



Photo courtesy of Sony Pictures Classics

A reinterpretation of Anton Chekov's "Vanya on 42nd Street" will shown at the Mary Riepma Ross Film Theater this weekend.

'Vanya' looks good on screen

The Facts

Movie: "Vanya on 42nd Street"
Rating: PG
Stars: Wallace Shawn, Julianne Moore, George Gaynes
Director: Louis Malle
Grade: B+
Five Words: Chekov's play given new life.

By Chad Johnson
 Staff Reporter

"Vanya on 42nd Street" wonderfully combines two forms of visual arts: stage and screen.

The film portrays Anton Chekov's play "Uncle Vanya", as it is acted by a troupe in an abandoned theater on

New York's 42nd avenue.

Director Louis Malle gets high marks for effectively transporting the audience onto the stage. The audience becomes, in effect, a spectator on equal terms with the actors, instead of being looked down upon by them.

Malle also does an admirable job of pulling the viewer into the film, and thus the play by not giving the viewer a dead giveaway by saying "OK, the play is starting ... now."

The actors are equally impressive. Most are used to seeing Wallace Shawn in such fare as "The Princess Bride" or "Deep Space Nine." These efforts do not reflect this actor's ability. He is convincing and intense as Vanya.

The same accolades go to George Gaynes. His excellent performance belies the fact that he is most recognized for his recurring role in the "Police Academy" series.

The best performance is turned in

by Julianne Moore, last seen on wide release screens in "The Fugitive." Her emotional portrayal of the distraught, but drifting, Yelena provides power and feeling to the film.

The lighting and camerawork add an unusual aspect to the play, enhancing the film. Declan Quinn, director of photography, lights the sets beautifully and allows the play to flourish by not crowding it or limiting its scope.

This excellent film has few faults. Although the camerawork is beautiful, it is a bit static, resting too long at the same angle or relying on standard over-the-shoulder shots in conversations.

On this point, Malle does not show his talents as a director. Still, the film's virtues outweigh its faults by far.

Malle exacts great performances from his cast. They portray a classic play in an off-beat style that should be seen by more viewers, more often.

Plays peek inside of prostitution, violence

By Paula Lavigne
 Senior Reporter

Violence in the home and on the street will attack audiences of two Omaha Magic Theatre productions playing together this weekend.

"Remote Control" and "Dialogue Between a Prostitute and Her Client" manifest themselves through the experimental, bizarre psychosis of the Magic Theatre.

Playwright Megan Terry's "Remote Control" switches between the superficial shell and reality of the Goon family, a family battered by domestic violence.

Magic Theatre OMT Director JoAnn Schmidman said domestic violence hot-line phones rang off the hooks the night after the performances.

"I had no idea the impact would be as immediate as this," she said. "You kind of plant a seed and so many people may recognize it."

The Goon family members are "fiber punks" — non-human creatures, she said, who behave like goons. The audience gets to look at the sugar-sweet harmony of the family on the outside.

Then they take the lid off and peek at the sour violence on the inside.

"Dialogue Between a Prostitute and Her Client" follows "Remote Control" with a look inside the real costs of prostitution.

The production involves live music and site-specific staging, she said. With the renowned spontaneity of the Magic Theatre, anything can happen.

Both plays will be on stage Friday and Saturday at 7 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$7 for students, and \$12 for adults.

The theater will also bring its production "Sound Fields" to the Lancaster Room of the Cornhusker Hotel, 333 S. 13th St., Jan. 26 at 10 p.m.

Mousetrap

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Buchanan compared touring to a bout with mental illness.

"You just lead, like, a manic-depressive existence," he said. "One night, the show goes great, you meet some cool people, everything's fine."

"Then, the next night the crowd sucks, you play terribly, and you end up sleeping on some guy's floor and he's got some really freaky cat that's bugging you."

"Sometimes I've just laid there wondering why I got myself stuck a thousand miles from home."

Hotel money is better spent on food and other necessities, Buchanan said, so the band is used to sleeping in the houses of strangers or mere acquaintances in cities all over the country.

"We've toured enough so that we pretty much know someone in every city we play at," Buchanan said, "but most of those people are just those we've met and talked to at earlier shows. We aren't really close friends."

While on tour, simple things can become problematic, he said, such as laundry.

"Last tour, I had one shirt that I

wore every night we played," he said. "And I sweat so much while on stage that the shirt just became this totally disgusting piece of cloth."

"It got to the point where I would wear it on stage, and then take it off and put it into a box until I put it back on right before the next show. I just didn't want to have to wash a bunch of shirts every week."

Things taken for granted at home become very important while on the road, he said.

"Hunger and sleep get to be the only things you care about," he said. "I tend to get really irritable when I'm tired or hungry, and life also tends to get extreme."

"When you get angry, you really get angry."

Being deprived of food and sleep can have bizarre effects, Buchanan said. He said the band almost broke down once over two large pizzas.

"We were almost done eating, and there were three pieces left, one for each of us. But Craig ate my piece and I flipped out; I almost killed him."

Despite all the craziness and negative experiences, Buchanan said he wouldn't give up road life with Mousetrap for anything.

"It's like hell sometimes, but it's also the closest thing to real freedom

I've ever experienced since I was a kid.

"You have no job, no home, no girlfriend. You have nothing but the music and you're just completely alone. It's really kind of an existential, minute-by-minute life."

And, Buchanan said, letting people all over the country know that Nebraska isn't just a deserted prairie is also a good experience.

"No matter where you go, whenever you leave the Midwest you get people who don't know what to expect," he said.

"People in California are absolutely the worst, they just have no idea. The crowds there were the ones that gave us the most trouble about being from Nebraska."

He said one incident in particular made him feel good about his home state.

"This chick in New York was being really condescending," Buchanan said. "She had no clue about what Nebraska was really like, and I just told her off completely. I really surprised her, and she shut up after that."

"I mean, Nebraska isn't the coolest place in the world, but no place really is. Every place has its problems. Anyone who thinks his home town is absolutely the coolest is just being stupid."

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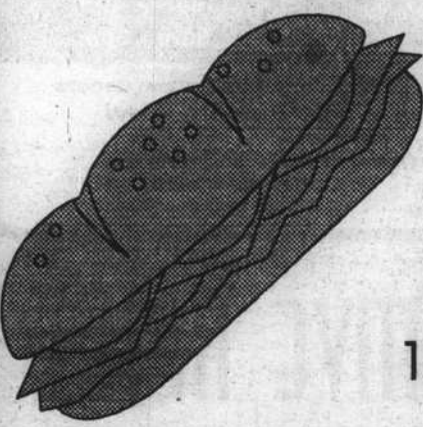
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