PCPA THEATERFEST

PCPA Theaterfest
Student Matinee Program

Three Sisters

A Play by Anton Chekhov
Translated by Marina Brodskaya

Welcome to PCPA Theaterfest

A NOTE TO THE TEACHER
Thank you for bringing your students to PCPA Theaterfest at Allan Hancock College. Here are some helpful hints for your visit to the Marian Theatre. The top priority of our staff is to provide an enjoyable day of live theatre for you and your students. We offer you this study guide as a tool to prepare your students prior to the performance.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDENT ETIQUETTE
Note-able behavior is a vital part of theater for youth. Going to the theater is not a casual event. It is a special occasion. If students are prepared properly, it will be a memorable, educational experience they will remember for years.

1. Have students enter the theater in a single file. Chaperones should be one adult for every ten students. Our ushers will assist you with locating your seats. Please wait until the usher has seated your party before any rearranging of seats to avoid injury and confusion. While seated, teachers should space themselves so they are visible, between every groups of ten students. Teachers and adults must remain with their group during the entire performance.

2. Once seated in the theater, students may go to the bathroom in small groups and with the teacher's permission. Please chaperone younger students. Once the show is over, please remain seated until

the House Manager dismisses your school.

3. Please remind your students that we do not permit:
- food, gum, drinks, smoking, hats, backpacks or large purses
- disruptive talking.
- disorderly and inappropriate behavior (stepping on/over seats, throwing objects, etc.)
- cameras, iPods, cell phones, beepers, tape recorders, hand held video games. (Adults are asked to put any beepers or cell phones on silent or vibrate.) In cases of disorderly behavior, groups may be asked to leave the theater without ticket refunds.

4. Teachers should take time to remind students before attending the show of the following about a live performance: Sometimes we forget when we come into a theatre that we are one of the most important parts of the production. Without an audience there would be no performance. Your contribution of laughter, quiet attention and applause is part of the play.

When we watch movies or television we are watching images on a screen, and what we say or do cannot affect them. In the theatre the actors are real people who are present and creating an experience with us at that very moment. They see and hear us and are sensitive to our response. They know how we feel about the play by how we watch and listen. An invisible bond is formed between actors and a good audience, and it enables the actors to do their best for you. A good audience helps make a good performance.

PCPA Theaterfest welcomes you as a partner in the live theatre experience from the moment you take your seats. We hope that your visit will be a highlight of your school year.

Cast and Production Team for *Three Sisters*

Director	Roger DeLaurier
Scenic Designer	Andy Hammer
Costume Designer	Frederick P. Deeben
Lighting Designer	Tamar Geist
Sound Designer	Elisabeth Rebel
Stage Manager	Heather Newman

Cast of Characters

Prozorov, Andrey Sergeyevich	Paul Henry
Natalia Ivanovna	Karin Hendricks
Olga	Elizabeth Stuart*
Masha	Stephanie Philo
Irina	Natasha Harris
Kulygin, Ilych Fedor	Erik Stein*
Vershinin, Alexander Ignatievich	Andrew Philpot*
Tuzenbach, Nikolai Lvovich	Evans Eden Jarnefeldt
Solyony, Vasily Vasilievich	Quinn Mattfeld*
Chebutykin, Ivan Romanovich	Peter S. Hadres*

Fedotik, Alexey Petrovich	John Keating
Rodeh, Vladimir Karlovich	Scott Fuss
Ferapont	Tom Ammon
Anfisa	Kitty Balay*
Maid	Brooke Martin
Orderly	Mike Fiore

*Member, Actors' Equity Association

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

This guide has been created with the California Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies in mind. Specifically, this guide may be used to support standards in the following areas: Reading Literature, Reading for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Writing, and Speaking and Listening. The Study Guide is a companion piece designed to explore many ideas depicted in the stage production of Three Sisters. Although the guide's intent is to enhance the student's theatrical experience, it can also be used as an introduction to the elements of a play (in this case a play with music), and the production elements involved in the play's presentation. Although some students may be familiar with the general storyline, each specific stage adaptation presents a wealth of new questions for this generation to answer. The guide has been organized into four major sections:

Teachers and group leaders will want to select portions of the guide for their specific usage. Discussion questions are meant to provoke a line of thought about a particular topic. The answers to the discussion questions in many instances will initiate the process of exploration and discovery of varied interpretations by everyone involved. This can be as rewarding as the wonderful experience of sight and sound that Three Sisters creates on-stage.

It is recommended that the Marina Brodskaya translation of Anton Chekhov's play, available in paperback at local libraries or book stores, be used in conjunction with discussion of the play. However, the discrepancies between various translations may also be useful for a discussion related to language, interpretation, and adaptation.

I. Elements of the Story

Play Synopsis :

This synopsis has been altered to reflect the details of this production. The original synopsis can be found at http://www.theatredatabase.com/19th_century/three_sisters.html

A year after the death of their father, an army officer, the Moscow-bred Prosorovs—Olga, Masha, Irina, and Andrew—are finding life drab and increasingly hopeless in a provincial Russian town. Only the proximity of a nearby artillery post and the company of its officers make their existence bearable.

Olga, the eldest, twenty-eight, is a teacher at the local school. She finds her work burdensome, and she already feels aged and tired, her dream of a happy marriage fading. She is sustained solely by the hope of selling the house and returning to Moscow. Masha, little more than twenty, is married to Kulygin, a much older teacher who has not lived up to her school-girl image of the intelligent and worldly instructor she once thought he was. For her, there is no hope of Moscow; she only sings softly to herself as her sisters make their plans. Irina, twenty, dreams of finding happiness and love in Moscow. Their brother, Andrey, a scholar, is in love with Natasha, twenty-eight, an oddly dressed and socially awkward villager; his sisters find it hard to believe that he will actually marry her.

On Irina's name day celebration, the sisters are visited by several people, including Chebutykin, sixty, an army doctor who once loved the sisters' mother; Baron Tuzenbach, thirty, a lieutenant in love with Irina; brooding Captain Solyony, and a newcomer, Vershinin, forty-two, commander of the post. Vershinin has two daughters and a second wife who frequently threatens suicide to annoy him. While he does not attend the celebration, Protopopov, head of the District Council, sends a cake. The sisters hope Protopopov will marry Natasha, but Andrey proposes to her and she accepts him.

With the marriage of Natasha and Andrey and the birth of a child, Bobik, the sisters become even more unhappy. Natasha dominates the sisters, her husband, and the servants. She takes Irina’s room for the child, and Irina, who now works for the telegraph office, must share Olga's room.

Vershinin, whose wife is endlessly quarrelsome and suicidal, and the unhappy Masha, bored by her husband and his colleagues, are drawn together. One day Vershinin tells her of his love for her. At first, she tries to resist hearing his claim aloud, but she quickly gives in. They are interrupted by Tuzenbach and Irina. The Baron has resigned his post to seek some satisfying work in civil life, and Irina, finding the telegraph office dull, is still obsessed with her hope of discovering happiness in Moscow. She is also worried because Andrey, frustrated in his plans for distinguished scholarship and now disappointed in Natasha, is gambling and losing heavily.

A happy evening with revelers has been planned for carnival, but Natasha compels Andrey to cancel the invitations on the pretext that little Bobik is ill. Solyony returns to confess his love to Irina. Rebuffed, he swears that he will kill any rival. Natasha receives a message from Protopopov inviting her to take a drive with him in his troika, and she laughingly accepts. "How funny these men are," she says.

At two o'clock in the morning, the household is awakened by a fire in the village. Refugees come to the Prosorov home for shelter. Natasha, abusing old Anfisa, the nurse, declares that she is now mistress of the household: Anfisa must go, and Olga and Irina must move downstairs. Old Chebutykin, distraught over losing a patient and being generally incompetent as a doctor, is drunk. Solyony enters, resentful at Irina's friendship with the Baron, and Vershinin brings a rumor that the battery is to be moved from the village.

