

•CALENDAR•



Tangled Webs

ANTAEUS THEATRE COMPANY FOLLOWS ONE TOWN'S ROMANTIC TRAVAILS IN 'THREE DAYS IN THE COUNTRY'

BY CARL KOZLOWSKI

The Antaeus Theatre Company has built a strong reputation on the Los Angeles theater scene for creating innovative twists on classic plays. That approach is amply evident in their latest production, "Three Days in the Country," which marks the West Coast debut of playwright Patrick Marber's adaptation of Ivan Turgenev's classic comedy "A Month in the Country," running now through Aug. 26.

Full of wit, folly and heart, the tale of unrequited passion unfolds over the course of three days in the sunny Russian countryside as men and women, both young and old, learn the tender and ridiculous lessons of love. Marber cut the length of Turgenev's play down from a punishing four hours to a 135-minute version, while director Andrew Paul oversaw the hiring and rehearsals for 26 actors filling 13 roles. That move built off an Antaeus tradition of double-casting their plays to give more great local talent the chance to be seen in addition to helping alleviate the stress of its busiest actors as they build the stage production into their frequent shoots for film and TV projects.

"It's not as much about what's different from the Turgenev play, but that it has a fresh sensibility about it," says Nike Doukas, who shares the lead role

of Natalya, the bored wife of a rich landowner, with Anna Khaja. "Turgenev was a playwright influenced by [playwright Anton] Chekhov and has a Chekhovian feel to it: the people are wanting relationships but not getting what they want. I think it's great when playwrights do adaptations of plays, it's more of a take on a play than a literal translation and shows their point of view."

The fact that "Three Days" is double-cast also doubles the excitement over at Antaeus, where two opening nights will be performed this Thursday and Friday to give all the actors a chance to shine. The rest of the ensemble includes Antonio Jaramillo and Daniel Blinkoff as Arkady the landowner, who is yearned after by family friend Rakitin (Corey Brill and Leo Marks).

When Belyaev (Adam Haas Hunter and Peter Mendoza) arrives to tutor Natalya's young son, Kolya (Elijah Justice and Marcello Silva), Natalya falls in love with him — but so do both her ward, Vera (Chelsea Kurtz and Jeanne Syquia), and the servant, Katya (Ellis Greer and Lila Dupree). Meanwhile, Matvey (Jay Lee and John Bobek) loves Katya, Bolshintsov (Alberto Isaac and Gregory Itzin) pines after Vera, and the local doctor, Shpigelsky (Harry Groener and Armin Shime-

rman), hopes to marry Lizaveta (Dawn Didawick and Lily Knight). Also in the ensemble are Lorna Raver and Reba Waters Thomas as Arkady's mother, Anna, and Marcelo Tubert and Patrick Wenk-Wolff as Schaaf, a German tutor.

"What's most interesting about the play is it's written by Marber, who wrote 'Closer' about love in the 20th century, and this is about love in the 19th century," says director Andrew Paul. "I directed the American debut of the play in 2016 and this is the West Coast premiere. The original play is legendary for inspiring Chekhov to write for the theater, after just writing stories. I was always puzzled by that because I found it tedious and never really enjoyed it.

"I met with Marber and after the success of 'Closer' the play and the movie, he said his family members were living in London and were nervous about raising kids in that environment due to terrorism," Paul continues. "He became a gentleman farmer for seven years on a working farm and tapped into that experience in writing this." ■

The Antaeus Theatre Company presents "Three Days in the Country" starting at 8 p.m. tonight and running through Aug. 26 at 110 E. Broadway, Glendale. Tickets are \$15 for previews and \$30 to \$34. Call (818) 506-1983 or visit antaeus.org.