it!

YELENA
I can't stand this hell any longer!

VANYA
My life is ruined! I had talent... I had courage... I had
intelligence! With a chance I might have been a Schopen­
hauer... a Dostoevsky! I'm talking nonsense... I'm talking
like an idiot! I'm going mad! / Mother... I am in despair:
Mother!

MARYA
Do as Alexandr tells you!

SONYA
(In MARINA's arms) Nurse... oh nurse!

VANYA
Mother, what am I going to do? / Never mind... I know what I
must do. (To SEREBRYAKOV) You will remember me. / (Exits) Runs off ul.

(MARYA follows VANYA.)
Serebryakov begins to rant and rave uncontrollably, shaken by the force of Vanya's hatred and accusations. The next lines overlap; the situation is utterly chaotic. Vanya sets the rhythm of the scene with his lines. Serebryakov slams his papers down on the desk yelling at Vanya and shaking his fist angrily in the air. Vanya cries and speaks disjointedly on his knees. He beings to call for his mother pitifully. He stumbles to his feet and looks for Marya, and seeing her upstage her crosses to her begging for help. He is utterly unhinged. He sinks to his knees at her feet, clinging to her with his arms around her knees. Marya does not know what to do. She is overwhelmed by Vanya's agony. She tries to get hold of the situation and shouts at him to listen to the professor. Vanya cries, "No!" in despair and then grows quiet and recoils from her coldness. There is no one to help him; he is utterly abandoned. This realization shocks Vanya out of his adject dispair and back onto anger; his crying becomes mixed with ironic laughter. He rises and backs off from Marya, then turns and runs to the exit saying he knows what he will do. He stops and turns to Serebryakov, melodramatically whispering his last line as a warning and a threat. Vanya runs off-stage. Marya hurries after him.

Relieved of the immediate threat of Vanya's presence, Serebryakov crosses off the platform to the center protesting loudly and shaking his fist petulently. Yelena runs to him pleading to leave the estate at once. Serebryakov turns away from her. Sonya
This is unbelievable! Take that madman away... I will not live under the same roof with him! Move him to the village, or somewhere... or I will go. I cannot stay in the same house with him!

YELENA

We'll leave today! We must pack up this minute!

SEREBRYAKOV

An utterly insignificant creature!

SONYA

(On her knees to her father, in tears) You must be merciful, father! Uncle Vanya and I are so unhappy! You must be merciful! Remember when you were younger and Uncle Vanya and grandmother and I sat up all night and translated for you, writing out your manuscripts? All night. All night! We worked without resting... we sent all our money... We work hard. (Gaining control) I'm saying it all wrong... all wrong. Please understand, father... You must be merciful!

YELENA

Alexander, for God's sake make it up to him... I beg you!

SEREBRYAKOV

All right, I'll talk to him. I'm not angry with him... but you must admit that his behavior is wretched. Very well, I'll talk to him.

YELENA

Be gentle... for God's sake...

(SEREBRYAKOV and YELENA exit.)

SONYA

(In MARINA's arms) Oh nurse darling... oh nurse... 

MARINA

You're shivering... there there little orphan, God is merciful. Don't grieve, little orphan. What a fuss they make, the beasts...
haltingly crosses to him speaking brokenly through her tears. She grasps his hands and sinks to her knees. Fighting for self-control she pleads for mercy and understanding for herself and for Vanya. All of their joint scarifices and unhappinesses well up inside her. Yelena joins Sonya's pleading, putting her hand on his shoulder and begging him to make up with Vanya.

Serebryakov is moved and confused by the force of Sonya's emotion. He grudgingly agrees to talk with Vanya and then crosses downstage a step, trying to compose himself. Yelena steps to him, takes his arm and they exit together to find Vanya.

Sonya still on her knees, is crying. Marina crosses to her and helps her to her feet. She gently leads Sonya to the windowseat and sits with her. Marina cradles Sonya in her arms, rocking her like a little girl.

A shot is heard offstage and Yelena screams. Marina and Sonya leap up and move stage left. Amid shouting and confusion Serebryakov runs downstage right and crouches behind the chair trying to make himself invisible. Vanya runs in waving a gun in his hand. Yelena is hanging onto Vanya trying to get the gun away from him. Vanya shakes her off and she stumbles to the left. Marya is standing in the doorway fearfully holding her fist to her mouth. Everyone is shouting and crying in panic and terror.

Vanya looks for Serebryakov and sees him behind the chair. Laughing maniacally he steps triumphantly to the edge of the platform,
"All right, I'll talk to him."
aims the gun at Serebryakov and fires. Yelena screams. Vanya realizes he has missed once again. He moans in anger and surprise. Crying, he sinks down and sits on the floor. Yelena begs brokenly to be taken away. Vanya suddenly stares at the pistol in his hand in disbelief. Over and over again he softly says, "What have I done?", as he sobs in disbelief and defeat. Sonya plaintively cries in Marina's arms. The lights fade to black.
(A shot is heard offstage; YELENA screams.)

MARINA

Oh, damn them...stop...stop it!

(SEREBRYAKOV runs in with VANYA and Marya are with them.)

SEREBRYAKOV

Stop him! Stop him...he's mad!

YELENA

Give it to me, Vanya...give it up!

VANYA

Let me go, Yelena! Where is he? (Sees him) Aha, there! (He fires the gun at him) Bang! (Pause) Missed! Missed again! (Furious) Damn you! Damn...Damn!

(VANYA drops the gun and sits.)

YELENA

(Crying) Take me away from here...take me away!

VANYA

What have I done? What have I done?

SONYA

Nurse...nurse darling...
"Where is he?"

"What have I done?"

"Missed! Missed again!"
"Damn you! Damn....Damn!"
ACT IV
The lights come up in Vanya's study/bedroom, the same setting as in Act III. It is late in the afternoon and the lighting is mellow. Vanya's roses are still lying on the stage right table. Throughout the act the lights will imperceptibly change to evening and at the end of the act it will be nighttime.

Telyegin is sitting on the downstage left center stool holding yarn for Marina who is winding it into a ball. Marina is sitting on the windowseat with her sewing basket beside her. They talk together in calm conversational tones, chuckling together now and then. As Marina tells how things will return to normal, she finishes the ball of yarn, pats it into shape and tucks it away into the sewing basket.

At the end of Marina's speech Telyegin stands. He starts to speak uncertainly; something serious is on his mind. He shifts about then takes a deep breath and tells Marina about the incident in the village. She stands and pats him on the shoulder, clucking sympathetically and soothing his hurt feelings. Telyegin gratefully turns to Marina and takes her hand, looking down shyly. Marina crosses and picks up her sewing. Telyegin follows her and whispers about hiding her gun used by Vanya. They laugh together.

There is a ruckus offstage. As they turn to see what it is, Vanya rushes in angrily with Astrov chasing him. Astrov is dressed to leave; he wears his high boots and carries his medical bag. They are arguing in loud angry voices. Vanya shouts at Astrov and crosses away from him to the down right corner of the stage. Telyegin and
ACT IV

(VANYA's study-bedroom. Late afternoon. MARINA and TELYEGIN sit talking and winding wool.)

TELYEGIN

Hurry, Marina...they will be calling us soon to say goodbye.

MARINA

There's not much left.

TELYEGIN

They're going to Harkov.

MARINA

It will be better.

TELYEGIN

It was frightening. Yelena Andreyevna kept saying, "I won't stay here! Let's get away...let's get away from here! We'll stay at Harkov and send for our things later!" They are taking very little with them. They should not live here anyway, Marina. It's not ordained. It's a decision of Providence.

MARINA

It is better. The quarreling and shooting...a disgrace! A shocking sight. (Pause) We'll get back to normal now. We'll have breakfast at eight, dinner at one, and supper in the evening as it should be...like Christians. (She sighs) It has been so long since I have had noodles, sinner that I am!

TELYEGIN

Yes, it's been a long time...a very long time. (Pause) I was walking in the village this morning, Marina. The man at the shop said to me, "You parasite...living off other people!" It hurt very badly...

MARINA

Don't listen to that kind of thing, my dear. We all live on God...You, Sonya, Vanya, and myself. None of us sit idle. We all work hard...all of us. Where's Sonya?
"Leave me alone!"
TELYEGIN

In the garden. She and the doctor are still looking for Vanya. They are afraid for him...

MARINA

Where is his pistol?

TELYEGIN

(Whispers) I hid it' in the cellar.

MARINA

(Smiles) Such a fuss!

(VANYA and ASTROV enter.)

VANYA

Leave me alone! Go away and leave me alone! I can't stand being watched!

TELYEGIN

(As he exits) Yes, of course... yes...

MARINA

(As she exits) Such a fuss!

ASTROV

I'd be happy to leave you alone... I should have gone home hours ago. But I cannot leave until you give me what you took from me!

VANYA

I didn't take anything!

ASTROV

I am serious, Vanya. Don't make me wait!

VANYA

I took nothing.

(They both sit down.)
Marina scurry off together muttering as they go. Astrov puts his medical bag into the chair upstage left and moves carefully to center stage blocking Vanya's escape. He is emphatic and angry. Vanya paces like a caged animal, trying to get past Astrov. Astrov quickly counters, barring his way.

Astrov shouts that he will use force to get back what Vanya took from him. Vanya pleads in desperation for Astrov to stop and Astrov backs off a little. Vanya groans, crosses to the upstage right chair and sits down heavily in defeat. Astrov watches him cautiously to make sure he is not going to bolt again; but Vanya is defeated and shamed as he remembers the shooting incident. Astrov sarcastically tells Vanya that he should have shot himself.

As Vanya speaks again Astrov moves to the upstage center chair and sits, keeping an eye on Vanya. Vanya laughs bitterly in self-ridicule saying he is mad. His laughter dies away and he tiredly goes on, ironically contrasting the professor's behavior as sanity against his own supposed insanity. He drops his head in defeat and turns away. The roses he had brought for Yelena are laying on the table next to him. He sees them and peevishly turns to the doctor as if Astrov has betrayed him. It is an evasive gesture, easier to face and understand than his conflict with Serebryakov. Astrov merely agrees, which infuriates Vanya, and he lashes out at him. Astrov counters him again and Vanya responds with a forced laugh. Astrov calls Vanya a crank in a light sarcastic tone, further
ASTROV

I will wait for a few more minutes and then I shall use force! If I have to tie you up, I will...I'm quite serious.

VANYA

Please, Astrov! (Pause) God...I've made a fool of myself; to shoot twice and still miss! I'll never forgive myself.

ASTROV

If you want to play with guns why don't you take a whack at yourself.

VANYA

It's unreal. I tried to murder someone and no one has arrested me. You all think I'm mad don't you? (Laughs bitterly) I am mad! But people who are stupid and heartless and hide behind the mask of "Learned Professor" are not mad. I saw you kissing her!

ASTROV

Yes, I kissed her, and that is more than you'll ever do.

VANYA

You should not go on living!

ASTROV

That's stupid.

VANYA

Madmen say stupid things!

ASTROV

That won't work, Vanya. You're not mad...You're a crank. I used to think that cranks were sick...abnormal. Now I know better. It is normal of men to be cranks...and you are boringly normal.

VANYA

I'm ashamed. You don't know how ashamed I am. The pain is too much to bare. What am I going to do? What am I going to do?
"I saw you kissing her."

"It's unreal. I tried to murder someone and no one has arrested me."

"You don't know how ashamed I am."

"Stop it! There's no beginning again."
infuriating him. Vanya cries out that he is ashamed. He pleads with Astrov to tell him what to do, sadly and quietly speaking of the worthlessness of his life; dreaming of a way to change it. He is half laughing and half crying by the end of the speech. Astrov gently leans over and touches Vanya on the arm, sympathetic but blunt about the hopelessness of their lives. Vanya begins to cry softly, then becomes wracked with sobs, pounding his fist on his chest in pain.

Astrov leaps up and violently shouts at Vanya to shut up, but Vanya sobs even more broken heartedly. Astrov calls his name softly, but Vanya is overcome with grief. Astrov crosses to him and gently grips his arm, calling his name. Astrov hangs his head, empathetic to Vanya's grief, and soothingly calls Vanya, who slowly begins to regain his self-control. When Vanya is quiet Astrov speaks of their wasted hopes and dreams, revealing the depths of his own despair. Vanya gently and sadly looks at him as he speaks. The two men are very close together in the sharing of their pain.

Astrov pauses and takes a deep breath. Composed, he carefully tries to coax Vanya into returning what he has stolen. Vanya reacts as if slapped, jerking his arm away in defiant anger, denying he took anything. Astrov leaps up and yells at Vanya angrily, saying he took the morphine from his medical bag. Vanya withdraws into himself, stubbornly refusing to answer. Afraid that he is losing Vanya, Astrov tries to break through his defenses. He threateningly bends over Vanya and roughly drives home the lines about suicide, cruelly and
ASTROV

Nothing.

VANYA

Give me something...to kill the pain. (Pause) My God. I'm forty-seven. If I live to be sixty I have thirteen years to go. It's an eternity! How am I to get through it? What am I to do? Thirteen years! (Pause) If only I could find a new way to live those thirteen years. You understand, Astrov. To wake up on a quiet sunny morning...and begin to live again with no past. To begin again. What am I to do? How do I begin again? Tell me!