Masha, quarreling with Kulygin, discloses that Andrey has mortgaged the house—in which the sisters share ownership—to pay his gambling debts and that Natasha has the remainder of the money he has borrowed. Irina weeps—in disappointment at Andrey’s financial and marital failures and at her own frustration. She is now working in the town council offices, but she is no happier. She realizes at last that she will never return to Moscow. Olga urges Irina to compromise and accept the unattractive Baron as a husband.

Masha confesses to her sisters that she is in love with Vershinin: "My sisters ... I've confessed, now I shall keep silent ... like Gogol's madman... silent ... silent ..."

Andrey, finding his sisters together, sulkily confesses to the mortgage of the house. He berates them for their disapproval of his wife, whom he describes as “honest.” He insists that they respect her and declares he is proud of his place as member of the District Council. Then he weeps: "My dear, dear sisters, don't believe me, don't believe me..."

The night ends with Irina's decision revealed to Olga: she will marry the Baron. However, she insists that the three of them move to Moscow.

Soon the rumor that the battery is to be removed is confirmed—it has been ordered to Poland. Farewells begin at the Prosorov home. Irina is to be married to the Baron tomorrow. He has work, and she is happy in having been accepted for a teacher's position. Olga is now head-mistress of her school and is living there with Anfisa. Vershinin kisses the sobbing Masha farewell, leaving her to the dull Kulygin.

Old Chebutykin comes to tell Irina that the Baron has been killed in a duel with Solyony, and the three sisters huddle together in grief. Masha consoles: "They are leaving us ... we are left alone, to begin our life over again. We must live ... we must live ..." Irina, her head on Olga's shoulder, cries: "There will come a time when everybody will know why, for what purpose, there is all this suffering. But now we must live ... we must work, just work! Tomorrow, I'll go... and I'll teach and give my whole life to those who, perhaps, need it." Olga reflects on their life, as the military bands are heard playing a cheerful farewell march. She suggests that time will go on and they will be forgotten, but their “sufferings will turn into joy for those who shall life after us.” Still, she longs to know the purpose of their suffering: “If only we could know... if only we could know.” The music fades, the smiling Kulygin brings out Masha's coat, and Andrey wheels out Bobik in a stroller. Old Chebutykin sings softly: "Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay." Reading his paper, he reflects: "It doesn’t matter! It doesn’t matter!”

Characters:

Irina
Sister to Masha, Olga and Andrey, and the youngest of this family, Irina is looking for love. Tuzenbach and Solyony are both in love with her, but she wants to find her soul mate in Moscow. Chebutykin reveals that she is his favorite of the sisters, and Fedotik brings her meaningless toys, which exposes her youth and playfulness.

Masha
The middle sister of this family, Masha is the quiet one. She is married to Kulygin, but she has become bitter about her marriage, feeling as if she's grown apart from him because of her greater intelligence. When she falls in love with Vershinin, she becomes aware of what true love is, but inevitably remains with her husband.

Olga
The eldest sister in the orphaned family, Olga becomes the inevitable care-taker of her brother and sisters. Herself unmarried, she works for a school, and by the end of the play, she finds herself meeting her unwanted fate: becoming headmistress.

Andrey Sergeyevich Prozorov
The brother in the family, he is somewhat out of the loop. He aspired to be a professor but ended up

being a member of the county council. He is often deceived by his wife and sadly realizes this. However, he still seems to be manipulated by her. He finds himself unable to escape his situation and develops a gambling problem. Much to his shame, he ends up mortgaging the house without the sisters' permission.

Natasha
Initially Natasha is the voice of the outsider, not able to fit into the family. However, she turns this separation into resentful strength, which she uses to control and manipulate her environment to her advantage. Her marriage to Andrey quickly becomes dispassionate, and she soon has an affair with one of Andrey's colleagues – the head of the District Council, Protopopov.

Baron Nikolai Lvovich Tuzenbach
A nobleman and Lieutenant in the Army, Tuzenbach embodies many admirable qualities. He is warm, loyal and honest. He also philosophizes, like Vershinin, and quits the army to become a worker and marry Irina. He is a lover, not a fighter, but will defend his honor when required.

Fedor Ilych Kulygin
A master at the local high school, Kulygin is self-indulgent, socially inept, but good-hearted. He is married to Masha and praises her integrity throughout the play. However, he is not completely oblivious to her affair with Vershinin, and he is relieved when the soldiers finally leave town.

Alexander Ignatievich Vershinin
A Battery Commander from Moscow who knew the sisters when they were young. Based on this link and their mutual love for intellectual pursuits, he and Masha have an instant connection, which turns into an affair. However, he is married with two children, and his wife poisons herself frequently. He tends to philosophize, particularly with Tuzenbach.

Ivan Romanovich Chebutykin
Chebutykin is a lonely failure: an old, alcoholic, army doctor who doesn't know (or at least doesn't remember) how to cure anyone. An old family friend, Chebutykin holds the key to many stories of the past. Sentimental, he idolizes Irina as his favorite and talks often about his love for their late mother.

Vasilly Vassilich Solyony
A contemporary of Tuzenbach, he is a Captain in the army, though he embodies many evil and sadistic qualities. He's jealous and socially awkward. To compensate he tries to show off, but mostly, he just embarrasses himself and makes others uncomfortable. A blood lusty dueler, he defends his unrequited love for Irina to the death.

Anfisa
An eighty-year old servant who has been working in the house for a long time and, therefore, maintains a unique connection with the family. Natasha wants to get rid of her, but Olga tries to protect her.

Ferapont
An old man who works for the council, Ferapont is constantly chasing Andrey to get him to sign important papers. He is constantly forgotten and driven to more effort than an old man should have to face. His presence exposes the nature of the other characters.

Alexey Petrovich Fedotik

A second Lieutenant in the army, Fedotik has a special relationship with Irina. He brings her little gifts, which she obviously loves even though she protests they are childish.

Vladimir Karlovic Rodeh
A second Lieutenant in the army, Rodeh is good friends with Fedotik and is a welcome and frequent guest at the Prozorov house.

II. Historical Background

The Play:
Written in 1900 and first produced in 1901, Three Sisters was Anton Chekhov's first specific commission for the Moscow Arts Theatre. His previous collaborations with the company (The Seagull and Uncle Vanya) were commercial successes in contrast to his initial playwrighting ventures with other companies which ended in critical ridicule and commercial failure. The play has often been described as "the decline of the aristocratic and artistic elite coupled with the search for meaning in a modern world." But simply, Chekhov offers us three Prozorov sisters - Olga, Masha, and Irina and their brother Andrey - who are refined and cultured youth, raised in Moscow but living a small and "lifeless" provincial town for the past eleven years. With the recent death of their father Colonel Prozorov, they await a return to Moscow where the "good life" can begin again.

From its initial success to current productions, audiences have responded with enthusiasm to the collision of envisioned dreams and frustrated hopes as well as the vibrant characters of this family and their friends, lovers, and acquaintances that populate the stage. This is also a play were the "off stage: characters - a deceased father, a local politico and lover of Natasha - Protopopov, Vershinin's suicidal wife and children, and the children of Andre and Natasha - are some of the most important instigators of action and reaction. And Moscow itself remains one of the greatest characters. Identified with the family's growth and happiness, and with the perfect life, it is the elusive and unattainable aspiration.

Three Sisters begins with a new era in Russian history; an era shaped by political upheaval and marked change in society. In 1855, the war-mongering Tsar Nicholas I died and left his bankrupt and defeated nation to his son Alexander II. Instead of continuing his father's brutality, the new tsar attempted 'Great Reforms' including the emancipation of all the serfs in 1861. (Serfs were 23 million strong and a class of life-time indentured servants tied to the owners of the land they occupied.) While freedom from this indenture allowed some peasants to gain education and upward social mobility, many were still locked in a cycle of land abuse, debt, and servitude. Those who did rise through education, benefited from public assistance schemes and soon established an 'intelligentsia' who believed, as the Prozorovs do, that 'life was important, ideas were important,

and that the world should and doubtless could be changed'" (historian Joel Carmichael).

