

STUDIO THEATRE

DAVID MUSE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
MERIDITH BURKUS MANAGING DIRECTOR

AND **NEW NEIGHBORHOOD**

PRESENT

THREE SISTERS

BY **ANTON CHEKHOV**

TRANSLATED BY **PAUL SCHMIDT**

DIRECTOR

JACKSON GAY

SET DESIGNER

DANIEL CONWAY

LIGHTING DESIGNER

JESSE BELSKY

COSTUME DESIGNER

JESSICA FORD

SOUND DESIGNER

CHRISTOPHER BAINE

COMPOSER

JAMES BARRY

DRAMATURG

LAUREN HALVORSEN

CASTING

**CALLERI CASTING (JAMES CALLERI,
PAUL DAVIS, ERICA JENSEN)**

PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER

KERI SCHULTZ*

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

MADISON BAHR*

PRODUCTION MANAGER

JOSH ESCAJEDA

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

ROB SHEARIN

Presented by
special arrangement
with Helen Merrill LLC.
Beginning March 8, 2017
in the Mead Theatre.

Three Sisters is generously underwritten by
Bobbi and Ralph Terkowitz.

**Member Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional
Actors and Stage Managers in the United States*

A NOTE FROM THE DRAMATURG, LAUREN HALVORSEN

In 1898, on the advice of his doctors and at the age of 39, Anton Pavlovich Chekhov moved to Yalta. The temperate climes of the coastal village, a slowly trekked 800 miles from Moscow, alleviated the symptoms of his acute tuberculosis. Chekhov, yearning for Moscow's intellectual and cultural energy—and his burgeoning romance with Olga Knipper, an actress at the Moscow Art Theatre—christened his place of exile “warm Siberia” and “a lousy dump.” In a letter to a friend the next year, he likened himself to “an army officer stationed in some godforsaken provincial hole,” and in later correspondence lamented, “I am dreadfully bored in Yalta. My life does not run or flow, but crawls along.” Chekhov harnesses this sense of tedious accrual—the incremental pile-up of frustratingly minor incidents, as seismic change hovers just beyond reach—in his 1901 masterwork *Three Sisters*.

Three Sisters' expansive timeline distinguishes itself in Chekhov's oeuvre—the play spans approximately four years, with long intervals passing between its four acts. Likewise unique in Chekhov's writing is its lack of a sole protagonist. (The collective focus is intentional: Chekhov wrote the play for the acting ensemble of the Moscow Art Theatre.) A meticulous observer of human behavior, Chekhov created characters who were fiercely realistic, people whose lives lack crests and plunges, whose emotional landscape is comprised entirely of inner turmoil that rarely finds expression.

This interiority is amplified by Chekhov's approach to language and plot. In *Three Sisters*, characters articulate themselves in fragments and disjointed expression: they approach their feelings sideways, offer answers untethered from questions, change subjects without warning. The plot likewise sidles on in fits and starts; the significant dramatic events that would shape the conflicts and resolution of other plays are here suggested by distant sound effects, or occur offstage or between acts. As translator Paul Schmidt observes of *Three Sisters*, “What Chekhov accomplished was gradually to cut away the melodramatic moments of the ‘plot’, or shift them offstage, leaving finally only his characters' helpless, unheeding responses to those moments.” *Three Sisters* subverts centuries of dramatic conventions and in exchange Chekhov captures the confusion and glory of being an imperfect person in an imperfect time.

In place of direct action expressed through arguments and negotiation, leading from one conflict to another, building to a climax that reveals a newly made order, *Three Sisters* offers a steady accumulation of quotidian moments, moments that reveal Chekhov's characters at their most urgent junctures of uncertainty, introspection, and desire.

Time is relentless, and it moves in one direction in *Three Sisters*—even as its characters lean toward the comforts of the past or the possibilities of the future. But when that fictional geography erodes, how will the Prózorovs and their circle of friends, lovers, and rivals live within the messy unknowns of the present? As we navigate the shifting world in our own present, the fierce resilience to live in the face of uncertainty that fuels *Three Sisters* burns anew.