ASTROV

Stop it! There is no beginning again. Our situation... yours and mine...is hopeless.

VANYA

Is it?

ASTROV

Yes.

VANYA

Then at least give me something for the pain! I can't bare it!

ASTROV

Shut up, Vanya! (Quieter) In one or two hundred years our descendants will look back at us and will despise us for having lived our lives so stupidly and wastefully. Perhaps they will be able to find happiness in their lives, but you and I have only one hope: That when we are asleep in our graves, the dreams we dream will be pleasant. Vanya, my friend, the only two decent, educated men in this entire district were you and I...and in a mere ten years this petty provincial life has poisoned and suffocated us. Now we are no better than the rest. (Pause) But, let's not change the subject...I want what you took from me.

VANYA

I didn't take anything.
"I can't bear it!"
directly exposing Vanya's indulgent histronics. Vanya is stung by the truth of his friend's attack but can not pull himself out of the depths of his despair. He turns away.

Sonya hurries in alarmed by their shouting. She looks at Vanya and then to Astrov as if asking what is happening. Sensing that only Sonya will be able to reach Vanya in his despondency, Astrov quickly moves to her and tells her about the stolen morphine. Frightened, Sonya rushes to Vanya. She asks him if he has the morphine. He tries to turn away and hide his face. She desperately begs him to give back the morphine. He won't answer. She attempts to be angry but fails. Crying and begging pitifully she kneels at his feet and throws her arms around him. Vanya cries softly. They hold each other tightly for a long moment. Vanya cannot defend himself from her deep and unselfish love for him. He slowly drops his hands. Sonya looks at him silently, pleading with her eyes. Unable to bear the pain and fear of her eyes, he reaches into his pocket and brings out a small morphine bottle and slips it into her hand. He softly says they must work.

Sonya gently answers him, stands, crosses to Astrov and puts the morphine in his hand. Emotionally drained, Vanya sits silently. Astrov says he must go and crosses upstage to put the bottle away in his bag.

Yelena enters and stands by the desk. She says the professor is waiting for Vanya. Sonya crosses to Vanya and takes his hand. Vanya tiredly stands and goes out of the room with Sonya, leaving Yelena
You took a bottle of morphine out of my bag! (Pause) Listen, Vanya, if you are going to finish yourself off, take a gun, go out into the forest, and do it cleanly. But first give me the morphine. If you use that, there will be talk and people will think I gave it to you. Having to do your post-mortem will be bad enough without that too!

VANYA

Leave me alone!

SONYA...your uncle has taken a bottle of morphine out of my bag. Will you please tell him that he is being asinine. I can't waste any more time waiting...I must get home.

SONYA

Uncle Vanya...did you take the morphine?

ASTROV

He did...I'm sure of it.

SONYA

Give it back! Why do you frighten me? Give it back, Uncle Vanya. I am unhappy too, but I am not giving up. I accept the way things are and will until I die a natural death. You must be patient...give it back. (Kisses his hands) Dear Uncle Vanya, please! Have pity on me...be kind...give it back. Be patient, Uncle Vanya...be patient.

VANYA

Here, take it. (To SONIA) But we must get to work...to work. We must do something...or I won't be able to bare it.

SONYA

(As she gives the bottle to ASTROV) Yes...yes, we must get to work...as soon as we've seen father off we'll get to work.
"Uncle Vanya. .did you take the morphine?"
"Is it so terrible?"
I must be going.

(YELENA enters.)

YELENA

(Vanya, we're just leaving. Alexander would like to speak with you.)

SONYA

Come, Uncle Vanya. You and father must be reconciled...

(SONYA and VANYA exit.)

YELENA

I'm going. (She gives ASTROV her hand) Good-bye.

ASTROV

Already?

YELENA

They're waiting.

ASTROV

Good-bye.

YELENA

You promised that you would go away today.

ASTROV

I'm just leaving. (Pause) You're frightened? (Taking her hand) Is it so terrible?

YELENA

Yes.

ASTROV

You should stay, you know. Stay? Tomorrow at the plantation...
and Astrov alone onstage.

Yelena stands with her hands together and says they are leaving. She is wearing a black traveling dress with a black handbag and gloves. Astrov looks up and answers lightly. She crosses downstage and steps off the platform as she reminds him of his promise to leave. He finishes closing his bag and crosses to her. Yelena looks down at the floor and asks her if she is frightened. She softly answers "Yes." Astrov asks her to stay and she looks up, stopping him with a gesture. She says "No," looking into his eyes steadily, humble but self-confident. Astrov crosses past her to stage right, playfully delivering his next line. He turns to her describing the beauty of the district with a fanciful gesture of his hand.

Yelena replies with mock anger at his light-heartedness and then answers him with simple sincerity, admitting her admiration and affection for him. She crosses to the center and holds her hand out to him. Astrov takes her hand and holds it for a moment. Suddenly, he drops her hand and turns away saying she had better go. As Yelena begins to leave, Astrov stops her with his voice. She turns back to him.

He speaks analytically of her and her husband; she stands still, taking his blunt criticism calmly. Astrov moves freely during the speech, turning and stopping for emphasis. He is straight-forward, not softening his remarks to be kind. When finished he claps his hands together and tells her to go away. "The comedy is over," he adds, as he turns tout.
YELENA

No. It's settled. And I can look you in the eyes because it is settled. I have one thing to ask of you...Do think better of me. I would like to have your respect.

ASTROV

Stay...I ask you to. You've no purpose in life. You've nothing to do, nothing to think about. Sooner or later you'll give in to your feelings. Better here in the lap of nature than in Harkov or somewhere in Kurst. It's poetic here and the autumn is beautiful. We have the forests and some lovely Turgenevish homesteads...

YELENA

You're outrageous! I am angry with you. But...I shall remember you with fondness. You are an interesting and original man. I'll never see you again, so I will admit that I was more than a little bit in love with you. Come, we'll shake hands and be friends.

ASTROV

Yes. (Pressing her hand) You had better go. (Musing) You seem to be a good, gentle creature... and yet there is something mysterious about you. When you came here all of us were at work... building, creating. Then we dropped everything to entertain you and attend to you, and your husband's gout. You have spread your idleness like an epidemic. As for me, people have been ill, the peasants are pasturing their cattle in my grove of young trees, and I have done nothing. Wherever you and your husband go you spread destruction. Strange...I am convinced that if you stayed here the devastation would be immense. Well, go away my dear. Finita la commedia!

YELENA

(She takes a pencil from the desk) I'll keep this to remember you by.

ASTROV

It's strange...we have become friends, and now we'll never see each other again. No one is here... before Uncle Vanya comes in with some more roses, may I kiss you good-bye?

(ASTROV kisses her on the cheek.)
Yelena once more leaving, stops at the desk. She picks up a pencil and turns to Astrov, saying she will keep it to remember him by. Astrov laughs at her spunk and strides to her side. He says they are friends and takes her hand. He looks around comically and asks if he may kiss her before Vanya brings more roses. She smiles and nods. Astrov kisses her on the cheek. She wishes him happiness and sighs wistfully and, saying how short life is, she impulsively puts her hands on his shoulders leaning in to him. They kiss passionately, then draw apart quickly, a little breathless and surprised.

Noise is heard from offstage. Astrov squeezes Yelena's hand and says "Finita." They look quickly at each other one last time and then part with finality. Astrov turns away and steps downstage of the chair to the left and Yelena turns and crosses behind the desk to the upright corner.

Serebryakov and Vanya enter together and cross to the center. Astrov counters downstage left. Marya follows with Telyegin on her right. Sonya moves to Yelena, fondly taking her hand and giving her a sisterly embrace.

Serebryakov turns and addresses the group. Pleasantly pompous he alludes to the trouble they have had. With quiet apology he steps to Vanya and they embrace. Vanya is moved by his gesture of honesty and answers with difficulty and emotion, saying that everything will be the same and then moves downstage to the right. It is a brief warm movement, moving in its rarity. Serebryakov steps to Marya
YELENA

I wish you happiness. (Pause) Life is so short! (She impulsively kisses him, then they draw apart quickly) I

ASTROV

Yes...the carriage is here...you had better go...

YELENA

Someone is coming...

SEREBRYAKOV, VANYA, MARYA, TELYEGIN, and SONYA enter.

SEREBRYAKOV

(To VANYA) Let bygones by bygones. After what I have gone through and experienced in these few hours, I believe I could write a whole treatise on the art of living, for the benefit of mankind! I gladly accept your apologies and apologise myself. Good-bye.

(They all kiss each other on the cheeks.)

VANYA

You shall receive the same sum as always. Everything will be the same.

SEREBRYAKOV

Maman...

MARYA

Alexandr, have your photograph taken again and send it to me. You know how dear you are to me.

TELYEGIN

Good bye, your Excellency! Don't forget us?

SEREBRYAKOV

(He kisses SONYA) Good-bye. Good-bye, everyone. (Shakes ASTROV's hand) / Thanks for your pleasant company. I respect your intelligence, your energy...but please allow an old man to make a suggestion: You must work, my friends...you must work: I wish you all good luck:/
and takes her hands. They kiss each other on the cheek. Telyegin steps to Serebryakov saying goodbye and shaking hands. Serebryakov addresses the group as a whole again, then steps to Astrov to shake hands. He turns around, energetically and cheerfully finishing his speech with his advice that they must get to work. Vanya glances up and meets Astrov's eyes; they smile ironically at each other. Serebryakov calls Sonya to his side and takes a last look at everyone. He pauses indecisively for a moment, a little sad, and then exits quickly with Sonya and Marya.

Yelena crosses off the platform to stage left center. Astrov counters to Telyegin and they talk quietly. Vanya turns to Yelena and haltingly asks forgiveness. Yelena holds out her hand and they meet center stage. He kisses her hand tenderly and then sadly turns away and steps downstage. Yelena stands for a moment looking at him standing quiet and dejected. In a moment of forgiving compassion she steps to him and kisses his cheek, quickly whispering goodbye. She quickly turns and goes out, not looking at Astrov as she passes. Vanya turns and painfully watches her leave. All his dreams leave with her.

Meanwhile, Astrov has noticed their farewell and covers Vanya's vulnerability by asking Telyegin to go see to his horses. Telyegin leaves. Trying to shake his mood of despair, Vanya energetically says he must work and crosses to the desk to get his ledgers. He gathers them up and crosses to the windowseat. The carriage bells
Good-bye. Forgive me? (He kisses her hand) We shall never meet each other again...

YELENA
(Moved) Good-bye, dear Ivan Petrovitch. (Kisses him on the cheek and exits)

ASTROV
(To TELYEGIN) Waffles, would you ask them to bring the horses round?

TELYEGIN
Certainly, my dear friend. (He exits)

ASTROV
(He clears his things) Why don't you go see them off?

VANYA
Let them go. I...I can't. My heart is too heavy. I must work...keep myself busy. Work... (He gets his papers)

(The carriage bells are heard.)

ASTROV
They're gone. The professor must be happy. Nothing could bring him back!

(MARINA enters and sets down with her sewing.)

MARINA
They're gone.

(SONYA enters and gets her papers.)

SONYA
They're gone. Good luck to them. (Well, Uncle Vanya, shall we do some work?)

(SEREBRYAKOV exits with MARYA and SONYA.)

VANYA
As they leave:

IV-9
(X TO RC)
(X TO SL OF T)
(X TO LC)

(SLOWLY, X TO SR OF T)

(GIVES HER HAND & HE KISSES IT)

(SEREBRYAKOV exits with MARYA and SONYA.)

VANYA
Good-bye. Forgive me? (He kisses her hand) We shall never meet each other again...

YELENA
(Moved) Good-bye, dear Ivan Petrovitch. (Kisses him on the cheek and exits)

ASTROV
(To TELYEGIN) Waffles, would you ask them to bring the horses round?

TELYEGIN
Certainly, my dear friend. (He exits)

(IV.7)

ASTROV
(He clears his things) Why don't you go see them off?

VANYA
Let them go. I...I can't. My heart is too heavy. I must work...keep myself busy. Work... (He gets his papers)

(SONYA enters and gets her papers.)

SONYA
They're gone. Good luck to them. (Well, Uncle Vanya, shall we do some work?)

(SEREBRYAKOV exits with MARYA and SONYA.)

VANYA
As they leave:

IV-9
(X TO RC)
(X TO SL OF T)
(X TO LC)

(SLOWLY, X TO SR OF T)

(GIVES HER HAND & HE KISSES IT)
"We shall never meet each other again..."
are heard receding in the distance. Vanya raises his head to listen; the sound goes through him like a pain. He quickly looks down and sits at the windowseat. Astrov quietly says, "They're gone." He looks at Vanya and lightly says nothing could bring the professor back, laughing as he finishes the line. He mimes a gun with his hand and says, "Bang!" Vanya looks up quickly, surprised at Astrov's gall, then he smiles, pleased at his friend's joke. Amused at himself, Astrov crosses below the desk.