The "intelligentsia" could gain some small amount of influence in the great cities of St. Petersburg and Moscow, but in the rural towns and provincial regions, little could or would change. With the rise of slums and industrialization in the turn of the 20th century, much of the idealism was suppressed by the drive for greater personal greed and international competition. This is the essence of this brilliant drama—a world somewhere between aspiration and rejection, between hope and despair—a modern world of Chekhov's unique understanding that reflected his sense of humanity where "he could never write villains, only buffoons."

The Playwright:
Anton Pavlovich Chekhov was born Jan.29, 1860 in Taganrog southern Russia to the son of a former serf turned grocer, Pavel, and a storytelling mother, Yevgeniya. Anton once observed that the six surviving children in the family "got their talents from their father, but their souls from their mother." His father was physically and verbally abusive, and he plunged the family into bankruptcy. He fled debtor's prison by returning to Moscow in secret and leaving his son, who had been attending the local gymnasium, behind to sell the family possessions and complete his education. To pay for that education, Anton resorted to private tutoring, selling goldfinches, and writing short descriptive sketches for the local newspaper. By 1879, Chekhov had been admitted to medical school at Moscow University and joined his family in the city as he planned his advanced studies.

In addition to his school work in Moscow, Anton became the sole support for his family and took to writing vignettes of daily life and humorous tales for the leading contemporary periodicals. He was noted for his "stream of consciousness construction," a contemporary technique he often combined with morally ambiguous conclusions. In 1884, he qualified as a physician but most often treated his patients at no charge, relying on his writing as his primary income source. Considered by many to be the best author of short stories in western literature, Chekhov's literary career also included writing documentaries, short plays, and full length dramas. By 1887, his story collection, In Twilight, won the Pushkin Prize for "the best literary production distinguished by high artistic worth." It was a much coveted honor.

He continued to practice medicine for much of his writing career asserting that "medicine is my lawful wife and literature is my mistress. When I tire of one, I go and sleep with the other." In the fall of 1887, Anton was commissioned by a theatre owner, Korsh, to write a play. Within weeks he had produced Ivanov. The production was a disaster.

By 1890, Chekhov was journeying to far eastern Russian to interview thousands of convicts and settlers at Sakhalin Island (just north of Japan). His findings and letters from the period are provocative and some of his most powerful work.

By 1892, Chekhov purchased a small country estate, Melikhovo, about 40 miles south of Moscow where he resided until 1899. In a small lodge on the estate, he began writing The Seagull in 1894, but the first night at the Alexandrinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg was a catastrophe. With the failure of this first production in 1896, he swore off writing for the stage. When the Moscow Arts Theatre, under the direction of Constantin Stanislavsky, revived the play in 1898 to great acclaim, Chekhov returned to dramatic creation and his Uncle Vanya, Three Sisters and The Cherry Orchard were all produced by the company with great success.

In March of 1897, Chekhov suffered a major lung hemorrhage as a result of his tuberculosis, for which he had refused to seek treatment since 1884. With his father's death in 1989, Chekhov chose

to "treat: his condition by seeking warmer climates and lighter workloads in semi-retirement. He bought land in Yalta and built a villa were he moved in 1899. In 1901, he married the actress Olga Knipper. While their letters reveal a passionate and loving relationship, they continued to spend much of their time apart - he writing in Yalta, she acting in Moscow. There is some suggestion that Olga's miscarriage in 1902 was the result of an extra-marital affair.

By May of 1904, Chekhov's tuberculosis was terminal, and he traveled to the German spa of Badenweiler for some relief. Olga's account of her husband's final moments has become notable - after announcing in German that he was dying, the doctor injected him with camphor to calm him and ordered champagne. Anton drank a full glass, saying how long it had been since he drank champagne. He then reclined and quickly stopped breathing. He was returned to Moscow for a hero's funeral and was buried next to his father in Novodevichy Cemetery.

Due to great translators and the adulation of famous writers such as George Bernard Shaw, Katherine Mansfield, and Raymond Carver, Chekhov has had an enthusiastic and widespread English language readership. The 1923 arrival of MAT in New York City and their productions of his works also helped to transform the nature of American acting. The "method" style of Lee Strasberg, as well as the works of writers like Clifford Odets and directors like Elia Kazan, shaped many generations of America's premier performers, such as Marlon Brando, Robert De Niro, and Dustin Hoffman. Ultimately, Chekhov's ideology, expressed in his vast canon, argues for a humanism composed of humanity, decency, compassion, education, personal accomplishment and will power.

19th Century Russia

General Background

Russian history is riddled with war, so—needless to say—it has shaped everything about Russian culture. However, at the time of the play, Russia is in a period of peace, between the Turkish war (ending in 1878) and the occupation of villages on the Amur River (between Russia and Northeastern China), as well as the Russification of Finland in 1900. There were plenty of domestic problems to keep Russia busy though. Serfs gained their freedom in 1861, but had little way of supporting themselves. Poverty, inequality, rampant censorship, and the lack of representative government caused tension and uprisings. Civil servants were introduced to keep citizens in check, but more on that later.

19th century Russia was a place of contradictions. To give some context—imagine how a socialite from Manhattan would describe America. Now, imagine how someone from rural Appalachia would describe America. This should give you some idea of the immense disparity between lifestyles of 19th century Russian people. While much of Russia was still rural, if not wild, the great cities were seeing rapid industrialization, including railways and the beginning of the Moscow Metro. In the countryside, former serfs were eking out a living with some home-grown crops, while the educated and noble were living lives of art, music, dances, and banquets.

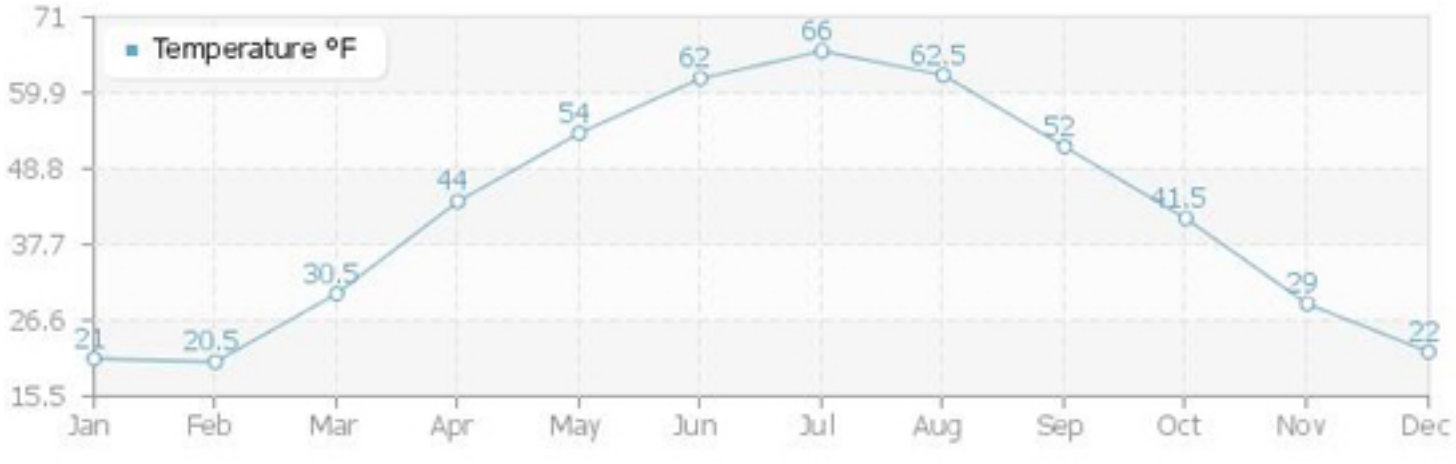
A ball at the Winter Palace. Tsar Alexander II is seated in the middle of the picture beside the Shah of Persia.

http://www.emersonkent.com/map_archive/russia_europe_19th.htm

Dark beige = Russia 1801,

Green = Acquisitions of Alexander I (1801-1825),
Blue = Acquisitions of Nicholas I (1825-1855),
Yellow = Acquisitions of Alexander II (1855-1881)

Note: Moscow's latitude is approximately 55.76°N. In North American terms, this is somewhere south of Juneau, AK and north of Edmonton, Canada.
See below for average temperatures.



