

Uncle Vanya: Lust, loyalty and longing

BY ELAINE RAY

You have mermaid's blood in your veins," Vanya says, scolding Yelena, his late sister's husband's second wife. "For once in your life, have a will of your own and fall recklessly in love."

But even in their most ardent moments, the characters in Anton Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*, which opens July 10 at the Nitery Theater, always stop short of throwing caution to the wind. This play, about work and idleness, lust and loyalty, and the perils of progress, simmers with longing.

Set on a provincial Russian estate, *Uncle Vanya* parallels the wasteful destruction of land with the emotional deterioration of the people who live there. An aging professor announces his plans to sell the estate and live off the proceeds in the city. But he'll do so over the dead body of his brother-in-law, Vanya, who has paid the mortgage for 25 years and whose unmarried niece, Sonya, is the true heir. The local doctor laments the destruction of the forest and the disappearance of wildlife. Sonya longs for the doctor; the doctor has eyes for Yele-

na. Happiness eludes them all.

Under the direction of Jarek Truszczyński, who has chosen an international cast, this production of *Uncle Vanya* is engaging. Although this is Truszczyński's directing debut, he has performed in several productions at Stanford, including *The Inspector General* and *The Bear*. Truszczyński, a veteran of the Polish National Theater in Warsaw,

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JAMES SHELBY, left, Aleksandra Wolska and Rush Rehm appear in Anton Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*, directed by Jarek Truszczyński, July 10-27 in the Nitery.

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came to the United States six years ago.

Drama Professor Rush Rehm, who plays Astrov, the physician, credits Truszczyński for having the vision to weave live pieces of Schubert's *Fantasia in F Minor*, *Four Hands*, into the script. "We have a piano and are really incorporating it in the show," said Rehm. "It's very intelligent; not gratuitous." Noting that scores of businesses and camps use Stanford facilities during the summer, Rehm sees this production as a "credible step toward a real artistic presence on campus."

The cast also includes James Shelby, as Vanya; John Allen, Aleksandra Wolska, Lucja M. Kwasniak, Jeffrey Schwartz, Ada McDaniel and Floria Albanese.

The play's three-week run is part of a year-long study of Chekhov sponsored by the Humanities Center.

Uncle Vanya will be performed at the Nitery Theater for three weekends from July 10 through 27. Performances will begin at 8 p.m. Thursday through Saturday, and at 2 p.m. Sunday. Tickets at \$12 for general admission, \$9 for students and seniors, are available at the Tresidder Box Office or by calling 725-ARTS. SA