



BLT Cast Excels In 'Vanya And Sonia And Masha And Spike'

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By Judy Roberts



Vanya and Sonia are in "The Morning Room" of the farmhouse owned by their sister Masha. The middle-aged siblings are quibbling, ruing their empty lives, and trying to make sense of soothsaying housekeeper Cassandra's latest cryptic warnings: something called "Hootie Pie" and the poor house. Soon, middle-aged Masha and her much younger boyfriend Spike arrive. As usual, Masha, a successful actress, away those many years her siblings stayed home tending to their now-deceased parents, only wants to talk about her fabulous life. Plus, she has brought demeaning costumes for Vanya and Sonia to wear to a neighbor's party to complement her own costume. Then, Masha announces she wants to sell the farmhouse. This family reunion quickly becomes conflict-laden.

The conflicts, their underlying causes and the behaviors that result are the essence of "Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike." Although serious matters, playwright Christopher Durang pokes fun at relatable human frailties and punctuates the humor with references from Chekhov, Greek mythology and Neil Simon. He also offers hope via Nina, an idealistic young actress, who unwittingly increases tensions further before things settle down. This amazing script requires the performers to display a variety of behaviors throughout the two acts.

Jordan Wright, as Vanya, proves he is up to the challenge. Always trying to be the voice of reason, he often reveals a character struggling to maintain that persona. He eventually loses the battle in a very effective display. Jordan's use of body language is an asset to his performance.

Bonnie Allen, as Sonia, demonstrates why she has found work as a professional actress. She is believable both as the sloppily dressed, melodramatic sister and as someone who, by putting on glamorous clothing, can enjoy herself. Bonnie's body language, too, enhances her role.

Carole Pickard, as Cassandra, contributes humor with her predictions, which intertwine Greek tragedy and complaints about her duties. Usually sassy or mystifying, sometimes she is polite. Carole performs all behaviors equally well.

Sandra Whitmore succeeds in making egoistic Masha sympathetic. With a quick change in the tone of her voice and her facial expression, she practically transforms before our eyes. One moment we see an alluring actress; the next, an aging woman in a state of panic, as when Spike is alone with Nina.

Johnny Rice excels as clueless actor Spike, especially in the scene in which he is wearing only his skivvies. He also demonstrates an ability to play an actor of limited talent. When Spike reads the role he auditioned for but didn't get, we see a much different Spike than elsewhere in the play.

Mackenzie Pickard, as Nina, is perfect as the starry-eyed visiting actress, who, although young, relates more to Vanya than Spike. While always polite, Mackenzie's fabulous facial expressions reveal Nina's true feelings towards Spike. Her reaction to his offer to perform his audition is memorable.

Behind the scenes, many people listed in the Playbill deserve credit for their work. The interior furnishings of "The Morning Room" include displays of decorative plates, cups and saucers; flowery curtains; and pictures largely of flowers and gardens - obviously relics of Vanya and Sonia's childhood. These props accentuate the siblings' reluctance to change. Also, kudos to Sandi Thompson, who has worked in numerous BLT productions, for her delightful costumes.

Director Theresa Cox, who first became involved with BLT in "Funny Little Thing Called Love," and Stage Manager Dru Dykes are to be commended for persevering despite numerous cast changes and illnesses.

There will be three more performances of this play, which contains some adult language and themes, and runs April 27-29. Friday and Saturday performances start at 7:30 p.m., and Sunday's performance starts at 3 p.m.

Tickets are available online at TheBrevardLittleTheatre.org, at the theatre one hour before each performance, or by calling (828) 884-2587 and making a reservation. Brevard Little Theatre is located at 55 E. Jordan St. For more information visit TheBrevardLittleTheatre.org.