The climates in Russian provinces would vary widely depending on location. Yakutsk (in Eastern Russia) is often called the coldest city on earth (although other Russian cities are certainly in the running). With average winter temperatures a good 50-some degrees colder than Moscow or St. Petersburg, Yakutsk makes Moscow look like a tropical paradise. Most likely the Prozorovs were not subjected to anything as harsh as this, but you can see how location can make or break your winter activity.

Government

More information can be found at http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/RUSgovernment.htm

In the late 19th century the Russian people were ruled by the Romanov Dynasty. The Tsar took the title 'Emperor and Autocrat of all Russia' and imposed autocratic rule - government by one man. Unlike in most other European countries, power had not passed from the monarchy to the people. The Tsars of Russia did not take advice from an elected parliament. Instead, the country was run by a ten man ministerial council. Each minister was both appointed and dismissed by the Tsar.

The Tsar also appointed the Chief Procurator of the Russian Orthodox Church. In fact, since 1721, the Orthodox Church had been run as a government department (a little more on that later).

The Tsar also had the power to grant hereditary titles. These usually went to men who had achieved high rank in the armed forces and the civil service. In 1900, it was estimated that there were about 1.8 million members of the nobility in Russia.

Alexander II became the sixteenth Romanov tsar in 1855. He attempted to bring in some political reforms. This included permitting each district to set up a Zemstvo. These were local councils with powers to provide roads, schools and medical services. However, the right to elect members was restricted to the wealthy.

Russia was divided into fifty provinces. Each province had a governor and below him were governors of districts and the commandants of towns. For more on provincial life, including architecture and décor,

Yegor Botman.
Formal Portrait of Alexander II.
1875

see: http://russiatrek.org/blog/cities/zaraysk-preserved-provincial-town-of-the-19th-century/
and http://www.museum.vladimir.ru/eng/exhibition/vladimir/brothers_e?menu=vladimir_exhibition

Reformers in Russia wanted the same democratic rights as those enjoyed in other European countries. In October, 1879, a new secret society of reformers, the People's Will was formed. Soon afterwards the group decided to assassinate Alexander II. They made several failed attempts on his life but were successful at killing several of his senior officials. In January, 1880, the People's Will contacted the Russian government and claimed they would call off the terror campaign if the Russian people were granted a constitution that provided free elections and an end to censorship. On 25th February, 1880, Alexander II announced that he was considering granting the Russian people a constitution. A year later Alexander II had still not published details of his reforms. The People's Will decided to carry out their threat and the Tsar was assassinated on 1st March, 1881.

Alexander III now became the seventeenth Romanov tsar. He immediately cancelled his father's plans to introduce a representative assembly and announced he had no intention of limiting his autocratic power.

During his reign Alexander followed a repressive policy against those seeking political reform and persecuted other Jews and others who were not members of the Russian Orthodox Church. Alexander also pursued a policy of Russification of national minorities. Russification included imposing the Russian language and Russian schools on the German, Polish and Finnish peoples living in the Russian Empire.

Despite several assassination attempts Alexander died a natural death on 20th October, 1894. He was succeeded by his son Nicholas II who attempted to continue his father's policy of suppressing those advocating political reform.

At the end of the 19th century there were 128 million people living in Russia. To help the Tsar and the provincial governors to rule the people, the government employed a large number of civil servants. They were graded into fourteen different ranks with the Tsar's ministers at the top. Each rank had his own uniform and those that reached the fourth grade and above became members of the nobility.

Military

More information can be found at
http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Russian+Army

By 1877 the field forces had 48 infantry and 19 cavalry divisions, which included artillery brigades, horse-drawn batteries, and engineer brigades and parks. In the 1870's the corps that had been abolished in the 1860's were restored (there were 16 of them, consisting of two or three infantry divisions and one cavalry division apiece). In peacetime the army had

760,000 men. The first mobilization schedule was compiled. In 1855 the Artillery and Engineer academies were founded, and in 1867 the Military Law Academy was founded. In 1868 the new Regulations on the Control of Troops in the Field During Wartime was published.

As a result of the military reforms of the 1860's and 1870's, the Russian Army became a modern bourgeois-type mass army. The Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78, which ended in a Russian victory, demonstrated the expediency of the military reforms. At the same time, the war also uncovered major flaws in the organization and combat training of the troops, the weakness of the supreme command, and the inadequacy of certain types of armament.This was all a result of Russia's conservatism and backwardness.

Civil servants in Russia in uniform.

Capitalism brought major changes to the armed forces of most developed countries, based on rapid growth of industry, science, and technology. With its relatively backward industry and its rotten autocratic pomeshchik (land lord) system, Russia could not keep up with the leading imperialist countries. This backwardness manifested itself in both the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05 and in World War I.

There was little mountain, howitzer, and heavy field artillery, and there were few machine guns. Troop combat training was out of date, the experience of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78 was not adequately considered, preference was given to the outdated close combat order,

and there was no individual training for riflemen. The new regulations drawn up from the experience of the Russo-Turkish War were introduced among the troops very slowly by the reactionary generals. It was Ivan Turgenev (1818-1883) —who lived and wrote

for many years in Europe andwas profoundly Western in his outlook—that first brought Russian literature to the attention of European readers, but at the cost of often being considered an alien in his own land. It was the twin giants Leo Tolstoy and Fyodor Dostoyevsky whose work exploded out of Russia in the 1870s to overwhelm Europeans with their imaginative and emotional power. To many readers it must have seemed as if this distant, obscure country had suddenly leaped to the forefront of contemporary letters. Both were profoundly influenced both by European Romanticism and Realism, but their fiction offered characters more complex and impassioned than those Europeans were used to.

Because Russia had not waged war for 25 years, promotion in the service was slow and a large proportion of the officers were quite old, especially the generals. At the same time the educational level of half the officer corps was low, and most of the generals did not have any talent as military leaders. The army was educated in a spirit of devotion to the “tsar and the fatherland.” In the late 19th century and early 20th, tsarism used military units extensively to suppress the revolutionary and national liberation movements, especially during the Revolution of 1905–07.

Literature and Theater

More information can be found at http://public.wsu.edu/~brians/hum_303/russian.html

At the beginning of the 19th century much of Western Europe viewed Russia as hopelessly backward—even Medieval. It was considered more a part of Asia than an outpost of European thought. During the first half of the century, indeed, peasants (called "serfs") were still treated as the property of their feudal masters and could be bought and sold, and had only a few more rights than slaves. Russian serfs gained their freedom only in 1861.

However, the nobility of Russia looked to the West for ideals and fashions since the early 18th Century, when Peter the Great had instituted a series of reforms aimed at modernizing the country. Russian aristocrats traveled extensively in Western Europe and adopted French as the language of polite discourse. They read French and English literature and philosophy, followed Western fashions, and generally considered themselves a part of modern Europe.

Despite the general backwardness of Russian society, its openness to the West (briefly interrupted by Napoleon's 1812 invasion) had profound influences on its literature throughout the 19th Century. The first great national author of Russia, Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837)—despite his celebration of Russian history and folklore—was profoundly influenced by such English writers as Shakespeare, Byron and Scott. Although his role in Russian literature is comparable to that of Goethe in Germany or even Shakespeare in England, his works were little known abroad during his lifetime.

