



Anton Chekhov's

The Cherry Orchard

A new translation by Michael Frayn

Directed by Siân Davis

August 28 to September 7
Wed to Sat @ 8:00 pm
Sun Matinée Sept 1 @ 2:00 pm

Rose Centre Theatre, School Road, Belmont
Bookings phone 445-9900 \$15 (\$12 Concessions)

Cast:

Ranyevskaya, a landowner
Anya, her daughter
Varya, her adopted daughter
Gayev, Ranyevskaya's brother
Lopakhin, a businessman
Trofimov, a student
Simeonov-Pishchik, a landowner
Charlotta Ivanovna, the governess
Yepikhodov, the estate clerk
Dunyasha, the chambermaid
Firs, the footman
Yasha, the young footman
A Passer-By / Postmaster
Stationmaster
Charlotta's Dog
Servants, Dancers, Peasants

Susan Hargraves
Rebecca Pappriell
Erica Kröger
Graham Wagstaff
John Paton
Nick Kemplen
David Steadman
Jill Chamberlain
Michael Breen
Nicky Clarke
David Fitchew
Karlos Wrennall
Andrew Wooding
Alastair Fletcher
Pferi
Members of the Cast

Crew:

Director	Siân Davis
P.A.	Patricia Johnpillai
Stage Manager	Angie Holmes
Co-Stage Manager	Patricia Johnpillai
Costume Design	Cathie Sandy
Wardrobe Assistants	Sue Parmee, Gail Carran, Christine McKie, Molly Clarke
Make-up / Hair	Lianne Hughes
Properties	Maureen Kenny, Mark Higgins
Lighting	Phil Searle
Sound	Philip Heath, Richard Parmee
Set Design	Siân Davis
Set Construction	Phil Davis, Stratton Kemplen
Set Dressing	Jill Chamberlain
Poster / Programme	Andrew Wooding
Publicity	Sherry Ede
Front of House	Doug Bourke

The action takes place on Madame Ranyevskaya's estate, early 1900s

Act One The Nursery, in May
Act Two Near the River, in late June
Interval
Act Three The drawing-room and ballroom, late August
Act Four The Nursery, in October

Director's Notes

When *The Cherry Orchard* (1904) was first presented outside of Russia (1911) it was greeted with some bemusement, if not outright chilliness. Chekhov's poetic realism, his taste for irony, the lack of clear action, the elliptical technique were radical and innovative; the 'Russianness' too alien, too difficult for Western tastes. It is, of course, now recognised as one of the great classics of World theatre.

For a director, the challenge has always been how to universalise a particular Russian statement into a generally sympathetic conflict between old and new, practical and impractical, romantic and realistic. And where to pitch it: notionally a comedy (and not simply of the 'ineffectual', as an early critic wrote), the play lends itself to wildly divergent interpretation, suffering distortion to appear in the guise of tragedy (Stanislavsky's first production at the Moscow Arts Theatre in 1904), prophetic political polemic (the Soviet favoured view), vaudevillean farce (a 1960s approach). So, not an easy challenge for a director to get 'right'... and the more I have worked on the play, the more certain I have become that 'right' is illusory and 'wrong' is only too possible.

Putting my neck out, I see the movement of the play as primarily a tracking of Ranyevskaya's perceptions of the orchard, initially as a place of succour, via a need for its continued existence as nostalgic icon, to a point where only in its letting-go (and she move on and depart. The 'message' lies very much in the view that nothing can be arrested, no pleasure made permanent, and the sorrow implicit in the painfulness of having to change. The critic, J.L. Styan, wrote (concerning the mysterious 'sad... breaking string'), that it "suggests time in its most inscrutable mood; it is the passing of one order of life, with what seems like irreparable loss; but it is also the mark of change, ushering in the new order, both hopeful and frightening, because it is unimaginable". And that feels like a fair reflection of the play in its entirety. *The Cherry Orchard* was written immediately after the turn of the century, on the brink of vast social upheavals, certainly in Russia. At the turn of a new century, and a new millenium, it strikes me that the world is similarly poised; 'September 11' carries a freight yet to be realised.

Given that this is Chekhov, I recognise that this is inevitably a simplistic vision of the play, with its strong sense throughout of the accidental and inadvertent; of the casual, the unintended, unpredictable and unforeseen; of the abortive and plain messy... not to mention the the delights of the rich and real characterisations (these are not merely queer, stupid, or capricious Russian 'grotesques'; yes, there are wonderful challenges for the actors!).