Marina enters and says "They're gone." and then crosses to the upstage right chair and sits with her sewing. Vanya opens the ledger and begins to work. A few seconds later Sonya comes in softly and says, "They're gone." She crosses to the desk to get her ledger, picks it up and cheerfully crosses to Vanya sitting on the stool beside him. She pauses a moment and then softly says she is sad they have gone. Crickets can be heard chirping softly. Marya comes in with her pamphlets and says, "They're gone," with a tone of contentment at events being in order. Contently she sighs, sure in the quality of her pamphlets and calmed by the quiet. By this time the lights have completed the slow dimming to night. The room is warm and cozy. Astrov gets his portfolio from the desk and goes to the chair upstage left, putting his maps away in it.

Astrov turns and looks at each person absorbed in their individual activities; Vanya and Sonya working at the ledgers, Marina sewing and Marya reading. He savours each detail as if storing it up to take
VANYA

Yes... work. Work.

SONYA

It's been a long time since we have sat together and worked. (She sits with him) I feel sad that they've gone.

(MARYA enters, gets her pamphlets, and sits.)

MARYA

They're gone.

SONYA

(Begins work) Uncle Vanya, let's do the accounts first... they're way behind. You do one account and I'll do the next.

VANYA

"Delivered... to Mr...." (Both write in silence)

MARINA

(Yawns) I'm about ready for bed.

ASTROV

It's so quiet. Scratching pens and singing crickets. It's so warm and comfortable... I don't want to leave. (Bells are heard) The horses are here... I must say good-bye and be off. (Puts maps away)

MARINA

Are you in such a hurry? You may as well stay.

ASTROV

I can't, nurse.

VANYA

"Account delivered... Sept. 4..."
"It's so quiet."
with him. Then he comments on how warm and comfortable it is. He hears the bells of his carriage approach and looks up. He takes a deep breath, and masking his emptiness, he says he must go. He crosses to the chair to gather his things.

The labourer quietly enters and says the horses are ready. Astrov hands him his medical bag and portfolio, telling him to be careful. Sonya has stopped writing; Vanya secretly glances at her. The labourer exits with Astrov's things. Astrov turns downstage and says, "Well." Sonya puts her ledger down, stands and crosses to him without betraying her emotions. They speak and shake hands. Astrov crosses to Marina. He says goodbye and kisses her on the top of her head. She rises and asks him if he would like some vodka. He says yes. Marina steps out of the room to get it for him. Sonya drops her eyes to the floor, unable to look at Astrov. Vanya quickly glances at Sonya and sees that she will be alright. Sonya's turmoil hurts him. She has told him everything, but he must let her regain her dignity by handling the situation with grace and calm, as he did with Yelena. He looks back down at his work.

After a short awkward pause, Astrov speaks of his horse a little self-consciously, crossing to the upstage center chair. Vanya answers casually. Astrov pauses again, looking around the room for something to talk about. He sees the map of Africa on the wall, points to it and cheerfully remarks that it must be hot there. Vanya looks up with mystification, lost at the direction the conversation has taken. Sonya smiles.
LABOURER

Mikhail Lvovitch, the horses are ready.

ASTROV

I heard them. (Hands him his maps and things) Here, take these. Be careful with these...don't let them get crushed.

LABOURER

Yes sir. (He exits)

ASTROV

Well...

SONYA

(Goes to him) When will we see you again?

ASTROV

Not before next spring, I imagine. Difficult in winter... Of course, if anything happens let me know and I'll come. (Shakes her hand) Thank you for your hospitality and kindness...everything. (Goes to nurse and kisses her on the head) Good-bye, nurse.

MARINA

Aren't you going to have tea?

ASTROV

No, thank you, nurse.

MARINA

Perhaps you'd like a drop of vodka?

ASTROV

Perhaps.

MARINA exits to get vodka.)

ASTROV

One of my horses has gone lame...I noticed it yesterday.
Marina enters holding a small tray with a glass of vodka on it. Astrov takes it and drinks it down. Sonya looks away until he is finished. He puts the glass back on the tray and Marina crosses to the right and puts the tray on the small table. She sits and begins to sew again. Sonya silently moves to Astrov’s side and they exit together. Vanya watches them go and sighs heavily. He goes back to work on the ledger.

Vanya works on the ledger for a long moment. Marya reads and Marina knits. The crickets continue to chirp as the stage lights slowly change, dimming on the stage in general and isolating Vanya at the windowseat. The bell's of Astrov's carriage are heard as they carry him away. Vanya starts and looks up, staring blankly into space. After a moment Sonya re-enters silently and crosses to the edge of the platform where she pauses and softly says, "He's gone." She crosses down to Vanya, picks up her ledger and sits working. Marina yawns comfortably. Telyegin quietly enters with his guitar and looks around. He sits down on the edge of the stage and contentedly begins to tune the guitar.

After a lonely pause, Vanya begins to speak quietly in resignation. They are alone and the emptiness is too terrible in the silence. Sonya puts her ledger down. Not looking at Vanya she begins to speak, saying it can't be helped. She rises and crosses slowly upstage and behind him, saying how they will be patient and work until they are old. Telyegin plays a gently melody on the guitar.
You must change his shoes.

ASTROV

Yes, I'll have to take him to the blacksmith. Ah, well. (Looks at the wall map) I suppose that it must be very hot in Africa.

VANYA

Yes... I guess so.

MARINA enters with vodka and bread.

MARINA

There you are. (ASTROV drinks) To your health, my dear. Won't you have some bread?

ASTROV

No, thank you... I like it plain. Good luck to you, nurse.

(MARINA and SONYA go out.)

MARINA sits.

"February second... lenten oil, twenty pounds. February sixteenth, lenten oil again, twenty pounds. Buckwheat..."

(The bells are heard. Pause.)

MARINA

He's gone.

SONYA enters and goes to VANYA.

SONYA

He's gone. (She sits) "Total... fifteen twenty-five..."
As she speaks of how they will suffer, she rests her hands protectively on his shoulders, comforting him. Speaking of her faith she holds her head up bravely and there is hope in her voice. She says, "I believe!", and Vanya reaches up and holds her hand, blending their sorrow together. He is sitting very still with tears running down his face.

Sonya says "I believe with all my heart." and gently turns Vanya's face to hers with her hand. She sees that he is crying and sweetly says his name, her own tears falling. She takes his head in her arms and holds him close to her. When she says that they will rest she lays her head tiredly on his. Vanya is holding onto her arm. They gently cling to each other, calm in their sadness; alone and yet together. The lights slowly fade to black. The guitar music lingers in the dark and the melody ends on a minor chord.
MARINA

(Yawns) Lord have mercy on us.

(TELYEGIN enters and sits, quietly)

VANYA

Sonya, my child... how my heart aches. If you only knew how my heart aches.

SONYA

It can't be helped, Uncle Vanya. We must go on living. We will go on living, Uncle Vanya. We will live through long days and weary nights; we will be patient and take what life has in store for us. We will work for others now and when we are old, without rest. And in time we will say that we have suffered, we have wept... that life has not been kind to us. God will take pity. And then, Uncle Vanya, we will see a new, beautiful life, and we will be happy, and we will rest. We will be able to look back on this life and smile gently. I have faith, Uncle Vanya. I believe with all my heart. (On her knees) We will rest. (TELYEGIN begins to play softly) We will rest. We will hear the angels and everything will shine with radiance. We will see all evil and suffering melt by the warmth of mercy and our lives will be sweet, peaceful, and gentle as a caress. I believe, Uncle Vanya... I believe! (Sees VANYA crying) Poor Uncle Vanya, you're crying. (Through her tears) You've had no happiness in your life. But wait, Uncle Vanya... wait. We shall rest. (She puts her arms around him) We shall rest... (The Watchman taps outside) We shall rest...

CURTAIN
"But wait, Uncle Vanya...wait."
DIRECTING NARRATIVE
DIRECTING NARRATIVE

Introduction

The first production I saw of Chekhov made a vivid and lasting impression. This was the 1964 National Theatre production of Uncle Vanya in London, starring Michael Redgrave as Vanya, Laurence Olivier as Astrov, Joan Plowright as Sonya, and Rosemary Harris as Yelena. It was a brilliant production, mature and well balanced in its acting and direction and interestingly designed. Style and grace were key impressions.

My next encounter with Uncle Vanya was in 1965 at the Long Wharf Theatre, New Haven, where I was working as an apprentice scene painter. I was able to observe many rehearsals and performances. This was a very different look at Chekhov. The play was directed by Jon Jory, an energetic and very American director. The production had less grace but more vitality. It was not as tight an ensemble as the London production, but the humor was more accessible to an American audience. It was played with less style but with more passion. The stage at the Long Wharf is a thrust with very little backstage area. The scenery consisted of a simultaneous setting with prop changes only.

I have seen stage or movie versions of all of Chekhov's major plays and have worked on scenes from his plays in acting classes. My most complete experience in performing a Chekhovian role came when I did Masha in The Three Sisters with the Montana Repertory
These cumulative encounters with his work gave me the desire
to direct Chekhov and when I was actually given the directing
assignment of Uncle Vanya, my background of experience with the
plays of Chekhov led me to approach him with a respect—an awe for
Chekhov. I hoped to do him justice, to avoid the pitfalls, to
discover my own approach; but, most of all, to enjoy and highlight
my engagement with such beautiful writing and true characters.

For clarity and continuity the directing narrative is
organized into the following components: structure, dynamics, design
and process. This is followed by a chronological analysis of the
four acts by using the components in detail.

Structure

In the simplest of terms the spine of the play is expressed best
as character superobjective: to find ways to lead happy and worthy
lives. According to each character's depth and personality, this
objective means varied things: to the professor it means to im-
prove things for himself while oblivious to the needs of others; for
Marina it's to help others through awareness of their simplest
needs; for Astrov it means to carry out what he has to do in spite of
his negative perceptions of himself; for Sonya it's to serve others
resolutely and with a hopeful outlook; for Vanya it's to live
meaningfully and with dignity; for Yelena it's to find serenity and
freedom from emotions she cannot face; for Marya it's to remain
complacent in the safe ideas of her pamphlets; for Telyegin it's
to maintain his security in the bosom of the family.

In pursuit of these objectives the characters encounter an array
of obstacles ranging from the corporeal to the spiritual. Sonya,
who loves and needs love, is entrapped in a plain and unattractive
body; Yelena, through her cowardice and chronic melancholia, fears
romantic involvement and is burdened by her physical beauty and
attractiveness to men. Serebryakov faces corporeal obstacles in
the deterioration of his body by age and is alienated from his
previous contentment by financial duress. Spiritual malaise pre­
vents Yelena from taking any action that would fulfill what romantic
yearning she has left. Vanya suffers the spiritual betrayal of his
commitments by sacrificing his energy and personal development of
the service of his sister and then her husband.

The overall action of the play consists in the characters
reaching for their objectives and encountering obstacles with varying
levels of recognition after the encounter. Some characters do
obtain their objectives; e.g., Marina and Telyegin have their
security intact at the end of the play and Marya returns safely to
the world of her pamphlets. Sonya, Yelena, Vanya, and Astrov are
the characters who face the most devastating recognition—the
bleakness of their lives.

Mention should be made of Chekhov's mastery of indirect action,
the revelation of the action revealed by subtext, as a structural
device unique to Chekhov. As an example of this, in Act III
Yelena speaks to Astrov on Sonya's behalf. Her conscious motivations in seeking to help Sonya are clear, but the mutual attraction felt between Astrov and Yelena leads to misunderstood motivations and finally to the kiss that Vanya accidentally witnesses. The anger and confusion Vanya suffers as a result affects his ability to hear Serebryakov's ill-timed proposal to sell the estate and this in turn precipitates the Act III crisis. I find Chekhov's mix of direct and indirect action, the subtle interaction of what is said and done, what is obliquely said and done, and what is not said and not done to be deep, true, and fascinating.

In initial structural considerations, the question of protagonist - the character who is the center of the action, the antagonist - the opponent, and the character of influence - the precipitator, seems an important aspect to analyze. Although there are arguable variations, Vanya is the protagonist, Serebryakov the antagonist, and Yelena the character of influence. Vanya is the main character and Serebryakov does oppose him; the most obvious illustration being in Act III during the confrontation over the estate. Yelena does influence and precipitate the crisis in the same act when Vanya has seen her and Astrov kissing.

Having dealt with this structural question of opposing forces in a compact fashion, I feel compelled to elaborate somewhat on the complexities Chekhov created with his poetic handling of structural elements in Uncle Vanya. The question of destructive forces in the
play is subtle and multiple: The corrosive force of day to day petty routine; Vanya's own overwhelming sense of committing himself to others; physical and spiritual limitations; the urge of sensitive and intelligent people to live a significant life in a universe in which we must die.

The antagonist might be life itself, when it is lived long enough for the process of mortal and spiritual attrition to show the individual the absolute limits to possibilities. Chekhov is ruthless in his presentation of truth as he sees it, but he is wise and kind in portraying the complexity of the human soul, a soul that recognizes the pain of living and will continue in spite of what that recognition costs. The interweaving of each character's desire, pain, passion, humor, disillusionment, self-revelation, indifference, insensitivity, generosity, contentment and happiness creates an irrestable symphony of human interaction which serves as the structural material of the play.