Of the other Russian writers of the 19th Century, the only other one to make much of an impression abroad was Anton Chekhov (1860-1904), whose short stories and plays used Realism in a much more understated way. His four great plays written just before and after the turn of the century—The Sea Gull, Uncle Vanya, Three Sisters, and The Cherry Orchard, along with the Realist masterworks of the Norwegian Henrik Ibsen—helped to rescue the theater from the dismal state into which it had plunged after the time of the German Romantics. Chekhov's works are often seen as the last echo of a fading tradition before Stalinism made "socialist realism" into a suffocating orthodoxy.

Chekhov (centre, reading) is widely acknowledged as the greatest ever short story writer

Music

By the second half of the 19th century, an active musical life was in place, thanks mainly to the efforts of the composer and piano virtuoso Anton Rubinstein, who with royal patronage founded in St. Petersburg Russia's first regular professional orchestra (1859) and conservatory of music (1862). Both became models that were quickly imitated in other urban centers. The first major full-time professional composer in Russia was Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, a member of the initial graduating class of Rubinstein's conservatory. Tchaikovsky's powerful compositions (e.g., Swan Lake, The Nutcracker, and The Sleeping Beauty) are still performed widely today. Other composers of Tchaikovsky's generation were self-taught and usually earned their living in nonmusical

occupations. They include Modest Mussorgsky, who worked in the civil service, Aleksandr Borodin, equally famous in his day as a chemist, and Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov, who eventually gave up a naval career to become a professor at the St. Petersburg conservatory.

The self-taught composers tended to effect a more self-consciously nationalistic style than the conservatory-bred Tchaikovsky, and among their most important works were operas such as Mussorgsky's Boris Godunov (final version first performed 1874) and Borodin's Prince Igor (first perf. 1890), along with Rimsky-Korsakov's symphony Scheherazade (first perf. 1888).

Some examples: Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Suite
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sB1-axKPmSM

Mussorgsky's Boris Godunov - Introduction and Polonaise
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QYZnZ5b7sBU

Borodin's Prince Igor
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sw1weml0-r0

Rimsky-Korsakov's Scheherazade – Symphonic Suite Op.35
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oOq9NjdLx1w

Other Forms of Art
Developing national self-awareness led Russians to take an interest in their national history, and culture, and contemporary art. Numerous art galleries were set up and private collections appeared, the most famous being the Tretyakov collection in Moscow and the Museum of Alexander III in St. Petersburg (most items for the latter came from the Gallery of Russian Painting in the Hermitage).

The Historicist or "eclectic" style, which was widespread in 19th-century Europe, influenced the development of everything from painting to architecture to the applied arts. A wide variety of different trends were revived and reinterpreted by modern artists and craftsmen. Throughout the second half of the 19th century Moscow was the center of silverware production in Russia. Articles produced at the Sazikov and Ovchinnikov factories reveal the great skill of Russian craftsmen. These factories revived old enameling techniques and many objects imitating the forms of utensils in medieval Russia appeared, together with settings for icons, bowls, albums and caskets.

Through the porcelain collection we can trace how the different styles were combined and reflected in one particular art form. The fashion was set by the Imperial Porcelain Factory, the oldest and largest producer in Russia, while private workshops such as the Gardner factory and those of the Batyenin and Kornilov brothers rapidly turned out works which imitated the latest trends.

An important place in the history of Russian bronzework is occupied by 19th-century St. Petersburg factories. The foundries at the Academy of Arts, the Schreiber, Bauman, Chopin, and Werfel factories all produced fine decorative bronzes. Owing to their high cost they were made almost exclusively for the imperial palaces and mansions.

A group of skillful artists of the St. Petersburg Mint created a notable collection of medals, often reflecting important historical events or showing a veritable portraiture gallery of outstanding contemporary figures. Talented fashion designers were also inspired by Historicism and they developed interesting models on the basis of traditional styles and motifs. The museum collection of costume contains splendid clothes and accessories which once belonged to the imperial family.

Leading 19th-century architects made their own contribution to St. Petersburg architecture. A great number of new palaces, apartment houses, theatres, hotels and stations constructed in the Historicist style changed the look of the city. By the end of the 19th century, St. Petersburg's main streets had more or less taken on that appearance which we see today, with a mixture of facades including elements of the Baroque, Renaissance, and early Neoclassical styles.

Small Cabinet Decorated with a Mosaic of a Tropical Forest Peterhof Lapidary Factory

Three-Part Icon of Our Lady of Bogolyubsk, with Saints Alexander Nevsky and Mary Magdalene Ivan Khlebnikov factory, Moscow

Icon of Saints Alexander Nevsky, Titus and Polycarpus Ovchinnikov Manufactory, Moscow

Plates from the Raphael Ceremonial Dinner and Dessert Services from Tsarskoye Selo Palace Imperial Porcelain Manufactory, St. Petersburg

Portrait of Empress Maria Alexandrovna Firs Zhuravlev

Lady's Table Nikolay Svirsky Manufactory, St. Petersburg

Service with nielloed views of Moscow Moscow

Empress Maria Fyodorovna's Oil Painted Fan with Bust Portraits of Alexander III and his Children

Religion

The state religion of the Russian Empire was that of the Russian Orthodox Christianity. Its head was the tsar, who held the title of supreme defender of the Church. Although he made and annulled all appointments, he did not determine the questions of dogma or church teaching. The principal ecclesiastical authority was the Holy Synod, the head of which, the Over Procurator of the Holy Synod, was one of the council of ministers and exercised very wide powers in ecclesiastical matters. All religions were freely professed, except that certain restrictions were laid upon the Jews. According to returns published in 1905, based on the Russian Empire Census of 1897, adherents of the different religious communities in the whole of the Russian empire numbered approximately as follows.

The ecclesiastical heads of the national Russian Orthodox Church consisted of three metropolitans (Saint Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev), fourteen archbishops and fifty bishops, all drawn from the ranks of the monastic (celibate) clergy. The parochial clergy had to be married when appointed, but if left widowers were not allowed to marry again; this rule continues to apply today.

Currency

Russian currency		approx. 2012 US value	years
	1 den'ga		
2 den'gi =	1 kopek		
100 kopeks =	1 **ruble** (silver)	$18.60	1764-1885
		$20.26	1885-1894
		$11.68	1898-1914
10 rubles =	1 imperial (gold)	$186.00	1764-1894
15 rubles =	1 imperial (gold)	$175.23	1898-1914
10 rubles =	1 chervonets (gold)		

The "den'ga," Russia's oldest coin (and obsolete since 1914), has, in its plural form "den'gi", become synonymous with "money."

What looks like a sharp fall in the ruble's value in 1894 was actually a strengthening, as finance minister Sergei Witte put Russia on the gold standard. Witte's reforms ushered in two decades of uneven, but nevertheless impressive economic growth.

Russian Names
While many Russian names have a familiar form, used by family and friends, formal address is usually in the form of name + patronymic. In general, the patronymic is the father's name + -ovich for men and -ovna for women, though the initial o is e following soft consonants. However, the structural combinations of formal, informal, given, family, and married names are varied by regions, time periods, and personal preference. In other words, names are flexible, and one person could be called by many different names depending on context.

Examples of common name + patronymic:
Ivan, son of Ivan: Ivan Ivanovich
Piotr, son of Vasiliy: Piotr Vasilevich
Andrei, son of Nikolai: Andrei Nikolaevich
Tatyana, daughter of Ivan: Tatyana Ivanovna
Ekaterina, daughter of Grigory: Ekaterina Grigorevna

III. Elements of the Production

About The Production:
For director Roger DeLaurier, Three Sisters is a homecoming of sorts. During his directorial MFA training at SMU, DeLaurier worked with Mesrop Kesdekian (previously with the Hedgerow Theatre) a director with lineage to MAT and the traditions of Chekhov and Stanislavsky. The three great plays of Chekhov (including Three Sisters) formed the centerpiece of the director's seminar and DeLaurier speaks with great enthusiasm of how this work taught him important lessons of stagecraft and what is required of, and for, complex characterization. Throughout his years in the Conservatory at PCPA, Chekhov's plays have served as the basis for the fall second year acting curriculum and with this production; he has an opportunity to share all he has learned as a student and teacher.

