

## Actors chose play for master thesis project



### 'Three Sisters' deals with desire for better life in Russia

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Staff writer

People go through life never satisfied with the present moment.

It's always "life was better back then," or "things will be better when we get out of here."

"Always then," "always there," but never here or now.

"Three Sisters," a theater classic written by Anton Chekhov, explores these feelings of hope, longing and desire for a life better than the one being lived.

The play was selected as the thesis project for all five actors in the Professional Actor Training Program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, leading to their master of fine arts degrees in acting.

The story, set in Russia in the late 1800s, is about a family of three sisters and a brother who lost their mother years ago and their father just recently.

It is a time of unsettlement in the country right before a revolution.

The family lives in a chilly, northern Russian town, which they find boring.

They long to return to their former home in Moscow, where they have many wonderful childhood memories.

Sasha Dobson, who plays Olga, the oldest sister, said the family believes the answer to its unhappiness lies in its former home.

"They're either living in the past or looking toward the future," Dobson said. "Their present-day lives are not



satisfying."

The family encounters numerous obstacles preventing them from returning home.

Women didn't have the same opportunities as men had during that time and couldn't even own a home in Moscow.

The sisters then begin to count on their brother to go to a university, get a good job and help them to a new life.

When that doesn't work out, they must face the reality of settling for the life they are living.

Not only is Olga forced to give up hope about Moscow but also dreams of having her own family.

"She gives up hopes for marriage so she can support her family," Dobson said of her character. "She has to come to grips with what she wants out of life and what she has to do."

Amy Johnson, who plays the younger sister Irina, described her character as a strong person in a dream world.

"She has her hopes set so high that once she doesn't obtain them, it breaks her down," she said.

Johnson said the young, naïve

#### Theater Preview The Facts

What: "Three Sisters" by Anton Chekhov  
Where: Howell Theater, Temple Building, 12th and R streets.

When: student preview 7:30 tonight, 7:30 p.m. Saturday and Nov. 17 - 20, 3 p.m. Sunday  
Cost: \$5 student preview, all other shows \$6 for students, \$9 for faculty/staff/senior citizens, \$10 for all others

The Skinny: Play explores feelings of lost dreams and forgotten desires.

character comes to a realization and acceptance in the end.

The role of the young, dreamy girl was not an easy one for Johnson.

"It's the most difficult thing I've ever worked on," she said.

Dobson thought the same of her own role and said, "It was a completely different role from what I'm used to playing. This character internalized everything. She is more serious than other characters I have played."

The intertwining of emotions and changing moods required an ample amount of preparation by the actors.

The actors were required to research the time period of the play and the lifestyles of the characters they played.



JOSH WOLFE/DN

TOP: IRINA, played by UNL graduate student Amy Johnson, has an intense moment during the end of Act II in "Three Sisters," a play which opens Friday at the Howell Theatre.

ABOVE: CELEBRATING their characters' anticipated return to Moscow in "Three Sisters," actors Kristopher Kling and John Eisner share a toast. RIGHT: THE MAIN CHARACTERS of "Three Sisters," played by Johnson, left, Amy Rafta and Sasha Dobson, make fun of another character.

Then they put together a study guide of their collaborated research.

Normally, thesis assignments are individual or paired efforts put out by students.

Dobson said talk had been done earlier in the year about all the gradu-

ate students getting together and doing a play.

So they just decided to do their thesis projects together.

"Three Sisters" worked well for

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