Dynamics

Dynamics is the relationship between motion and forces affecting motion. Within the structure, dramatic energies tense and relax, speed up and slow down, confront and retreat. Rhythms flow with lyric smoothness, sputter erratically, or swell to passionate heights. Though many Chekhovian energies inform the dynamics, I have emphasized the following: humor, dysfunction, multi-dimensional characterization, missed moments, and counterpoint.
A strong dynamic too often overlooked is Chekhov's humor and its use as a palliative to sorrow. I have a deep conviction that Chekhov's characters are injured not through large tragic upheaval but through attrition caused by unremarkable events and accumulated sorrow and disappointments. Counterpointed with this conviction is an equally deep one that these people don't seek their unhappiness or hold onto it with a sickly grasp; when they must they face it but do not indulge. They seek the relief of laughter and the pleasure of being together.

Chekhov's structural dynamic of arrival and departure frames the whole play and variations occur within the play. People come together when they can and depart when they must. Vanya and Astrov seek each other in Act I. Astrov has opened the act with the statement of yearning and dissolutionment that becomes truth for his character by the end of the show. Vanya enters in Act I rumpled and in the grip of malaise and discontent that begins the revelation of a deep state of spiritual discontent. And yet these two friends seek the pleasure to be gained through their humorous bantering and lively exchange.
Chekhov has a wonderful comprehension of the human heart and mind in all its facets. I find his people complex and multi-dimensional but so very accessible in their humanity. I feel I know his people and I love them. He is excruciatingly honest in his clear-eyed analysis of their frailties and faults, but infinitely generous in bestowing a balance in them with the portrayal of their pain, sensitivities, generousities, hopes, and dreams. Telyegin can easily be seen as a parasite on the estate; his loyalty to his estranged wife can be seen as ridiculous pride. But Chekhov gives his generous little clown the gift of music which he shares with others unstintingly. He is not well endowed with attractive attributes but he gives what he can to those around him and to his wife's children by the man she loves. Character dimension and individual worth serve as a major dynamic in a Chekhovian production.

Another dynamic is what can be called "missed moments." Characters' preoccupations may lead them at one moment or another to hurt each other consciously or not, but their greatest sins are sins of omission. If they fail to recognize needs or return love and thus hurt each other deeply, it is because they are unaware and not because they calculate it. The result of the omission is a
"missed moment." In Act II when Astrov is swept by the agony of the memory of the death of the injured man, Sonya is unable to recognize what he is going through because she is so much in love with him that her need to ask if he could love is more powerful than her sense of sympathy.

These omissions or "missed moments" have a cumulative effect leading, as in Vanya's case, to an emotional, physical and intellectual dysfunction, another dynamic in the play. This dynamic of the play completes the erosion of relationships and leads to the resulting process of attrition at the end of the play.

Perhaps the most important dynamic to me has been counterpoint. Eric Bently, in his chapter on craftsmanship in *Uncle Vanya* in *In Search of Theatre*, puts it beautifully:

As one can analyze certain Shakespeare plays in terms of the chief concepts employed in them—such as Nature and Time—so one might analyze a Chekhov play in terms of certain large antitheses, such as (the list is compiled from Uncle Vanya) love and hate, feeling and apathy, heroism and lethargy, innocence and sophistication, reality and illusion, freedom and captivity, use and waste, culture and nature, youth and age, life and death. If one were to take up a couple of Chekhov's key concepts and trace his use of them through a whole play, one would find that he is a more substantial artist than even his admirers think. (p. 339)

Counterpoint emerges in the dynamic energies in *Uncle Vanya* in so many guises and it accounts for so many of the dramatic tensions of the play that I've found it dominant in the chronological section to follow. A simple physical counterpoint can be seen in the
contrast between the girls—one plain, one beautiful. A complex counterpoint can be seen in their psychological reactions to love—Sonya seeks love and fails, Yelena fears love and is pursued.

Each act will be discussed in detail based on the structure and dynamics above. I will apply and explore their use as they illuminate particular scenes. While the dynamics that have been discussed above consistently run throughout the entire play, I also feel that families of the same kind of dynamic organize themselves around the acts, giving each of them an individual character.

Act I is characterized by the dynamic of coming together for social interchange; especially entertainment and humor. Underneath this seemingly bucolic and pleasant gathering lies the counterpoint of rot and malaise; especially Vanya's deteriorating mental health and Serebryakov's approaching senility and death.

Act II features the dynamic of missed moments between people who wish and need to come together in more intimate ways than previously possible.

In Act III, the dynamic of dysfunction triumphs in each scene, climaxing with Vanya's babbling gibberish to his mother and moments later flailing foolishly about with a loaded gun.

The dynamic of attrition, symbolized in large by the actual leave-taking, but also personalized by the major characters with the loss of something dear to each of them, completes the evolution of forces at work in the play. Loss and loneliness are, at the end,
counterpointed by the totally unconscious but nevertheless redeeming love between Vanya and Sonya. Because of their great losses, they have been profoundly brought together.

**Design**

I had seen *Uncle Vanya* designed in two widely different ways, at the Old Vic with four naturalistic sets on a proscenium stage and at the Long Wharf on one realistic, simultaneous set on a thrust stage. When I went into design conferences for my production my adaptation was completed and flexibility had been purposely built in to accommodate the limitations of the Main Hall stage and the technical budget.

My overriding desire was to have the design support the show with carefully selected elements, allowing the emphasis to be on actors moving in a space, coming together and moving apart, reinforcing the point and counterpoint of the relationships. Three simple settings were decided upon with scene changes at the intermissions. One drawback was the need for an intermission after the short twenty-five minute first act, but it seemed a small compromise for what I considered to be the right quality and amount of design support.

The main set design element was a pattern of simplified birch trees which remained in the background of the sets and which could be emphasized or subdued through the control of the lighting. The furniture became a major element, carefully selected and altered from act to act with slipcovers. The positioning of the furniture
with selective additions of other pieces helped differentiate the acts, vary and define the playing areas, the relationships of space, and proscribe the entrances.

I wanted to make a basic statement of mood, season, and the passage of time with each act and felt that the lighting for the show would provide the greatest potential. I was given a top graduate student, Gary Fassler, as my lighting designer. He was quick and intelligent in picking up on my basic concept for each act.

I wanted a positive, poetic mood for the outdoors Act I, and he gave me dapplied lighting that highlighted the trees and allowed variations of light and shade on the stage into which I could insinuate my actors to enhance their various moods. For example, Astrov could move into shady areas when delivering the introspective and depressed speech about his patient who died.

I wanted pools of light in Act II, a late-night atmosphere with variations of cold and warmth, characters coming together in pairs as in duets, interwoven with the soliloquies of isolated individuals. Fassler made it possible to use lanterns throughout the act, enhancing the effect of certain characters bringing warmth and withdrawing it. He effected long, slow, and imperceptible lighting changes that allowed me to define areas of cold isolation for each of the five major characters in the act while also having the flexibility to define warmer areas where the successive duets took place, with a significantly different area for each duet. For example, Sonya's
isolation spot was at the downstage right window seat and Yelena's was upstage left at the coal stove. They came together in duet at the end of the act at the centerstage lounge.

Act III began with a bright fresh atmosphere, reflecting optimism and hope to counterpoint with the end of the act which breaks into chaos, violence, and the destruction of ideals. The lights changed imperceptibly throughout the act, underscoring this long act of counterpoint. For the last act I wanted afternoon light fading slowly to evening, reflecting the pattern of departure and attrition and ending with a slow funneling down to a final pool of light on Vanya and Sonya during her soliloquy. Each departure brought a diminishing of the stage light, which echoed the diminishing happiness and hope of the characters, especially Vanya and Sonya.

The costumes were primarily pulled from stock. Consistent with the simplicity of the general design, each character had a basic costume with ancillary pieces and accents added as appropriate. My priorities were character appropriateness, fit, and comfort for the actors. Degrees of formality were expressed in the choices made for each character—Sonya wore simple, basic clothes and Yelena showed more sophistication in her dress. Vanya was dressed more formally than Astrov and less formally than the professor. Essential contrasts between characters were used; e.g., the actress playing Yelena had lovely, striking blond hair and a dark costume to highlight this feature, and Sonya was dressed in a white blouse and light
skirt, setting off her abundant dark auburn hair, a feature pointed out in Act III as her best feature. One girl thus became almost like a photo negative of the other, a useful counterpoint device.

Chekhov is so selective and specific with sound and music in his plays that I chose not to use preshow and intermission music, feeling that silence would heighten the effect of the sound in the show itself. A very important consideration in casting Telyegin was his ability to play the guitar. I felt strong potential in using the playing of the guitar in point and counterpoint in three of the four acts. Indeed, the actor proved sensitive to the moods of the scenes and developed some nice melodies during the improvisational stages of rehearsal; e.g., backing Astrov's speech in Act I about the plantation and destruction of nature, heightening the Act II scene between Vanya and Astrov with a light and ironic melody, and, most importantly, enhancing Sonya's final aria in Act IV with melody fluctuating between minor and major keys, supporting the exquisitely painful hope in her lines and Vanya's quiet and still despair.

Live sound throughout the play seemed important to me. I felt recorded sound would ring false, so I found ways to use live sound for the banging shutter in Act II and the sequence of carriage bells in Act IV. However, I had to rely on recorded sound for the wind and thunder in Act II, a less than satisfactory solution because of the difficulty of the cueing. The recording available for rain was so bad that I cut it.
In all I was pleased with the design and technical support; I felt it enhanced the show simply and gracefully without burdening the cast and director during technical and dress rehearsals. It provided a sculptural quality for a thrust stage and a dynamic quality for the lights. It reinforced my concepts of counterpoint, dysfunction, and attrition.

**Process**

Although the process of direction is not a major consideration of this thesis, the use of improvisational techniques employed over a long rehearsal period did contribute considerably to the final production and some salient aspects should be mentioned. Previous to my teaching experience in Africa improvisation had not played a major part in my dramatic technique. However, over those two years I developed considerable skill in using improvisational techniques creatively and for a variety of purposes. Use of improvisation is particularly apropos in rehearsing a Chekhovian play. I interpreted *Uncle Vanya* strongly in terms of character relationships. Improvisation techniques are particularly useful in breaking down barriers between the actors and in fostering ensemble acting as well as in the development of character relationships and in fleshing out and defining individual characters. My use of improvisational techniques in the development of *Uncle Vanya* can be demonstrated by the five following applications:
1) to clarify my interpretation of *Uncle Vanya* with the actors
2) to develop actor/character relationships
3) to tap the creativity in individual actors
4) to solve specific problems
5) to develop blocking

Although there is by the nature of improvisation overlap in these categories, for example, solving a problem enhances character relationship and so on. I will briefly touch upon each specific use of improvisation and demonstrate with examples.

The use of improvisation served to further my interpretation of the play. The actor portraying Serebryakov had chosen an interpretation to begin with that I felt interfered with the dynamics of the play. I sensed early in the rehearsal process that this actor was resistant to direction; perhaps because of a lack of personal confidence. He was from a different academic discipline and did not have the opportunity to practice and develop his performance skills with consistency. In Act II, scene 1, I felt it vital that Serebryakov be seen and portrayed as a sick old man who is facing death and is frightened. The actor resisted the vulnerability of the character. Although an enderly man himself, he persisted in expressing his own physical vitality. As I had already established a rehearsal procedure in which playing opposites were commonly employed I allowed the actor freedom to do what he wanted with the scene and follow his natural inclinations.
During early improvisations I kept Yelena static (physically in one place) and let Serebryakov move at will. Then following the opposite, I would limit Serebryakov in his movement and allow Yelena to move at will. Over a period of several rehearsals I slowly manipulated Serebryakov into a relatively static position on the chaise lounge, reinforcing the disabeled condition of the character. The final step in this sequence of improvisations was to actually restrict the actor to the lounge, completely immobilizing him. In this way I was able to overcome the actor's resistance by allowing him personal expression while maneuvering him into a position where he could organically experience the sensation of physical helplessness important to the character.

The actress portraying Yelena was one of the more inexperienced members of the cast of Uncle Vanya. As there was a great deal of maturity in the cast in general, she tended to become inhibited and insecure early in the rehearsals. I used improvisations to help the actress tap her sources of creativity and this gave her confidence in the particular quality that she as an individual brought to the play. I felt that her sense of humor and playfulness could be used as a triggering device in establishing a comfortable working relationship with the other members of the cast, particularly Astrov and Vanya who were both played by faculty members. Although humor and playfulness are not qualities that are central to the character, using these natural qualities in the actress gave her a sense of
freedom. And as she gained confidence she opened up to improvisational techniques and began to make her own special contributions to the play. One improvisation in particular worked well with this actress. She tended to be quite shy with the actor playing Vanya who with his confidence and forcefulness tended to overpower her early in rehearsals. One night we were rehearsing all of the Yelena/Vanya scenes which Vanya is persistantly protesting his love. I calculatedly gave Yelena the advantage by erecting various physically barriers behind which she could retreat and thereby controlled the amount of contact she chose to make with Vanya. It had the double purpose of challenging Vanya to find variety in his approach to Yelena and in giving Yelena the upper hand in her relationship with Vanya. Particularly effective was the use of the upstage drapes in the Masquer Theatre behind which she could retreat only poking her hand or head out as desired. She became quite ingenious in indicating to Vanya which of his approaches were effective and tolerable and which were not. It brought subtly to their interaction and confidence to the actress.