DeLaurier is especially excited by Chekhov's ability to reveal themes through relationships — interactions among and between characters. And Three Sisters is a powerful example of how we activate our longing and our desperations and how we make the life that we dream of. DeLaurier believes that contemporary audiences can particularly relate to this play because we all share the collision between the dreams and ambitions of our youth that are tempered or constricted by the life as we end up living it. We all aspire to courage that can change our lives and allow us to pursue our dreams, but we often lead lives of quiet desperation.

Intrigued by the complexity and imperfections and humanity that Chekhov expresses in his personal letters and notebooks, DeLaurier is excited by the opportunity to revel in the intimate setting of an arena structured Severson Theatre. He believes that audiences will find that complete immersion in the world of the play will enhance the realism of the story and reveal the dimensionality and honesty of the acting. The amplification of a larger space can distort the subtlety of the moments of exquisite dissatisfaction that Chekhov creates.

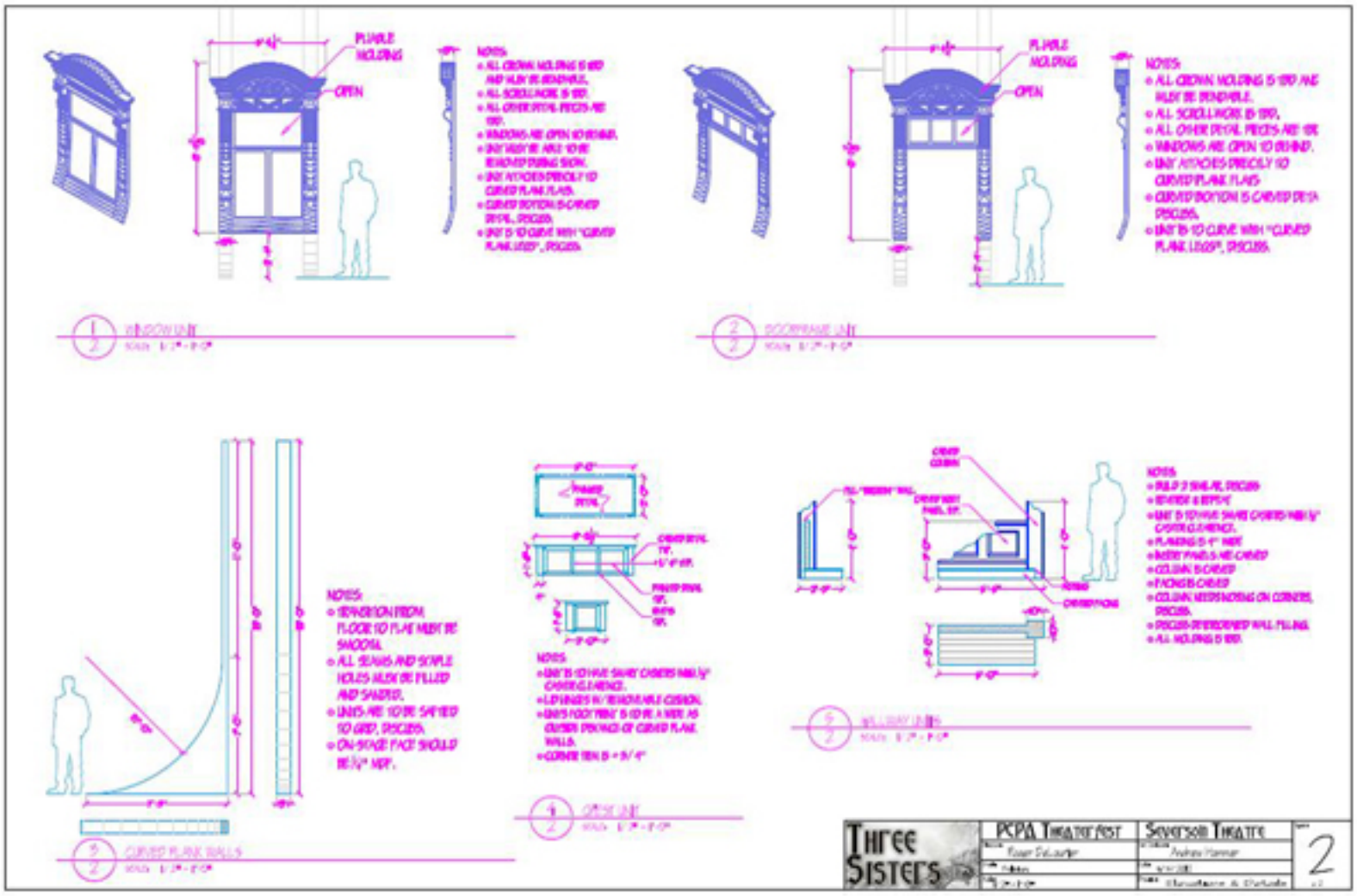
In addition to spacial realism, DeLaurier and his design team are working on the costume design with details such as piping, pleating and construction of each garment that help us to envision ourselves in the turn of the century Russian world. Elisabeth Rebel, who serves as both sound designer and composer on this project, plans to support the variety and color of the acting company with composition for string quartet. This music choice of violin, cello and viola, mirrors and enhances the human voices of this drama.

And ultimately, it is this "human" factor that influences DeLaurier's choices. For the initial audiences, it was shocking to see such realism on a stage; this new style of acting and storytelling changed forever what audiences expect of theatrical performance. And as our own fascination with reality television or series such as Downton Abbey (what DeLaurier describes as Jane Austen meets Falcon Crest) grows, he hopes that the great acting of our theatre company can wet our appetites for more of these great plays.

Scenic Design:
Scenic designer, Andy Hammer, created the world of Three Sisters as we see it on the stage of the Severson Theater. From renderings to construction, every scene element enhances the look of the play. Artistic staff and production staff work hand in hand to create an environment that expresses the story’s plot, while being pragmatic as physical elements of the stage that must be manipulated from scene to scene.

Period appropriate furniture and décor items are researched to help the designer set the scene:

