

# Student thespians perform admirably in Chekhov's challenging 'Three Sisters'

By JEFF GROVE  
Assistant Arts Editor

The plays of Anton Chekhov are probably the hardest modern plays to stage. But no one who saw *Three Sisters*, produced by the UNC department of dramatic art last week in Playmakers Theatre with an all-student cast, would have guessed as much.

The play deals with a family in a provincial Russian town at the turn of the century. The sisters, Olga, Masha and Irina, dream of the romantic life they knew as children in Moscow and long to return to the great city. Their brother, Andrey, is a shy man content to pass his days reading. His fiancée, Natasha, muscled her way into the family and eventually establishes herself as head of the house.

Of the three sisters, perhaps the most appealing was Irina, the youngest. Played by Kathryn Meisle, she is a vulnerable innocent who did a lot of growing up in the final scene, when the man she did not love but was engaged to marry is killed in a duel.

In some productions of *Three Sisters*, Masha is a passive character. Not so here. Wendy Wilson played her as a passionate woman trapped in a marriage that had fallen far short of her expectations. This choice made Masha come alive, a difficult feat since she often was on stage for long periods of time without speaking.

Olga is the most difficult of the three roles. She is the quiet, firm leader of the trio, but her problem in the play — being ushered into a job she really does not want — seems far less significant than the problems her sisters face. Consequently, an actress playing Olga has to work very hard to gain the audience's sympathy. Mona Niemiec's Olga exerted a definite but gentle pull on her sisters. She seemed to be the force that held the family together.

Michael Cumpsty's performance as Andrey hit the right mark. His shyness was believable because he used it as a shelter, and it did have limits. When provoked, he was capable of explosive emotions.

The military holds a great influence over the family because the

father was a general. A battalion is quartered in the town, and some of its officers are family friends who visit often.

Baron Tusenbach, Captain Solyony and Doctor Chebutykin are among these military visitors. John Tyson played Tusenbach, a natty little man who became quite touching at the end of the play, in an appropriately brash fashion. Caspar Thomson's Solyony was a brooding, vicious character — almost too much so, because it was easy to wonder why this man, obviously disliked by everyone else, was allowed to visit. Still, he delivered his lines with an acid disdain the audience seemed to like. The doctor was played by Dale Mitchell. An often melancholy man, Chebutykin in Mitchell's hands was a sympathetic character offering comments on the stupidity and futility of life.

There were, however, actors whose performances just didn't work. Chief among these were Ken Strong as Vershinin, a colonel who has an affair with Masha. Vershinin is a highly precise man, but Strong made him artificial and overly precise.

Still, Vershinin was a welcome change from Masha's husband, Kulygin. Played by Carl Espy as a buffoon, Espy offered caricature instead of character, and it was irritating at that.

Anne Seitz made Natasha a hateful woman. Her nastiness and anger often went overboard and seemed unmotivated. At Saturday night's performance, she was so evil that the audience hissed at her appearances.

Director Gregory Boyd, who with Nicholas Fersen translated the play into English, brought out the humor that is often buried in productions of *Three Sisters*. He also put Chekhov's themes of time, death and futility into physical terms. Thanks to his leadership, this *Three Sisters* was challenging and thought-provoking.

Peter D. Gould's set was a stark wooden arrangement that emphasized the family's symbolic imprisonment. As the evening progressed, the set gradually closed in on the family until it forced them out. A forest of bare birch trees at the rear soon came to resemble prison bars. The atmosphere, aided by Linwood Taylor's lighting, was that of a concentration camp. Suzanne M. Schultz's costumes made subtle but effective comments on the characters.

## BOG

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"It's understood that they (the University) want some sort of food service on South Campus," Monroe said. "The options seem to be a full-service cafeteria with three meals a day or a limited food service that would serve one meal a day and operate a sandwich-type operation."

"The administration seems to see the need for a full renovation of Chase," he said. "We want just renovations enough to do a dinner service and a fast food delicatessen-type operation."

"What we want to prove is that total renovations aren't necessary," Monroe said. "We feel it's going to cost more for three meals." Donald Boulton, vice chancellor for student affairs, said Sunday the cost would be the same for renovating Chase to serve three meals as it would be for one.

"To cook however many meals with renovations just doesn't go," Boulton said. "We've got to renovate the building no matter what we do with it. Whether it's a deli doesn't matter. You've got to do the renovations."

Antle said the University was unsure what the first floor of Chase would be. "We'll be work-

ing that out in the next 30 to 60 days, I hope."

He said a decision on what to do with the first floor of Chase would be made by UNC Chancellor Christopher C. Fordham, III, and would have to be approved by the UNC Board of Trustees after that. Once approved, the University would accept bids for contracts to do the construction.

Antle said renovations for the second floor of Chase may start as early as January 1983, but "first floor probably won't start for God knows when."

The Air Force ROTC, now in the first floor of Lenoir Hall, and some activities of the Carolina Union would move to second floor Chase so renovations in Lenoir can begin in May, he said.

In its Friday meeting, the BOG also approved a loan of \$3,271,000 for renovating Lenoir Hall. Antle said the first floor of Lenoir would be renovated as an expanded dining area, and the Pine Room would offer a variety of fast foods.

In other business Friday, the BOG voted to recommend to the General Assembly that tui-

tion aid for students at North Carolina's 38 private schools be held at the current level.

The board voted not to endorse the 1983-85 budget of the North Carolina Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, an association formed in the '60s to lobby for private colleges' interests.

In its recommendation, the BOG added one clause to the recommendation of the Committee on Educational Planning, Policies and Programs. By stating, "It is further recommended that consideration be given to reallocating funds from the Legislative Tuition Grant to the State Contractual Scholarship Fund," the board showed its awareness of the need to give financial aid to those who most need it, Roy Carroll, vice president for planning for the UNC General Administration, said Friday afternoon.

The scholarship fund is a needs-based program while the tuition grant is a \$650 scholarship given to each in-state student.

## Fahey

From page 1

Referring to the second assault victim, Hunt told Fahey, "You are not to discuss her or go near her. It is your responsibility to take the fear she has of you out of her life."

The provisions of the probation were that Fahey:

- report regularly to an assigned probation officer.
- make monetary restitution for the dental bill of Steven Suddreth, the first victim.
- seek counseling as proscribed by the probation officer.

- not go near Granville Towers without authorized permission from the Granville Towers administration.
- not go in or about Scott Residence College.

- work 100 hours of community service during the probation.

Hunt told Fahey that his travel would not be restricted because of his New York residence, but that he would have to report to his probation officer before leaving Chapel Hill.

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