I used improvisational techniques to develop and reinforce relationships between characters. An additional benefit came in developing a more generous and spontaneous interaction between actors. The relationship between Astrov and Vanya is deep and complex. A series of improvisations aimed at establishing the mood of pleasant social exchange in Act I led to a playful bantering between Astrov
and Vanya. I gave each actor a series of secret objectives with which to play the scene. During one run-through of the scene Vanya's objective might be to simply make Astrov laugh. Astrov's might be to keep a straight face no matter what. During another run-through Vanya's secret objective may be to surprise either by physical means or vocally. Astrov's objective might be to verbally pass judgment though ad-libbing on the effectiveness of Vanya's entertaining. Many variations of secret objectives were explored and an easy going entertaining quality developed between the actors that illuminated their individual characters as well as the special nature of their relationship. Vanya found inventive ways in which to clown his way around the seriousness of what he is actually saying. Astrov developed a good humored irony that enhanced his character. Their relationship took on tones of strong mutual enjoyment and friendly competition that had strong ramifications throughout the play while enhancing the dynamic of humor. The spontaneity that developed between the actors carried through the performances of the play.

It is vital to the conflict in Act III that Vanya be unable to effectively challenge Serebryakov's plan to sell the estate. A problem developed early in rehearsals of that scene due to the discrepancy in personal forcefulness between Serebryakov and Vanya. Vanya was tending to overpower Serebryakov and Serebryakov was finding himself dominated in a scene where he must have the upper hand through his stature and social position. If Serebryakov does not
have the upper hand, fairly or unfairly, the conflict is muted and Vanya is opposing too weak a force to justify the extremes to which he goes. The actor playing Serebryakov had been overpowered by Vanya's stage energy and had suffered a drop in self-confidence. I aimed the next rehearsal at solving what I saw as a very specific and potentially destructive problem of lack of self confidence on his part. To focus in on this problem before it became insurmountable I cancelled my posted rehearsal schedule and called the entire cast excluding Astrov and Vanya. I gave the role of Vanya temporarily to Telyegin, who by nature is a meek actor and who was highly unlikely to dominate Serebryakov. I took the bounds off the scene and with the exception of Vanya told everyone to support Serebryakov physically and vocally ad-libbing as they saw fit, and overtly expressing the ripeness of Serebryakov's plan.

As the improvisation began to work we moved spontaneously out of the Masquer Theatre and onto the staircase outside where Serebryakov took a dominate position on the top steps. The improvisation took about an hour during which every conceivable reason emerged reinforcing the selling of the estate as a superb plan. Through the sincere and positive reinforcement of the others the actor playing Serebryakov regained confidence in his stature, not only in his own eyes but in those of the others. As we resumed rehearsals with this scene with Serebryakov and the real Vanya, I reinforced the sacrosaint quality of his position by literally marking off a boundary
around Serebryakov over which Vanya could not cross. Not only did this have a desired effect of bolstering Serebryakov but also increased Vanya's sense of frustration at not being able to unseat the professor during the scene. The improvisation solved a very specific problem which could have thrown the dynamics of the play off balance.

In working for five weeks with nondirectional blocking and without floor plans it became very important to avoid set patterns of movement. Actors naturally tend to favor certain stage areas and begin to develop patterns for their entrances. As an example of how I overcame this problem I will describe rehearsals in the Masquer Theatre. The Masquer has two sides on which the audience ordinarily sits. When I detected the actors playing to one side or the other I would switch to the opposite. Often using a back wall as the audience. To reinforce this I would describe myself as the audience and calculatedly moved to various positions around the space during the scene. I would reverse potential entrance areas when I detected actors establishing patterns. By consistently changing patterns and encouraging new ones I helped the actors develop the ability to adjust to each other naturally while balancing the stage for three-fourths round as required.

An example of a performance blocking pattern that had its source in these spontaneous blocking switch ups can be found in the Act III scene between Yelena and Astrov. I had been working scenes with various improvisations which used contrasting patterns of movement.
Yelena would be static with Astrov moving freely one time then Astrov static with Yelena moving the next time. I happily discovered through this technique the movement pattern that expressed the irony of misunderstanding between them that culminated in the kiss. After trying various improvisation patterns it became clear to me that I wanted Astrov stable while Yelena does the questioning about his love for Sonya. At the end of this segment, I had Yelena move away from Astrov in discomfort and embarrassment. Then keeping her fairly static I let Astrov move following his accusation that she is a fluffy weasel. The irony that he has accused her of being the predator while he is doing the stalking enhanced the misunderstanding that led to the Act III crisis scene. At first Astrov had a tendency to move to Yelena too quickly. I set up an improvisation in which I gave her the freedom to flee if he flanked her with his abruptness. After a few instances where she did just that, Astrov developed the subtlety that I wanted in his approach to Yelena. The scene was subtle and ironic and true to the characters. I got what I wanted out of the scene by observing and then selecting and enhancing the outcome of the blocking improvisation.
ACT I

The arrivals and departures in Act I are one of Chekhov's effective structural elements that allows the action of the characters' seeking enjoyment through each other as a relief from introspection. As successive arrivals take place the pleasure in social ritual extends. Counterpoint is felt in the dissonant note struck by the altercation between Marya and Vanya which reveals the ominous quality of his discontent. The final arrival, that of the laborer, disrupts social exchange and Astrov must depart. The discontent he was expressing in the first moments of the play is reinforced.

I wanted to establish a low-keyed conversational tone at the beginning of Act I. I felt this would provide a tone of normality that would allow the most important dynamics in the act to emerge—humor and social interchange as a palliative to personal discontent. Also I saw the idea of "normality" as a larger framing device for the whole play; at the end of Act IV there is an obvious return to "normality" but with a devastating difference—the destruction of hopes.

To encourage slow relaxed rhythms in the Astrov/Marina scene, I kept Marina fairly stable in her mood and movement. She spent most of the scene at the bench. Astrov counterpointed her stillness by moving freely on the stage. I worked on smoothing the actor's natural high energy and abrupt rhythms into relaxed natural movement.
It was important to me that the enjoyment Astrov and Vanya find in each other's company be quickly established. When speaking of this scene to the actors I called it the "entertainment scene." During early improvisational work the desire to entertain and be entertained was emphasized. A playful bantering quality between the actors developed to such an extent that it carried strongly through the act.

Vanya's entrance was quite comic and Astrov's lift in energy and his happy, teasing greeting of Vanya encouraged Vanya to bring himself out of his vague discontented mood. I kept Vanya's movement free during this scene; the actor responded positively to the freedom to express himself spontaneously. There was a sense of friendly challenge between the two men; Astrov lightly and with gently irony would egg Vanya on and Vanya would take the challenge with pleasure and find new qualities to entertain Astrov each night this scene was done.

The personal discontent the two men suffer would emerge powerfully throughout the play: I found it my responsibility to balance this discontent with humor and good fellowship. This behavioral counterpointing adds dimension to the characters by revealing their capacity for deep friendship and their enjoyment of wit and humor. The depth of their personal burdens is revealed by and more sharply defined by their need for relief.

Vanya chooses the professor as the topic of discussion, a subject that is at the core of what is bothering him, but he handles it with exaggeration and farcical humor. This counterpointing establishes three important things: the bantering, high-energy quality of the friendship
between Astrov and Vanya, and Vanya's character obsession—the professor. We also see Vanya's compulsion to clown and make a fool of himself. In spite of the humor of the scene we sense in Vanya a certain volatility, a restlessness and a manic energy.

The opportunity for finding individual worth in Chekhov's minor characters presents itself in Act I with Telyegin. In my production Telyegin was congenial, sincere, easy to please, and vulnerable. It was this vulnerable quality I saw in the actor during auditions that particularly appealed to me. The actor had no stage experience but I felt his natural qualities would compensate. I had to work diligently and carefully with him, but was rewarded in the naturalness of his performance.

When Telyegin protests at Vanya's banter about morality he reveals himself as a simple man with simple ideas and little sense of humor. But his faithfulness to a faithless wife is oddly moving, showing him as a humble, self-sacrificing man with a strong sense of loyalty. This story is very funny in the script; it works by itself. I kept the actor on the track by gently insisting that he be sincere and simple.

Character depth and relationship emerged in Vanya's response to Telyegin. He could simply tell him to "dry up" but I chose to reveal something of the relationship between Vanya and Telyegin. The statement is a put-down but a counterpoint was developed in the manner in which Vanya handled it: he says it lightly, pats Telyegin and kisses his cheek impishly. The initial impulse from my point of view was to find
something for Vanya to remove the potential for a hurtful sarcasm on his part. I was trying to protect the vulnerability of the actor playing Telyegin and to avoid the possibility of treating the moment between them as cynical. Both characters gain depth if Vanya puts Telyegin down lightheartedly: Telyegin is able to recover from the put-down by Vanya's affection, thus continuing to contribute conviviality to the scene—and Vanya, even if not respectful of Telyegin's opinions, is able to show his warmth toward him.

When Sonya and Yelena join the scene, the contrast between the two women is immediately apparent: Yelena is beautiful and moves gracefully with a fluid quality. Sonya is plain and is quick and direct in her movement. I had Sonya focus on individuals in a clear and definite manner, while Yelena showed a vagueness in her focus; as if Sonya were melody and Yelena were harmony. With Yelena I constantly worked to adjust her naturally light voice with more melodious tones. As the actress's confidence in the role developed she gained more control over her voice production. This actress responded strongly to improvisation and I found it profitable to work spontaneously with her.

Her forte seemed to be "inspired moments" and my task was to select and reinforce those moments. With Sonya it was an opposite process. This actress's approach was thoughtful, measured, and calculated. She developed slowly but steadily. Where improvisation was the key for Yelena, extensive intelligent analysis was the key for Sonya. With Yelena my task was capturing the spontaneity; with Sonya it was inducing
it and giving her time to build up to the high emotional peaks throughout the show.

When Marya breaks the mood of pleasurable conversation with her remark about her pamphlets, I encouraged sharp vocal tones and a brusqueness that broke the flow of the scene. The irritation between her and Vanya is sudden and strong. In a moment they are insulting each other with some ferocity. Vanya's animosity about the professor is in sharp counterpoint to his previous joking about him. In his impatience with his mother we learn the professor is not all that funny.

I directed Marina, Yelena, Astrov, and Telyegin to turn away in embarrassment at this outburst to underscore the seriousness of the conflict and to reinforce their need to flee from unpleasantness. Sonya, on the other hand, takes action and the reaction by Vanya points up that Sonya can control her uncle where no one else can. In the early stages of rehearsal Vanya tended not to respond as quickly and completely to Sonya as I wanted. My concern was initially a dynamic one--attempting to stifle the conflict and return to normalcy as quickly as possible. However, in working the scene I sensed the need for Vanya's vulnerability to Sonya; and through the creative exchange between the actors and myself, the actors took a quantum leap forward in the complexity of their relationships that added immensely to the depth of the production.

When the laborer interrupts and Astrov learns he must leave, his composure is shaken, providing the prime opportunity for Sonya's character development. Her concern for him carries her quickly to
his side; the speed of her reaction and movement reveals her fondness for him. The moment we realize that she's in love with him comes when Yelena teases Astrov about his work being uninteresting. I directed Sonya to leap to his defense, describing with animation the value of his work as if with a lively memorized aria and uninhibited but graceful gestures inspired by her love. This counterpoint of unrestrained enthusiasm with her usual modest and shy demeanor reveals her love for Astrov, thereby furthering the plot and character development.

Astrov's speech is another aria; he becomes passionate and eloquent and reveals his deep feelings on the beauty of nature and his anger at its destruction. Each person reacts a little differently—Vanya with amusement at Astrov's romanticism, Sonya with adoration through her love for him, Telyegin and Marina with respect but not understanding, and, finally, Yelena with an awakened interest in this man who can speak so passionately.

In contrast to this scene is the final one between Yelena and Vanya in which we see Vanya's feelings for Yelena firsthand, in contrast to his comic lust earlier in the act. The freshness of the conversation about the plantation in the previous scene is counterpointed to this scene between Vanya and Yelena. This obviously revives a stale conversation they have had many times. Vanya's awkward pleasure at being alone with Yelena is balanced against her languid movement away from him in progressive stages. She is friendly but bored with him. When he persists, she flees in disgust; a high contrast
to the innocent quality of Sonya's revelation of love for Astrov.

Dynamically, humor, individual worth, and counterpoint in human love relationships has surfaced: Vanya's loud and manic desire for Yelena, Yelena's exasperated revulsion of Vanya and her quiet but keenly aroused interest in Astrov, echoed by Astrov's in her, and Sonya's devotion to Astrov.
ACT II

The structure of Act II is a series of alternating soliloquies and scenes, solos and duets. In the two-person scenes, or duets, couples reach out to each other, come close, and then pass by with failed communication or "missed moments." Five soliloquies alternate with and enhance the unity of the act while each retains its individual quality. These solos express various levels of isolation, hope, yearning, and the slow on-going development of self-revelation.