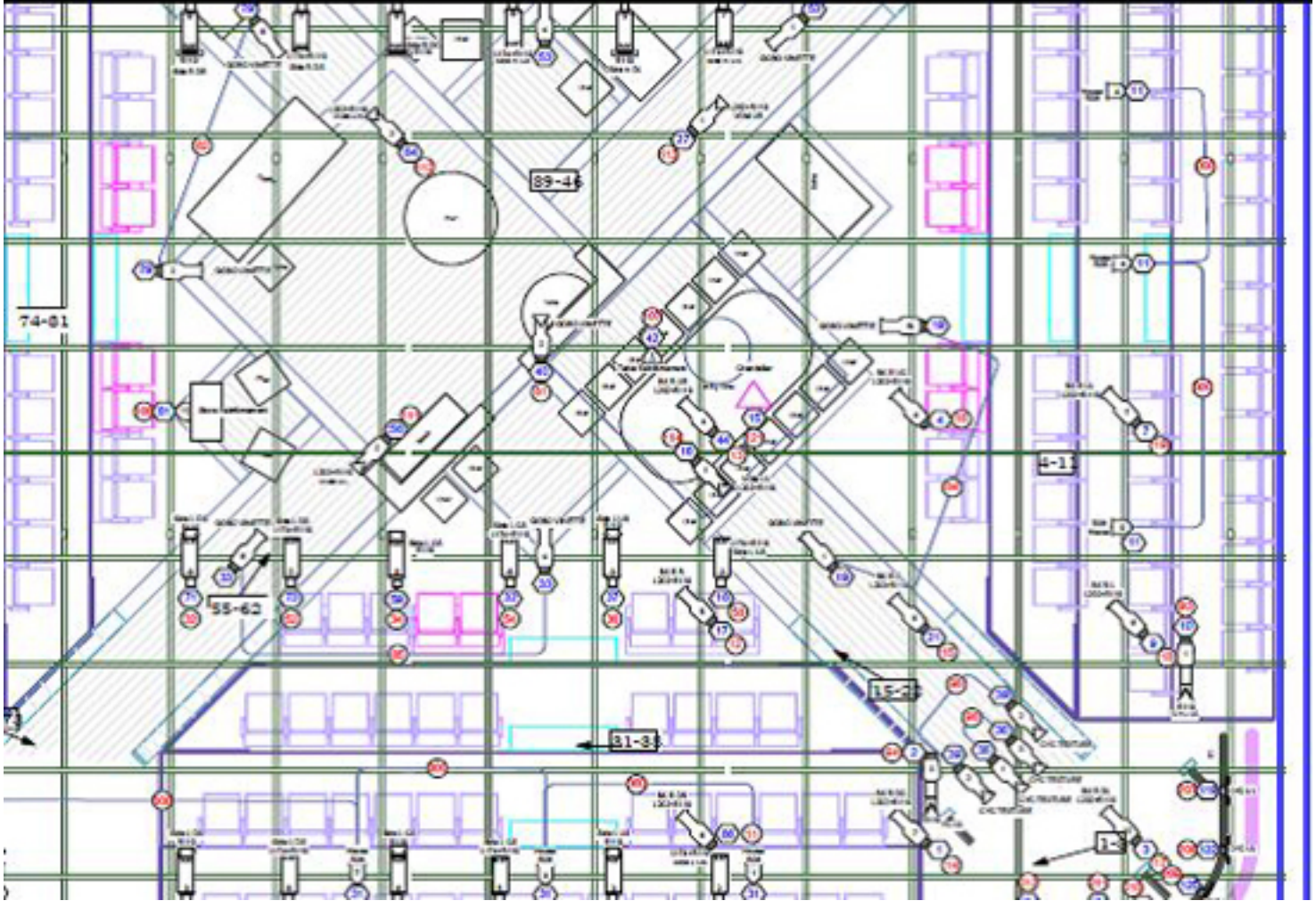
CAD (computer aided design) renderings are created to guide the production of various stage elements:



Lighting Design:
Lighting designer, Tamar Geist, creates the appropriate mood by designing a lighting scheme that reflects the changing seasons and events of the play:

The lighting is augmented by “gobos” or “go betweens” that are placed in front of the lighting, casting shadows, imitating trees or windows.

A CAD representation of the stage, marks where the various lights should be placed and directed. This blueprint of the lighting design helps the designer and tech teams to work together seemlessly.



Costume Design:

Costume Designer Frederick Deeben created the following renderings to assist the director and other designers in imagining how the costume element would enhance telling the story for Three Sisters. The renderings are a very important step in making sure the costumes are constructed to the designer's specifications. Note that some characters have different costumes for different parts of the play, noted by the act number illustrated at the bottom of the rendering.


Act I
Masha


Act IV
Masha


Act I & II
Olga


Kulygin


CHEBUTYKIN


VERSHININ


TUZENBACH


ACT III
TUZENBACH

IV. Vocabulary and Activities

Vocabulary from the play:
Name day: The feast day of a saint after whom a person is named. The name day for Irina is May 5, which means she is named after the great holy martyr: St. Irene from Macedonia. She was young, beautiful, and eventually beheaded only to rise again and convert more people. See more here: http://greekamericangirl.com/2012/05/22/st-irene-the-great-martyr/

Naphthalene:
Most commonly used in mothballs, naphthalene is a substance with a strong distinct odor, often used as a powder or small crystals. Prolonged exposure or exposure to large doses is toxic.

Alum:
The name for various astringent compounds, most commonly potassium aluminum sulfate. It is often found as an ingredient in pickled vegetables.

Scent bottle:
Perfume bottle. Examples below are examples of 19th century Popov porcelain perfume bottles.

Around the 19th century alchemy and perfumery had close ties and new scents were invented.

Dobrolyubov:
Nikolay Dobrolyubov, a critic for the journal Dobrolyubov Sovremennik (“The Contemporary”) from 1857 until his death in 1861, was a radical and influential liberal critic who rejected traditionalism and romantic literature. He a proponent of progress, western science, and criticism over art.

“A green oak stands...”:
The prologue from Ruslan and Lyudmila, an opera composed by Mikhail Glinka between 1837 and 1842. The opera is based on the 1820 poem of the same name by Alexander Pushkin. The story is based on Russian folktales and includes monsters, magic, and a young married couple. The new bride is carried off, but her true love rescues her in the end. The following link is to the famous overture from the opera. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dzLklMAWoUw

Silver samovar:
a large tea kettle with a spigot. Below is an example of a 19th century Russian samovar.

Novodevichy:
A convent and cemetery in Moscow where Chekhov is buried. Learn more here:
http://www.moscow.info/orthodox-moscow/novodevichy-convent.aspx

Persian Powder:
An insecticide made from powdered plants.

Troika:
A sleigh or carriage driven by three horses.

Voltaire (1694-1778):
Pen name for Francois Marie Arouet, a French writer and philosopher associated with Enlightenment thinking. He was interested in natural sciences, political reform, freedom of religion, freedom of expression, and free trade.

“True love knows...”:
This is Prince Gremin’s aria from Tchaikovsky’s Eugene Onegin, based on Pushkin's verse novel Eugene Onegin, which is about a bored St. Petersburg dandy who moves to the country, ends up in a duel, kills someone, then travels, moves to Moscow where he tries to kindle a relationship with a woman who was once in love with him. She is now married and rebuffs him.

Fedotik takes a picture:
Here is a 19th century camera

Ta Ra Ra Boom De Ya:
Oddly enough, this is an American song in which a flirtatious young girl sings about her escapades. It became very popular in Europe and especially in England. There have been several versions over the years; none include “sit on a tomb today.” The irony of a song intended for a young, flirtatious girl being sung by an old, depressed man is striking. One could also interpret the doctor’s meaning based on who is in the room when he sings this. Here is the tune
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eztsaD2oCNg&feature=related

Stanislaus second class:
A civil service decoration for which Kulygin would have received this medal:

Pram:
A stroller.

Lermontov (1814-1841):
Mikhail Yuryevich Lermontov, a Russian romantic writer, poet, and painter who became the most important Russian poet after Pushkin’s death in 1837.

Basic Theater Vocabulary:
Apron: the stage floor between the front edge of the stage and front curtain

Aside:
a piece of dialogue intended for the audience and supposedly not heard by the other actors on stage.

Blocking:
the director's planned movement for characters

Build:
the increase of vocal intensity toward a climatic point

Cross:
when an actor moves from one side of the stage to the other

Full Back/Front:
facing completely away from the audience or completely toward the audience

Fourth Wall:
the imaginary wall through which the audience views the play

Gelatins:
transparent color sheets inserted into a frame in front of a spotlight or floodlight

House Lights:
auditorium lights

Monologue:
a speech presented by a single character, most often to express their thoughts aloud, to another character(s).