Finally, the other huge factor in 'getting it right' is the translation and as we (the actors and myself) have teased-out the possibilities inherent in this version, I am by no means certain that Michael Frayn has delivered 'pure Chekhov'. However, certainly challenging, it has also been a most entertaining script to work with and, for my tastes, is 'right' enough. It's just... well, Chekhov did label the play a 'comedy' but was the original quite so funny? Err... I really do hope you find it funny!

Director

Siân Davis has had a longtime involvement in theatre, mostly as an actor but more recently as a director. Her commitment is primarily to NZ plays, but she is prepared to consider the odd 'classic', especially if offering a good challenge... a condition well-fulfilled by *The Cherry Orchard*. Her previous productions for Company have been *Hedda Gabler*, *Eugenia*, and *Arsenic and Old Lace*.



Acknowledgements

North Shore Music Theatre, Dolphin Theatre, Carol Evans, Torbay Theatre, Cooper's Creek, Dianne Wallace

Susan Hargraves' last performance was earlier this year in *Happiest Days of Your Life* at the Dolphin. Favourite roles include Cruella de Vil in *101 Dalmatians* and Auntie Mame both performed in Hong Kong.

Rebecca Pappill was last seen dancing the Sugar Plum Fairy for *Symphony in the Park*. She then dived into the absurd with a NZ short film festival and had a baby on *Mercy Peak*. Having recently returned from performing Bollywood style in India she is now gracing the stage for the first time for Company.

This is **Erica Kroger's** fourth production for Company. Her most recent was also with Siân - *Eugenia*. She has been involved with numerous other productions in Auckland, including playing Cleopatra in *Anthony and Cleopatra*.

Graham Wagstaff was last seen playing Einstein in Company's *Arsenic and Old Lace*, Dolphin's *Happiest Days of Your Life*, and *Shortland Street's* Dr McKenzie.

This is **John Paton's** first time with Company and second with Siân. Last time he was an autistic with no lines and now a businessman with many. Quite a change and loving it.

Nick Kemplen has featured in many commercials and has had numerous film and television appearances over the past 10 years of performance. Most recently he appeared as the 'Southern Man' for Speights. His last stage appearance was in *A Winter's Tale* Summer Shakespeare and he still works for Auckland Theatresports as an improviser. Good on ya mate!

David Steadman was last seen in *Rehearsal for Murder* at Stables Theatre. Earlier this year he played Alex in Howick Little Theatre's *Ghost Writer*.

Jill Chamberlain was in Company Theatre's last production *Curtain Up on Murder* and has recently appeared in Torbay's production of *Two for 2002*. Jill is a designer by profession and has brought her design skills to our sets.

Michael Breen has just returned from England where he has been living for 17 years. He has trained and performed in NZ and the UK playing in many varied rôles. This is Michael's first time with Company.

Nicky Clarke has appeared in the background of various television commercials and was a nurse for the first two seasons of *Mercy Peak*. Having worked backstage for Company she is now making her first appearance on stage for them.

David Fitchew was first introduced to Chekhov when in 1958 he had the opportunity to tour the North Island in a production of *The Seagull* with the Community Arts Council. Later, while living in Australia, Canada and back in Auckland, he acted, designed and directed in a great range of productions from Chekhov's *The Bear* to *Jesus Christ Superstar*. He is thrilled to be with Company Theatre and Siân for the first time and for this production of this great classic.

Karlos "Legend" Wrennall has had quite a varied career on stage starting with "Wayne the Barman" in *Taming of the Shrew* to many other characters including kings, princes, murderers and a butcher. His most recent rôle was Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*.

Andrew Wooding arrived in Auckland just one year ago. Since then he has played a mad cop in *Arsenic and Old Lace* and supported Company with his design skills.

Alastair Fletcher's fifteen years involvement with Company has ranged from singing in Music Halls through set building to stage management. This small rôle adds to the variety.

I, Pfeni [Silver Lining Griselda] was born on Christmas Day five years ago in Palmerston North. I am a pedigree miniature wire-haired dachshund. I was named after a character in the play *The Sisters Rosensweig* that my master was in at the Dolphin theatre. Olga Knipper, Chekhov's famous actress wife had pet dachshunds. Small dogs of charm and beauty feature in many of Chekhov's stories, so I feel I'm type-cast.

Upcoming Production

The Sex Fiend

Directed by Anthony Whitehouse

Auditions 8 September here at the Rose Centre

Plays 23 November to 7 December



Siân's thank you card for key helpers.