Sympathy for some characters is less accessible than for others, but can be found. I found it in the first scene in Act II between the old professor and his beautiful young wife. It is very late at night and a summer thunderstorm has been building, making the air humid and oppressive. They have been catnapping fitfully. Serbryakov wakes up and calls out impatiently to Yelena. No matter what she does Yelena cannot please him and she is exhausted from trying.

This scene is often played with sympathy for Yelena and condemnation of Serebryakov because of his demanding and obstinate complaining; as if he lived for the tormenting of Yelena. Serebryakov is easily perceived as egotistical, selfish, and insensitive. Yet when we are introduced to him in the play, it is through a very brief encounter during which he actually does nothing to offend. We hear a caricature of him through Vanya, but his bias is broad and unmistakable.

When Serebryakov wakes up he is in pain; this old man is suffering,
not merely trying to get attention. His pain wakes him up, not his desire to aggravate people. Anyone who has been in severe pain can understand the difficulty of being pleasant while suffering. Serebryakov is in too much pain to walk. He was purposely kept in the lounge to emphasize this fact and to counter the actor's tendency to move with too much vitality. Yelena's movement consisted of patterns of avoiding Serebryakov. The more he needs sympathy, the more irritated he becomes; the more he goads Yelena, the further she moves away; the lonelier he becomes, the more he needs sympathy.

Yelena avoids Serebryakov because of his eternal demands. While he makes humorless and persistent attempts at gaining her sympathy, Yelena, in return, never reassures him. Her response is one of blame. She goes through the motions of helping him but once. She then abandons the pretense. I reflected this in the overall pattern of movement.

A surprisingly difficult task in directing this scene was in convincing the actor that although Serebryakov is irascible and difficult, his complaints have legitimacy. His lines about fear of isolation and death are moving and sympathetic. I explored the painful truth behind each line with the actor extensively. Serebryakov's line, " Haven't I earned the right in my old age? The right to be cared for by other people?" was delivered as a legitimate request. When Yelena closes the window and says, "No one denies your rights," she was blocked to sit as far away from him as possible, pointing up the fact that he asked her to leave the window open because he could not breathe.
Serebryakov's last speech is a revealing soliloquy expressing the depth of his despair and isolation and expressing the dynamic of mortal attrition: the approach of death. I directed the actor to deliver it as a solo, stressing quiet understatement. The line, "But they won't forgive me my age," was delivered with painful understanding of the deep truth behind it. They don't forgive Serebryakov his age, especially Vanya. At the end of the scene Serebryakov is marooned in the lounge with Yelena sitting in the dark in the far upstage right corner.

Individual worth is found in the short scene where Marina gets through to Serebryakov and takes him to bed, finally breaking the all-night vigil over him. Marina is comforter; she doesn't have the intellectual or spiritual depth of some of the other characters but her worth is found in her treatment of others. She is the simple, comforting mother-figure. She can't prevent pain, but she can comfort when she sees it, as she does not with Serebryakov.

Serebryakov grumpily bluffs his way through the scene with pretentious heartiness. I felt this an important counterpoint to the quiet revelation of his fear of death. Marina faces him with her genuine comforting. I directed the actress to carry out the removal of Serebryakov with an even-paced rhythm--she is unaffected by his grouchininess as he is just one more child in pain who needs soothing. I had her carefully help him stand and take his weight on her tired old body and murmur softly all the way out. I directed him to become calm and grateful once in her hands, creating a severe contrast to
his behavior when Yelena or Sonya tried to help him.

The duet between Vanya and Yelena begins as a resumption of their tired and stale conversation of Act I, with the added quality of a missed moment. Vanya again reaches out to Yelena and she rejects. Vanya's speech about his wasted life comes closer to the truth than anything stated by him yet. I blocked the actor away from Yelena and to the window where he could look out at the storm and the isolating night.

But Vanya is not quite ready to see the whole truth of having mistakenly sacrificed his life to the professor and others; he falls into the trap directly as he cups his hands in the symbolic gesture of giving his life to Yelena. I felt it important to have a quality to this moment unlike his other protestations of love; it was very simple and quiet. A missed moment is created by Yelena; she senses the change in Vanya, but her incapacity to respond overwhelms her and she rejects him again. He tries once more and she slaps him down completely by saying, "You are drunk!" At this point of rejection I had Vanya retreat to the dim cold corner that Yelena had used for retreat earlier in the scene with the professor. He humiliates himself with one last pathetic gesture of passion and she leaves him. This scene has the impact of repeated failure of relationship.

Vanya's soliloquy is one of self-discovery. He speaks of the past potential of loving Yelena, but this fantasy has come to a dead end. I had arranged that the professor's laprobe be left on the lounge: when Vanya sees it lying there it helps define the transition for Vanya.
He has been yearning after an impossible answer to his unhappiness in loving Yelena and now focuses on the more concrete embodiment of his discontent—the professor. In order to give the speech more impact I encouraged the actor to vary the anger and horror at his discovery that he has thrown his life away for the professor, with an open expression of the real love for the professor that led him to the sacrifice. His love for Yelena was unreal and stagnated—his real love for the professor is now blighted by the discovery of his sacrifice to a man suffering old age and death.

The next duet is between Astrov and Vanya. In this scene Astrov is in his most confident and yet inconsistent state. His speech about being competent when drunk is a study in charming self-delusion. His desire to dance to the guitar and not being able to, illustrates this. But the best counterpoint showing this dysfunction of Astrov's comes in the capturing of a spontaneous rehearsal incident. During a rehearsal when the actor was still groping for lines, he was trying to ease himself into a relaxed position on the lounge. The contrast between the confidence reflected in Astrov's lines and the awkward, slow-motion manner in which the actor was getting onto the lounge struck me as a perfect physical illustration of the counterpoint between what the character is saying and what he is doing. I kept it as a piece of business and it clarified the moment.

The duet between Vanya and Sonya takes their relationship one step further and deepens it. Sonya is worried about Vanya and chastises him for his drunkenness; he backpedals humbly, taking her remarks
without defense. He is unable to face Sonya's analytical and infinitely gentle look. When Vanya begins to cry, I had the actress go on her knees to him, holding his face in her hands—-they touch each other in intimate and loving ways; no one else does. I used this physical relationship again when Sonya must plead for the morphine bottle in the final act.

Another important motion that this scene sets off is in the triggering of Sonya's protective impulses toward Vanya—-she is angry with Astrov. This now leads to the duet with Astrov that will set into motion her indirect seeking of Astrov's love that will culminate in her finding out he can't love her and cause the destruction of her hopes. The vacillation in her motives in wanting to talk to Astrov was physically expressed in the pattern of her advances and hesitations in going to his door and calling him. She is angry at Astrov encouraging her uncle in his drinking, but she is eager to be able to speak to him alone.

Once Sonya has passed her uncharacteristic moment of anger she cajoles Astrov into a light and candid mood. I wanted a quality of fragile happiness in this scene unlike any in the other duets. This mood would heighten the moments by contrast when Astrov goes into his character obsession—-the destruction of beauty and of life. Such a moment of obsession comes when he speaks of his despair at the unfeeling people around him and he circles the lounge in much the same way as he circles the bench in Act I; and, he begins to drink more.
Sonya becomes frightened at his mood when he starts for another drink; she interjects, bursting into an eloquent plea not to destroy himself. When she pleads with him she again goes on her knees as she did with Vanya, revealing the depth of her love and urgency. He is moved by her sincerity and, in contrast to Vanya who was moved to tears, he is moved to resolution. He pulls himself together, promising not to drink and proclaims he is sober, while physically counterpointing with his physical unsteadiness.

When Astrov returns to his more jovial mood, he says he does care for beauty. I had the actor sit next to Sonya, intensifying Astrov's insensitivity which causes Sonya acute embarrassment at her plainness. I used this moment to set up Sonya's emotional transition from happiness to pain in her soliloquy that follows this duet.

The next part of the scene contains a prime example of "missed moments." Astrov again slides from his light mood into depression. One minute he is sitting up cheerfully talking about beauty and the next he slumps forward, shuddering at his pretense of gaiety. The line about his patient dying during Lent slips out of him. This is in high counterpoint to his confident bragging to Vanya about his superb control when he is drinking. It was important that the audience not miss this very subtle change in Astrov and I made the actor take time with it, clarifying each step. When Astrov's self-confidence plunges, he is tired and defeated and his soul cries out for comfort. It's important to remember that he has spoken of this incident only to Marina and now Sonya: we know he is close to Marina and now the potential is for closeness to Sonya.
If Sonya could only respond at this moment to Astrov's need she very probably would secure a place in his heart. But she doesn't. Like so many other moments between people in Chekhov's plays, she is preoccupied by her own thoughts and emotions. I calculatedly used preoccupation instead of insensitivity, letting her express her concern and then by orchestrating the tender shyness with which she asks her question. She missed the moment and it delicately slipped by as she tried to find a way to question him on the subject of love.

Her feebly manufactured line asking Astrov if he could love a friend or a younger sister does not reach Astrov emotionally; he is still steeped in the pain of the memory of his patient who died, and he answers her superficially and without understanding. Juxtaposed against the first missed moment is this one in which Astrov, through his preoccupation, doesn't hear Sonya's oblique plea for love. Sonya is now totally vulnerable to Astrov and has tried in the only way she knows to say it. The second missed moment slips by. If this scene is carefully and delicately paces out it is one of the most excruciating scenes in Chekhov. To me the secret lay in maintaining each character's ignorance of the fact that they are hurting each other—sin by omission and not design.

The weight of Sonya's emotion at Astrov's departure carries her into the following soliloquy where her unfulfilled yearning is expressed in her happy outburst. Then she sees her reflection in the window and a sense of foreboding floods over her and drains her joy away: another moment of counterpoint. I used the window to trigger
the actress's emotions; she was blocked to look out of the window during the last part of her joyful lines as if remembering earlier when Astrov looked out the window searching for a light in the distance. Instead, she is confronted by her own plain image. I had the actress take a long, quiet pause of realization then she slowly turned away from her image and sat. The simplicity of her words about not being beautiful, the stark truth in the way she sees herself, is a reversal of the bubbling happiness in the first half of the soliloquy. Sonya is left still and desolate.

Unlike the previous encounters where the "duets" ensue because they are sought for and somewhat premediated (Vanya seeks Yelena because he is in love with her; Sonya seeks Astrov similarly), as the final scene begins, the emotional syntax is different. The last scene in Act II has a magic quality of spontaneity. Sonya and Yelena have not had one moment of true exchange with each other in the play and both women have failed throughout the act in communicating with the people who are special to them. Now we have an unexpectedly successful communication between two people who have had no calculated desire to reach each other.

I've often wondered why this scene has not stood out in productions I have seen. An answer might lie in the lack of spontaneity. The relationship between Yelena and Sonya has been, up to this point, terribly restrained. When they come together in this scene this previous restraint gives way to a marvelous uninhibited joy which gives the scene the life and sparkle that is written into it. Such spontaneity
produces moments like the one in which Sonya and Yelena suddenly begin to cry from the sheer weight of their emotions. They tell each other secrets and answer painful questions honestly. It has a special quality of painful truthfulness and openness revealed by the Act IV scene between Vanya and Astrov. If the scene is played with the kind of restraint typical of their relationship up to this point, it smothers the fragile and special nature of the scene. This is what I have sensed in previous productions and what I countered in my production through the improvisational work with the "slumber party."

This scene is full of dramatic visual and musical counterpointing. The musical counterpointing is expressed in the patterns of Sonya's and Yelena's coming together and pulling apart. Once Yelena has stated the problem, Sonya rushes to her and they embrace. Sonya becomes shy and they part. They come together again to share the toast, part again in tears, come together again in tears and so on. The rhythms begin hesitantly and slowly then speed up as the two gain confidence in each other until the moment when they talk of Astrov. When this moment happens they are signing together in their duet. It's rather like the moment in a Puccini opera when the statement of the melody by the musical instruments blands with the vocal melody.

The visual and musical counterpoints mix in the next part of the scene. When Yelena begins to say that she is a minor character, she was blocked to retreat to the dim and cold stove corner upstage left while Sonya is prominently blocked downstage right. The visual counterpoint is obvious. Also, it's an emotional counterpoint; the stove
corner is where Yelena moved during the distressing scene at the beginning of the act with Serebryakov. Sonya is by the window where she was with Astrov. Yelena stands small and lonely with her blond hair glimmering in the dark; Sonya stands in silhouette prominently downstage. Their emotions are opposite.

The musical quality emerges again when Yelena quietly says there is no happiness for her and Sonya laughs happily downstage. The contrast is shocking.

When Yelena is alone on stage waiting for permission to play the piano she hears the watchman tapping and humming outside. She tells him to stop. Yelena needs music but she ironically takes it away from the watchman. In the final moment of the act, she is denied music. The final picture is of Yelena and Sonya standing in opposite diagonal corners again facing each other in a reversal of the previous picture; contrasting with all their previous happy chatter, tears, and laughter is the last stark line, "We must not," and then silent distress.

Every meeting between people in the act has begun with eagerness and hope for union and has ended in isolation. Attention to the visual and musical counterpoints enhances this powerful Chekhov theme.
ACT III

The third act revolves around a family gathering during which a series of character revelations, complications, and developments precipitate material and spiritual crises. The act is a design of misunderstandings, confusions, and, finally, dysfunctions which accelerate into cacophony.