Motivation:
a specific reason for saying or doing something

Project:
increase voice or actions so they will carry to the audience

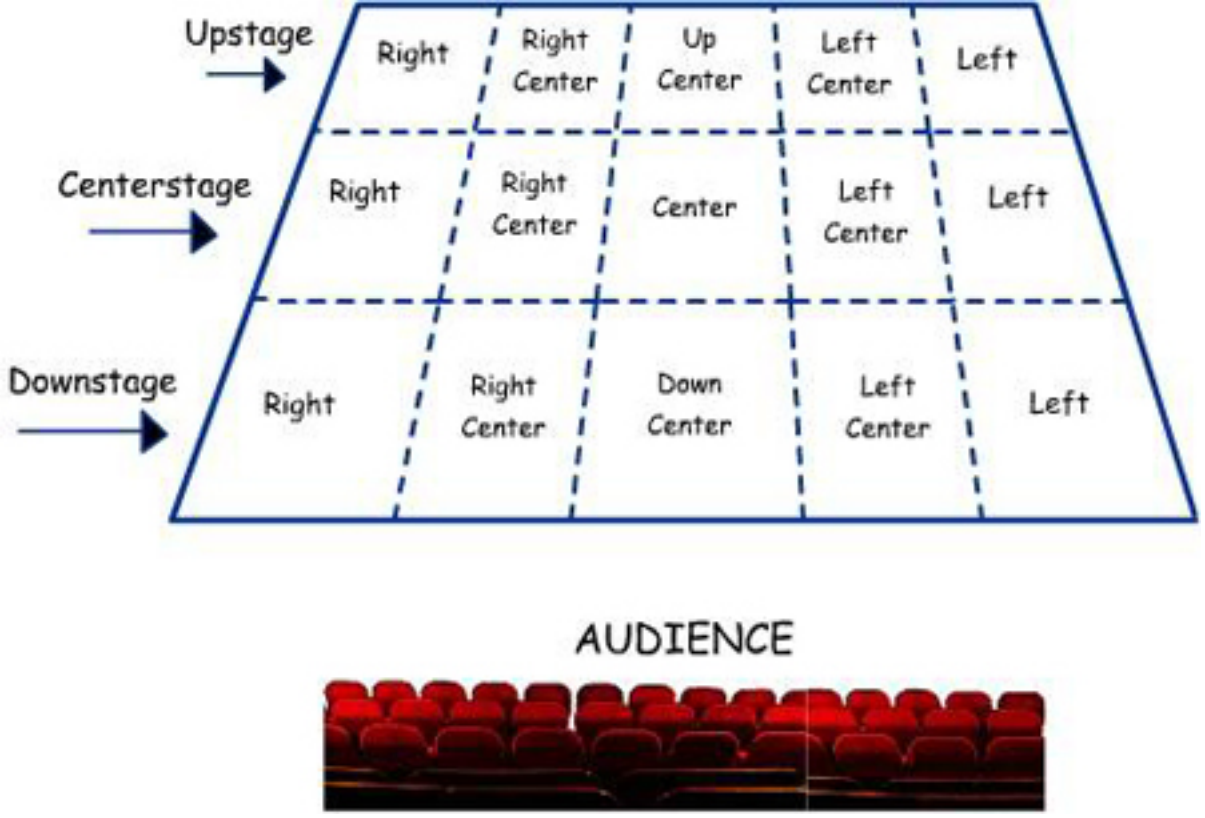
Soliloquy:
a speech in which one actor speaks aloud revealing his or her inner thoughts. Unlike a monologue, a soliloquy is not directed at another character.

Thrust Stage:
a stage that goes into the audience

Voice-over:
the voice of an unseen narrator

Wings:
offstage to the right and left of the acting area

Stage Diagram:



Discussion Topics (For Grades 7-12):

1) During the French invasion Napoleon stated, "If I capture Kiev, I take Russia by its feet, if I capture Petersburg, I take it by its head and if I capture Moscow, I destroy its heart". What do you think he meant by this? Can you find evidence in the play to support your theory? Hint: pay attention to where different characters are from.

2) The play is called Three Sisters. What other titles could describe this play? Why do you think Chekhov chose the title he did?

3) If you were to treat Moscow as a personified character, how would you describe her/him?

4) Costumes often make a statement about the characters who wear them. What do the costumes in this production say about the characters?

5) Masha believes that she and her siblings know lots of “superfluous things.” What does she mean by that? Do you think it’s true? Why does Vershinin think their knowledge is necessary?

6) This play presents various opinions about what it is to live a good life. What do you think living a good life looks like? Do you think any of these characters have an opportunity to live well?

7) Love is a strong theme in this play, although as a pursuit it poses many challenges. Which character do you think knows the most about how to love?

8) As much as this play is about a relationship between sisters who are very close, this play is also very much about separation. In what ways do you see separation as a theme in this play?

9) During the time the Prozorovs have been absent from Moscow, some big changes have taken place in the city. The home they remember, in many ways, no longer exists. Do you think it would be better for them to know what changes have occurred, or do you think they are better off not knowing?

10) Going down the list of characters, try to determine what each person wants most and fears most. Then, describe each character in one word.

Activities (For Grades 7-12):

1) Make a Timeline: Examine the role of time in the play. Note the events that are mentioned in the play and chart the history of the family's story. Create a timeline based events.

2) Hot Seating: is used as a device to explore a character in more depth by creating past events and events outside of the text. One person chooses to be a character in the play and is asked questions about his or her life outside the text. The person being hot seated must form answers that make sense for the character based on the context of the play. Hot Seat one of the more minor characters like one of the servants. What insights does he offer about the other characters and the story? Write a diary entry for the character based on the story that materializes from this exercise.

3) Improvisation of Scenes Relating to the Play: In small groups, create an imaginary scene from the Prozorovs' childhood. Think about how they interact with each other, what their parents are like, what life in Moscow is like. It may help you focus on just one theme or the development of just one character.

4) Relationship Diagram: Make a flow chart showing who is connected to whom. Use different types of lines for different types of relationships, such as a dotted line for friendship, dashes for employment, and a solid line for feelings (use different colors to identify different feelings, such as pink for romantic love, blue for respect, etc.). Use arrows to show direction. For example, use arrows on both sides of a line to show a mutual relationship, but an arrow on only one side to show a one-way relationship like Solyony's love for Irina.

5) Storyboarding: Imagine you are adapting this play for the big screen. Sketch a storyboard for one scene. Be prepared to explain your directorial choices. For storyboarding instructions, vocabulary, and examples, go to http://accad.osu.edu/womenandtech/Storyboard%20Resource/

6) Silent Soliloquy: A soliloquy is like a monologue in that only one character is speaking. However, it is not directed toward another character. It is the character's inner dialogue (performed aloud) as he is talking to himself about his own thoughts and feelings. For this exercise, choose a character who is present for much of a scene but says very little. Then, write a soliloquy for that character, expressing what he or she is thinking and feeling during that scene. Some interesting choices may be Solyony, Anfisa, the maid, or Ferapont. For this exercise, you may want to assume the characters can hear/see more of the action than they appear to.

7) Improvisation/ Character Work:
- The teacher will place signs around the room, each with a main character's name on it.
- Each student should pick a main character to portray. In their portrayals, they should think about these things: how does their character walk? What gestures do they make? How does he/she feel emotionally? What is his/her focus?
- Have one student volunteer be the observer. The observer will watch the actors and try to distinguish which character each student is portraying.
- Have your students walk around an open space as their character. One by one, the observer will tap each student's shoulder and put each student in one of the 5 groups based on which character the observer believes they are playing.
- At the end, see if everyone is in the right group. Talk about what movements, gestures, pace, and stance gave clues to the characters. You can repeat this exercise again as much as you'd like with

different observers.

8) More Improvisation:
Break the class up into groups of 3-5 students. Give them 10 minutes to decide what are the main five points or events in the story. The group will create tableau pictures (frozen poses that tell a story) to represent each of their main points. Have one person narrate the caption of each tableau like a living picture book. Have each group take turns with their tableau story and watch each group in turn as they quickly go from one frame to the next, freezing only ten seconds or so between each to let the audience see. This exercise quickly lets us all discuss what we think are the main events or plot points in the play.

9) Contemporary Adaptation:
Three Sisters has been translated and adapted many times in many countries and time periods. Working in groups of 3-5 students, have groups decide on a contemporary location for their adaptation. Then, choose one scene to rewrite as a contemporary piece. They should use contemporary language and create set and costume sketches to create a mini production. If sketches are beyond their skill level, have them cut out outfits, prop options, and furniture from fashion and design magazines.