

Public Theatre rocks the laughs in 'Vanya, Sonia, Masha and Spike'

David A. Sargent / Special to the Sun Journal

Review

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LEWISTON -- The superb six-member cast of "Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike" generates a whirlwind of hilarity in The Public Theatre's new production which continues this coming weekend Jan. 29 through Feb. 1.

This recent Broadway hit comedy (2013 Tony Award for Best Play) begins on a lovely summer morning when the tranquility and numbingly predictable life of Vanya and Sonya is blown sky-high. Their self-centered movie star sister, Masha, descends on the family's well-appointed Pennsylvania farmhouse with Spike, her latest, and considerably younger, lover.

This show's audiences will savor a rich array of talent on the TPT stage under the able direction of Christopher Schario, TPT's executive/artistic director.

Jonathan Hadley is outstanding in the role of button-down Vanya. He reveals that he has written a play, and a read-through of his surrealistic script leads to an epic rant aimed at rude and clueless Spike who dared to send a text during the reading.

Hadley's career includes appearances across the country in many hit shows. He played Bob Crewe in "Jersey Boys" on Broadway, and continued in that part for six years on the first national tour. He also toured in "Fiddler on the Roof," "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat" and "Into the Woods."

Sonia is played by Janet Mitchko, TPT's co-artistic director and a veteran director and actress in numerous shows on the Lewiston stage. She delivers a powerful, humorous and totally engaging performance. Many audience members are likely to rate this Mitchko role as their favorite.

Mitchko's character keeps the surrounding insanity somewhat under control. She has a spellbinding solo phone conversation with a surprise suitor that takes her from doubt to humor and hopefulness.

Masha is played by Robyne Parrish with believable film-star flair. She is artistic director of North Carolina's Gilbert Theatre and was most recently seen at TPT as Ana in "The Book Club Play."

Anna Doyle, a Maine native and currently a senior at Colby College plays Nina. Spike makes a play for her, but she's a level headed young lady who's delighted to meet her movie idol. Doyle was seen this past summer in Theater at Monmouth productions.

Jarid Faubel plays Spike, who spends a lot of time in his underwear. It's a role that's meant to be the least likeable of the six characters, but he gives Spike's egotism a good degree of appeal.

Faubel appeared in "X-Men: First Class" and "Jack Reacher" with Tom Cruise. He appeared last summer in "Seven Brides for Seven Brothers" at Maine State Music Theater.

New York actress Jamie Rezanour regularly brings the house down as Cassandra, the wacky and clairvoyant Latina housekeeper. She constantly declares enigmatic warnings to everyone around her. "Beware of Hootie Pie" turns out to be a very significant sign affecting the play's outcome.

Rezanour also provides lots of laugh with a voodoo doll.

The plot includes a costume party and Masha's insistence that everyone attend in costumes that go with her Disney-style Snow White. There's Spike as Prince Charming, as well as Vanya and Nina as a couple of the dwarfs. Sonia balks at being a dwarf, but her choice of costume and accent are a game-changer for her.

"Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike" by Christopher Durang combines numerous references to works of Russian writer Anton Chekhov. TPT's website (www.thepublictheatre.org) offers a study guide that sorts all that out, but it's not necessary to

enjoy the craziness. Audiences should be aware that the play contains some adult language.

The set was designed by Judy Stacier, Bart Garvey is lighting director and Jonna Klaiber is costumer.

Remaining performances of "Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike" are at 7:30 p.m. Thursday and Friday, Jan. 29 and 30; 8 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 31; 2 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 1; and there is an added matinee at 2 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 31.

For tickets, call The Public Theatre Box Office at 782-3200 or visit www.thepublictheatre.org.

The Public Theatre is located at 31 Maple Street in downtown Lewiston.