Yelena's overreaction of hurt and anger at Vanya's mermaid remark sets off a series of important discoveries about Yelena that serve to make Yelena much more complex than the all-too-frequent interpretation of her as a lazy, manipulative, empty-headed vamp. I have seen the character portrayed as superficial but chose in my interpretation to search for her worth as an individual. Dysfunction can be found at the very core of Yelena's character; she is a victim of chronic melancholia and her sense of personal worth is very weak.

The actress tended to Understate her reaction to Vanya's remark about letting herself go. As I pointed out to her, if she overacts on the line she is showing as concretely that she is deeply pained by the rift within her character between desire to let herself go and her crippling incapacity to do so, thus deepening her character!

She carries the burden of being a beautiful woman; the difficulty of establishing normal relationships when feminine jealously and masculine desire interfere with her motives. Yelena does not consciously solicit sexual attention from the men around her: she quite consciously rejects it. She relates to Sonya in Act II as a friend.
and wants to be friends with the men, too, but they respond sexually. Yelena also has a highly refined sense of guilt. Her every gesture is subject to misinterpretation--her own beauty makes her a victim of guilt and melancholia.

Prompted by their new-found friendship, when Sonya reveals to Yelena how desperate and unhappy she is, Yelena tries to help in the only way she can, by questioning Astrov. I worked an urgency into Sonya in her need to talk to Yelena as soon as Vanya left the room by having her, literally, flee to Yelena. This points to the depth of friendship between the two girls and the depth of Sonya's trust. I wanted the audience to remember this when Yelena's motives are misunderstood by Astrov. Perhaps Yelena's idea to help is not the most clever, but her sincere desire to help Sonya precludes suspecting her motives.

Also, I knew that the more urgently and painfully I could have Sonya express herself makes her discovery that Astrov has said he doesn't love her later more devastating. I directed her to deliver the most painful part of her speech alone and away from Yelena and used this same picture of isolation on exactly the same place on the stage when she gets Yelena's answer about Astrov during the family scene.

In Yelena's soliloquy she expresses the appropriateness of a relationship between Astrov and Sonya and understands Sonya's fascination for him. I see the dysfunction in her when she vacillates between recognizing her own fascination for Astrov and her overwhelming desire to escape, caused by her unreasonable sense of guilt at the merest
thought of a romantic involvement. Her ego is so fragile that she feels she has betrayed Sonya in some way and she loses her courage to help and becomes defeated before she has tried. Yelena somehow knows she will be misunderstood and tries to flee. The soliloquy reflects this vacillation in Yelena in the contrasting rhythms revealed in her positive and negative mood swings and erratic movements. She didn't merely say she wanted to escape; she was running to the door when stopped by Astrov's entrance.

The scene between Astrov and Yelena was based around a pattern of misunderstanding of character motives. I orchestrated the themes of misunderstanding that runs through the act to create a sense of interrupted melody that exploded in disharmony by the end.

Yelena's cowardice surfaces again in her inability to persist in running away from a situation she dislikes. I had the actress take a good deal of time to recover her composure, pointing up how unnerved she was. She delayed in crossing to the table even after he had set a chair for her, as if she had forgotten why he came—which was true; she's thinking of Sonya, herself, and Astrov and he's focused on the pleasurable prospect of showing her the maps. The scene begins with a misunderstanding: Astrov believes she wants to see the maps and cheerfully sets them up on the desk. The picture of Astrov at the desk with the large map of Africa behind him and the Russian maps in his hands is a visual reinforcement of his intense interest. The benevolent and gentle tropical climate that Sonya spoke of in Act I is in the African map behind him; the harsh crippled Russian environment is in his hands.
I developed interest in the long monologue about the maps by counterpointing the focus of the minds and eyes of the two actors. Astrov was directed to become more and more focused on his maps as his concentration and conviction deepened. Yelena becomes bored—it is not the complex philosophy of conservation that interests her; it is the passion of the man himself. The actress was directed to move her eyes slowly from the markings on the maps on his animated hands, up his arms and slowly to his face until her entire focus was on him and not what he's saying.

When Astrov turns to Yelena at the end of the speech, the first misunderstanding between them becomes complete. Expecting an extension of the interest she showed in Act I, he now sees that she is thinking of something entirely different. The series of misunderstandings that carry through the act has begun. Astrov will misunderstand her apology and will come to an erroneous interpretation of her motives. Vanya will walk in on Yelena and Astrov's embrace and will misinterpret it. This will put him into a state of mind that will make it impossible to deal rationally with Serebryakov. Finally, the momentum of the misunderstandings escalates the emotions that lead to the attempted shooting.

The combination of Astrov's anger and coldness throws Yelena off balance again. I had Astrov gather his maps quickly and efficiently and move as far away from her as possible. I felt that the depth of his anger would add to her confusion and make it even more difficult for her to ask what she has to. It worked well, producing in the
actress a groping sensation that could potentially be misunderstood as slyness by Astrov.

Once Astrov had stated that she is sly, I emphasized to him that there was no doubt in his mind whatever that she was stalking him for herself and encouraged him to be very pleased about it. I built irony in the counterpoint of him accusing her of being a hunting animal with himself the prey as she was doing very little physical and it was he who was doing the stalking—literally. He moved in on her with subtlety and caution, very careful not to give her reason to flee.

The possibility that Yelena is interested in him excites him immensely. He begins a love aria so strong and self-confident that he carries her helplessly and sputtering along with him. She can't regain her balance. Her responses showed that, excepting one very brief moment during Astrov's passionate kiss, she continuously resisted him with her words and actions, but Astrov physically stopped her by literally blocking her exit and wittily countered her verbal responses, neutralizing them with his confidence and humor. In past encounters, Yelena has been able to deflect Vanya's advances; he is considerably hampered by his lack of confidence. But Astrov's surety sweeps her away for one frightening moment, at the exact point when her vulnerability to Astrov's masculinity surfaces.

Misunderstanding is repeated when Vanya enters and sees the kiss. He is too shocked to respond coherently. I asked the actor to stand very still to allow the depth of his shock to register clearly. This inability to move at first and then his following incoherent responses
are the beginning of a physical and emotional dysfunction in Vanya that will build during the confrontation scene with Serebryakov.

The confrontation scene begins so quickly that Vanya cannot recover. While he unsuccessfully seeks an escape from the room Sonya comes in and eagerly rushes to Yelena for the answer to Yelena's questioning of Astrov. I staged this on the downstage edge of the stage close to the audience to protect its confidentiality. This also allowed Sonya's reactions to be clearly seen by the audience but protected her from being noticed by the others. I felt it important to keep Sonya's despair quiet and frozen and had her stand in shock facing away from the others and to the audience. As the only person who can really handle Vanya it has to be clear that she is incapable of action during Vanya's crisis. She didn't move at all until Vanya raised his voice loudly on his angry line to the professor, and then very slowly Sonya is thrown into dysfunction through her emotional shock.

When Serebryakov reveals his plan to sell the estate Vanya is already in turmoil over having discovered Astrov and Yelena, giving him a blow to his masculinity. Now his more obvious rival is challenging the validity of all his years of work and focus--his territory, his raison d'être: the estate.

To illustrate the territorial nature of the scene Vanya, in his disjointed attempts to stop Serebryakov, was allowed free range of the stage, except the desk where the professor stands and claims his territory. The act began with Sonya attempting to work out accounts
from the ledgers on the desk and that desk represents the heart of the estate—it was the focus of the scene by its size and placement. Vanya and Sonya have both spoken repeatedly of the neglect of the affairs of the estate. Now Serebryakov has possession of the desk.

The seriousness of the stake in the battle between Vanya and Serebryakov necessitated that throughout the scene Serebryakov be able to withstand the full range of Vanya's attacks, through reason, anger, sarcasm, appeal to decency, and rage. If Vanya could drive Serebryakov from the territory, if he could literally and physically attack Serebryakov he would not have to resort to his final extreme act.

The primary function of the others in the scene serves as a counterpointing device; they provide an anxious but frightened background to the furious battle developing between Vanya and the professor. They are unable to help Vanya. Even when they try, which they do too little and too late, the result is failure, as with Telyegin, who cannot articulate, or they only succeed in further angering Vanya. The one person who could have an effect is Sonya. And, paralyzed in her own agony, she cannot act. Her physical stillness only further isolates Vanya. I encouraged her to phase out of the scene and to concentrate on the completeness of her personal loss—this accelerated Vanya's isolation while he desperately seeks support from the others in his battle with Serebryakov.

The patterns of confusion and misunderstanding escalate; Vanya is too emotionally upset to think or argue coherently and Serebryakov,
in his arrogant righteousness backed by Marya, is too self-centered and pompous to take serious consideration of Vanya's arguments. The scene becomes an arena with Vanya a tormented animal and the others hopelessly looking on.

The pattern of the confrontation emotionally, intellectually, and physically is one of rhythmic dysfunction. The dysfunction of Serebryakov's rationality happens when he fails to understand Vanya's articulated explanation of how he secured the estate for Sonya, his own daughter; he only replies to this sound argument by saying he doesn't understand what Vanya is going on about. I had the actor deliver in honest confusion, ineffectually putting around with the papers on the desk and appealing to the others for support in his opinion that Vanya is behaving like a madman.

Failing in the battle with Serebryakov and turning into himself, Vanya goes to pieces, crying out in torment and then bursting into tears (emotional dysfunction), stumbling downstage where he collapses in agony, his legs buckling under him (physical dysfunction), and begins to babble incoherently about his potential to be a Schopenhauer or a Dostoevsky (intellectual dysfunction).

In counterpoint the others now try to take rational action although their motivation is to help. Their responses were carefully timed to create more confusion and chaos. Vanya crawls to his mother pleading helplessly. Her rejection is the final blow to Vanya and he grasps at action in his complete failure. He stands and threatens Serebryakov melodramatically, thus obfuscating the real importance of
the meaning of his exit and ironically mocking his own importance.

Upon Vanya's exit the professor bursts into action, leaving the territory of the desk and stomping about in an ineffectual rage. I felt that having the professor leave the territory at this moment made him vulnerable to Vanya's coming attack. Sonya now acts, desperately begging with her father. After the leaves, Sonya cries in Marina's arms and is comforted by her. This physical and emotional comforting was designed to neutralize the violence of the previous confrontation and to lull the audience just before the gunshots.

Another rhythm counterpoint comes with the violence reerupting with the gunshots. My purpose in setting this up to be as shocking to the audience as possible was to set up Vanya's realization at what he has done. In counterpoint to the loudness of the screaming and shooting his last words are fairly low in volume and he is crumpled on the floor. The cacophony of the shooting is in hard counterpoint to the emotionally drained quality of the last moment of Vanya's quiet whimpering and the women's exhausted sobbing. Vanya has come face to face with his dysfunction in a brutal realization.
ACT IV

The final act has an overall pattern of departures which creates a diminishing social climate, underscoring a process of attrition. It can be seen as a mirror opposite of the pattern of arrivals in the first act, which created a climate of expanding social interaction. Each departure now brings loss. Although the losses are accepted, each one contributes to a deepening isolation. The final scene ends with Sonya's aria of hope counterpointing her uncle's and her own destroyed hopes.

I used the scene between Marina and Telyegin at the beginning to begin establishing a mood of the return of normalcy. I paced the scene slowly and carefully, emphasizing to the characters their enjoyment in a pleasant ordinary moment in contrast to the pain of the chaos in Act III. I found a simple moment of personal pain and then warm understanding at the point when Telyegin tells Marina that he was called a parasite. Telyegin reveals his hurt at the remark very simply and sincerely and Marina comforts easily. Its simplicity and ease was to precede the complexity of what was to come in the next scene with Astrov and Vanya, and then Sonya and Vanya.

Vanya has faced his crisis in recognizing the waste of his life and now, through a difficult pattern of evasion and contact, the two people closest to him, Astrov and Sonya, will force him spiritually and emotionally into a painful capitulation—he will be injured, but not mortally.
Vanya comes on desperately trying to escape Astrov. I built an urgency into this first part of the scene by keeping the movement spontaneous--Vanya was literally trying to get past Astrov and Astrov literally had to prevent him without knowing where the actor would move. It created a tension that heightened the importance of the final contact between the two men.

The pattern of evasion continued after Vanya abandoned the physical attempts at escape and sought psychological escape. Astrov countered such attempts--when Vanya accuses Astrov, Astrov merely agrees; Vanya says he's mad, Astrov says he's a crank; Vanya pleads pain, Astrov ignores. Vanya states his hopelessness and fantasizes beginning his life again. Astrov neutralizes this last feeble attempt with hard, unsentimental facts. I encouraged Astrov to put a finality into his tone that would leave Vanya so desolate and devoid of hope that the spiritual collapse would be triggered in Vanya. And it was--Vanya broke down.

Vanya's last possibility for escape is symbolized in the bottle of morphine and Astrov fails at getting it back from him. I had to build urgency and revelation of Sonya's love of her uncle in the actress to the heights necessary to bring on Vanya's total emotional collapse. We improvised the scene with essential character objectives--Sonya's only objective was to get the bottle, Vanya's was to not give it up. It took a long time but finally the actress reached such a deep level of desperation that she got through to Vanya and the actor gave her the bottle. The emotional impact of her love and desperation was stunning,
counterbalanced by the depth of pain in Vanya as he gives up his last possibility for a dignified escape. The sense of desolation was extreme but the mutual love expressed in their long quiet embrace established the tone of loss and gain that would counterpoint each other in the last aria of the play.

After relinquishing the morphine, Vanya is emotionally drained. I felt the dynamics of the next moment vital: the calm acceptance and quiet return to control and sanity in Vanya showed how deep his acceptance was—and the deeper the acceptance the deeper the spiritual pain. I tried to keep the moment as simple and ordinary as possible.

The reinforcement of attrition continued in the departure that followed: Yelena and Astrov say goodbye. Yelena must capitulate to her cowardice and Astrov must recognize the ephemeral quality of his love for Yelena. Again I followed my instinct to keep a calm and normal pacing to the scene; the major recognition scene has taken place and the successive departures bring recognition, but with diminishing intensity.

There were moments of warm and sincere contact in the departures; Yelena kisses Vanya on the cheek, Sonya and Yelena have a sisterly embrace, Astrov and Yelena kiss, Serebryakov and Vanya look each other in the eyes and shake hands. I made each of these moments simple and communicative. The poignancy of these moments of warm human contact occurring in the atmosphere of loss and failure was important to me dynamically: attrition brings simplicity—complicated love relationships and convoluted motives are reduced to one pure
wordless impulse to reach out and touch the other person.

When the Serebryakovs leave, the carriage bells herald the use of the phrase, "They're gone," which will sound through the rest of the play like a litany, underscoring the sense of attrition. This was so important to me that I insisted on live sound and a slight but subtle variation each time we hear them.

As Sonya and Vanya become involved in their work, Astrov is left with nothing to do. In the Act III scene with Yelena, Astrov admitted to working on his maps in pleasurable tandem with Vanya and Sonya working on their accounts. Now while Sonya and Vanya do their accounting, Astrov packs away his maps to take them home, a poignant counterpoint to the comfort he once found. I built a gentle aimlessness into his movements as if he were a horse that had slipped its traces and didn't quite know where to go. His isolation was heightened by the lowering of the general lighting, and the sound of the crickets chirping enhanced the warmth and coziness of the room each must leave.

Astrov kisses Marina affectionately on the head. I have him make a long cross to point this gesture, reminding us that it was merely a handshake for Sonya. Marina responds by offering him sustenance as she did in Act I, reinforcing the mirror image structure of Acts I and IV. I chose to have the actor aware that Sonya will be hurt by this; he doesn't want to be cruel but feels that she would be hurt more if she holds onto any illusions of him.

Sonya is hurt but simply looks at the floor, maintaining her dignity. In counterpoint, Astrov is more shaken by the incident than
he expected, his feelings keener than he admits. He tries to cover by speaking of his horse. The following remark about the temperature in Africa comes out with an absurd inconsistency. I had the actor deliver the line with comic abruptness. It revealed the inconsistency of his emotions and broke the tensions created by the three of them struggling to remain composed at this final painful departure, humor prevailing.

After Astrov departs I worked for a convincing surface picture of the completion of the return to normalcy by controlling the timing in the scene. Everything happens very slowly with long pauses and casual comments as Vanya works at the ledgers. The carriage bells sound again and the final, "He's gone," is spoken. The attrition is complete.

The casual quality of Telyegin's relaxed playing, Marina's comfortable yawning, and Marya's absorbed reading counterpoints Sonya and Vanya. I had them sit self-consciously still trying to imitate the normalcy reflected in the others until the lights slowly dimmed into a pool of isolating light.

Vanya triggers Sonya's final aria with an excruciatingly simple expression of his pain. I went with a strong interpretation that Sonya's aria is a beautiful, hopeful, and positive song--springing from a deep spiritual need arising from her loss. Vanya hears this song of hope and is hopelessly looking at nothing in deep despair. But his tears and Sonya's loving response to them create the moment
in which they touch each other in an innate recognition of the simple and pure love that attrition has exposed.

I chose to reveal the pain and love in each of them and to let it stand unresolved. The melody that Telyegin plays during the aria resolves only after the lights are completely out.
UNCLE VANYA  SCENE BREAKDOWN CHART

(Note: When a character has no lines in a given scene, it will be indicated by parenthesis, i.e. (Marina).

When a character has very few lines in a given scene it will be indicated by an asterisk, i.e. Vanya*.

These characters will not be called for rehearsals unless the rehearsal schedule indicates (All Called.)

ACT I

Scene 1....Marina, Astrov.
Scene 2....Marina, Astrov, Vanya.
Scene 3....Vanya, Serebryakov, Sonya, Telyegin, Yelena, (Marina), (Astrov).
Scene 4....Vanya, Astrov, Telyegin, (Marina).
Scene 5....Vanya, Astrov, Telyegin, Sonya, Yelena, Marya, (Marina).
Scene 5A...Sonya, Marina, (Vanya), (Astrov), (Telyegin), (Yelena), (Marya).
Scene 5B...Astrov, Sonya, Labourer, (Vanya), (Telyegin), (Yelena), (Marya), (Marina).
Scene 6....Astrov, Vanya*, Sonya, Yelena, (Telyegin), (Marya).
Scene 6A... Astrov, Sonya, (Vanya), (Telyegin), (Yelena), (Marya), (Labourer).
Scene 7....Vanya, Yelena, (Marya), (Telyegin).

ACT II

Scene 1....Serebryakov, Yelena.
Scene 2....Serebryakov, Sonya, Yelena*.
Scene 3....Vanya, Serebryakov, (Sonya), (Yelena).
SCENE BREAKDOWN CHART (Continued)

Scene 4....Marina, Sonya, Serebryakov, (Yelena), (Vanya).
Scene 5....Yelena, Vanya.
Scene 5A...Vanya - soliloquy
Scene 6....Astrov, Vanya, Telyegin*.
Scene 7....Sonya, Vanya.
Scene 8....Sonya, Astrov.
Scene 8A...Sonya - soliloquy
Scene 9....Sonya, Yelena.
Scene 9A...Sonya, Yelena, Yefim.

ACT III

Scene 1....Vanya, Yelena, Sonya.
Scene 2....Sonya, Yelena
Scene 2A...Yelena - soliloquy
Scene 3....Astrov, Yelena.
Scene 4....Astrov, Yelena, Vanya.
Scene 5....Serebryakov, Telyegin, Yelena, Sonya, (Marina).
Scene 5A...Serebryakov, (Telyegin), (Marina), (Yelena), (Sonya), (Marya), (Vanya).
Scene 6....Serebryakov, Telyegin*, Yelena*, Marya*, Vanya, (Marina), (Sonya).
Scene 7....Serebryakov, Vanya, Marya, Yelena, Sony, Marina.
SCENE BREAKDOWN CHART (Continued)

ACT IV

Scene 1....Telyegin, Marina.
Scene 1A...Telyegin, Marina, Vanya, Astrov.
Scene 2....Vanya, Astrov.
Scene 3....Vanya, Astrov, Sonya.
Scene 3A...Yelena, Sonya, (Vanya), (Astrov).
Scene 4....Yelena, As-rov.
Scene 5....Vanya, Serebryakov, Marya, Telyegin, (Yelena), (Astrov), (Sonya).
Scene 6....Yelena, Vanya, Astrov, Telyegin.
Scene 7....Astrov, Vanya, Marina, Sonya, Marya*.
Scene 7A...Astrov, Labourer, (Vanya), (Marina), (Sonya), (Marya).
Scene 8....Astrov, Sonya, Marina, Vanya, (Marya).
Scene 9....Vanya, Sonya, Marina*, (Marya), (Telyegin).
**TREES**

Tree trunks are cut from tubes which are shrunk to form stumps. Branches are pruned and leaves removed. N.B. All street 12" from bottom. All units will be sheared before grouping into attractive and on so convivially bright, unit on front in jet I must be splintered. Bushes to be added.

**WALLS**

Wall units are fabric tubes which are slipped into sewn bands of material. All top to pap immediately up stage of prosenium.
Build of whatever but please use new wood as units will be splayed. No plywood please.

Scale = 1/2" = 1'-0"

Fence - Build of whatever - unit will be painted. Edges need some early deal knife work.

Scale = 1" = 1'-0"
UNCLE VANYA by Anton Chekhov

Cast

Alexander SEREBRYAKOV, a retired professor Aubrey Dunkum
YELENA Andreevna, his wife, 27 yrs. old Jean Crupper
SONYA Alexandrona, his daughter by his first wife Tony Cross
MARYA Voyntkskaya, mother of the professor's first wife Mary Sigvardt
Ivan Petrovich (VANYA) Rolland Meinholtz
Mikhail Lvovich ASTROV, a doctor Alan Cook
Ilya Illich TELEGIN, a poor landowner Michael Steele
MARINA, an old nurse Betsey Knight
A laborer Loyd Smith
YEFIM, a watchman Loyd Smith

ACT I A garden. About 2:00 on a warm afternoon.
The Serebryakov Estate.
INTERMISSION - 10 Minutes

ACT II A drawing room. Night.
INTERMISSION - 10 Minutes

ACT III A study. Early afternoon. A few months later.

ACT IV Study. Late that afternoon.

Acknowledgments

Dr. George Reed Phil Maloney
Bitterroot Flower Shop Kaimin
KU FM

No Smoking in the Auditorium
Uncle Vanya

Anton Chekhov

May 23-26
Stage Co.
Great Western
BIBLIOGRAPHY

A critical exploration into the direction and intention of Chekhov's art, using The Wood Demon and Uncle Vanya; included an analysis of his use of structural devices.

A translation of Chekhov's four great plays with emphasis on the balance between Russian elements and American appropriateness. Preceded by an informative preface on translating Chekhov and followed by a useful section of essays by sixteen authors edited by Bristow. This translation is, to my mind, the clearest of the five I used. Extensive textural notes accompany the translations.

A sociological study of Russia primarily using Chekhov as the source of information. Extensive material on such subjects as class (official, peasant, landowner, intelligentsia, etc.). A valuable source book for the actor and director.

A variety of stories, some long and some less well-known. In this anthology, as well as in the others included in this bibliography, entertaining and useful stores can be recommended to cast members of Uncle Vanya (e.g. "The Kiss." "Anne Round the Neck." "The Peasants").

A standard translation of Chekhov's four major plays plus Ivanov. Slightly longer than other translations.

A recent compilation of articles and reviews of significant productions of Chekhov's plans from 1889 to 1945. Reflects the changing perspectives on producing Chekhov through the years.
A dated British translation containing Chekhov's four major plays and three one-act plays.

Compact collection of letters with a balance between the personal and literary, from when Chekhov was twenty-five through his most creative period, the Yalta Years.

A clear standard translation of *Uncle Vanya*, *The Cherry Orchard* and *The Wood Demon*. Having a translation by the same translator of *Uncle Vanya* and *The Wood Demon* was particularly helpful in comparative analysis of the two plays.

A collection reflecting a variety of representative critical approaches, past and recent. A good introduction to the central questions on Chekhov's art and outlook. Contains a useful and comprehensive bibliography.

Twenty-three stories of which over two-thirds are not found in the other anthologies. (For cast members; "Rothschilds Fiddle," "A Women's Kingdom," "A Day in the Country.")

Litvinov, Ivy (trans.). *Short Stories and Novels*. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, (n.d.).
A collection including several of Chekhov's important longer stories. (For cast members; "Dull Story," "Ward No. 6," "The House with the Mansard," "In the Gully," "The Bride.")

Through analysis of Chekhov's play by the "direct/indirect action" system. Extensively using quotes from Chekhov's letters, the author traces Chekhov's development as a dramatist, including analysis of some of Chekhov's more obscure plays.
A selection restricted to the shorter stories only, balancing the comic and more serious and leaving out the banal. Includes some background on Chekhov and critical selections. (For cast members; "The Darling," "The Lady with the Dog," "Gooseberries," "The Teacher of Literature."

Contains forty of Chekhov's stories in the order in which they were written, including some early stories not commonly found in standard anthologies.


A clear introduction to the theory and foundations of improvisation. Especially helpful to teachers and directors unfamiliar with the techniques. It has equal value to the experienced leader in improvisation.

An analysis of a modern production concept of *Three Sisters*. Author makes a case for a new concept to meet the needs of a new audience rather than externally reproducing a successful but out-dated past production.

A puzzling book: A lot of what he observes about Chekhov's plays seems to be insightful, but he is strongly opinionated and prone to sweeping statements that seem unsubstantiated. Interesting as a supplemental critical source, but cannot be recommended to a beginner in Chekhov.

A collection presenting a broad, revealing variety of letters from over eight volumes, with an emphasis on Chekhov's personal life and sense of humor. Much of the theatrically oriented material has been omitted.
A collection of representative works. Includes a short biological and critical introduction, 28 short stories, 2 plays, and a selection from his letters. A good concise book to recommend to cast members unfamiliar with Chekhov.

This translation reads more easily than Garnett, but some of the stage directions are a bit editorial and some lines have been deleted.