

ABSTRACT

A Director's Approach to Helen Edmundson's *Anna Karenina*

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Helen Edmundson's adaptation of Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* is an engaging yet complicated script that presents a challenge to directors and designers alike. The play breaks down the eight hundred-page novel into an evening's entertainment and forces the two main characters to encounter one another and together relive their stories. This thesis is a documentation of the director's process in approaching, conceptualizing, analyzing, and staging Edmundson's script at Baylor University in February of 2018. This thesis explores the difficulties in adapting a literary classic like *Anna Karenina* for the stage and relates specific adaptation choices to the theatrical style of the play.

A Director's Approach to Helen Edmundson's *Anna Karenina*

by

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seen you do. Thank you for making me push myself to try and emulate your work ethic and artistry.

DEDICATION

To Mom and Dad. Thank you for everything.

CHAPTER ONE

The Playwright and the Play

Introduction

Theatre maker Anne Bogart, in her work *What's the Story: Essays about Art, Theatre, and Storytelling*, discusses what she believes the job of a theatre artist is. She writes early on in the work,

In theatre we construct journeys for audiences utilizing the tools of time and space. We create societies, tell stories and propose means by which people can live together with increased humanity, empathy and humor. An effective production communicates in ways that infiltrate the audience in multiple layers, weaving details and scenes, narration, imagery, symbolic action, plot and character.¹

There is no better way to describe the job of a director than in the above quote. Bogart, in describing an “effective production,” lists the necessary elements needed to create a cathartic event of theatre. It is the job of the director to be attentive to these and to make sure that the audience has the greatest experience they can. While I had many goals for this production, it was important for me to create a work that would be both aesthetically pleasing for myself, and likewise engaging for the audience. It is my goal in the future to professionally direct operas, and while *Anna Karenina* is not an opera in the literal sense, there is something very operatic in its construction.

The play, adapted from the novel by Leo Tolstoy, is immense in scope. Moving like a waltz, it tells the story of larger-than-life characters during a period of opulence and

¹ Anne Bogart, *What's the Story: Essays about Art, Theater and Storytelling*, (London: Routledge, 2014), 7.

excess. It was important to me to approach this piece from an operatic angle, paying close attention to movement, flow, and design. I needed to find a way to tell this story that both encapsulated the world that the characters were living in as well as the grandeur and stakes of their situation.

This thesis will explore my journey as director for Baylor Theatre's 2018 production of *Anna Karenina*. The play was approved for me to direct by the Baylor Theatre faculty in November of 2016 as part of the fulfillment of the M.F.A. degree requirements. The following serves as a documentation of my process and of my approach to directing *Anna Karenina*. This chapter examines the historical context of Leo Tolstoy's novel *Anna Karenina* and of playwright Helen Edmundson who took up the task of adapting the work for Shared Experience Theatre in 1992. This research helped me unlock the inner workings of the play and aided me in my theoretical analysis of the script.

Tolstoy and Anna Karenina

Born in September of 1828, Count Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy² is remembered as one of the most significant writers in the Western world. A master of realism, Tolstoy examines the inner workings of his characters' minds in his novels. Much of Tolstoy's work was shaped by his own political and religious standings; *War and Peace* was

² The Cyrillic spelling of Tolstoy's name is Лев Никола́евич Толсто́й, which transliterates to Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy. It would seem that Tolstoy had much control in the late 1800s over the translation of his name. According to the Jewish-Language columnist Philogos, Tolstoy during his own lifetime, had his name translated to "Léon" for the 1879 French edition of *War and Peace* and "Lyof" for the 1889 English publication. The second 1904 English publication of *War and Peace*, translated by Constance Garnett, listed the author as Leo Tolstoy. See <https://mosaicmagazine.com/observation/2015/03/how-lev-tolstoy-became-leo-tolstoy/>

inspired (though not based on) the Decembrist's revolution, and *Anna Karenina* was written following a religious and spiritual crisis he faced.

Tolstoy grew up in an aristocratic family, and was raised by a series of relatives after the early deaths of his parents. In 1862, at the age of thirty-four, Tolstoy married Sophia Andreevna Behrs, a young woman of eighteen. The two shared a “physically passionate, emotionally destructive marriage,”³ and Tolstoy distanced himself from his wife as his religious and political views became more conservative towards the end of his life. Together the pair lived and worked on Tolstoy's family estate, with Sophia serving as Tolstoy's secretary and editor. Tolstoy felt a strong connection to the Russian countryside and recently emancipated serfs who worked it. He founded a school for the children of the serfs who worked his land, and fathered a child with one sometime before his marriage. In 1910, at the age of eighty-two, Tolstoy walked out on his wife in the middle of the night and wandered to a local train station. He died of pneumonia at the Astapovo rail station the day after he left home. Biographers have found it tempting to note a poetic similarity in this to his character Anna Karenina, who likewise died escaping an unhappy marriage at a train station.

Anna Karenina was originally published in installments by the literary magazine the *Russian Herald* between January 1875 and April 1877, and finally printed as a three-volume work in 1878.⁴ In its final novelization form, the book is immense: the 2000

³ Susan Jacoby, “The Wife of the Genius,” *The New York Times*, April 19, 1981, accessed January 10, 2018, <http://www.nytimes.com/1981/04/19/books/the-wife-of-the-genius.html>

⁴ In his essay, Todd notes that the magazine only published editions of *Anna* in the late winter and early spring months of each month. Todd explains this irregularity refers to Tolstoy's “Summer condition’... that during those months he oversaw and participated in the farming at his estate and pursued other activities he found pressing, including the education of the peasants.” 56. See William M. Todd III, “Anna on the Installment Plan: Teaching *Anna Karenina* through the History of Its Serial Publication,” in *Approaches to Teaching Tolstoy's Anna Karenina*

English translation by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky spans eight hundred and seventeen pages in eight parts. Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* is set during the height of the Russian Imperial period and takes its characters across Europe over the course of about four years. The novel focuses on the intertwining lives of Anna Karenina, a noblewoman, and Konstantin Levin, a wealthy landowner. Anna finds herself in the midst of a tumultuous love affair with the alluring Count Vronsky, with whom Anna's sister-in-law Kitty is in love. Levin pines for the young Kitty, but spends his days trying to revolutionize Russia's farming systems. As Anna falls prey to her emotions and allows the love affair to take over her life, Kitty finds Levin and the two begin their own romantic journey. At the end of the novel Anna succumbs to her inner demons by throwing herself in front of a train, while Levin and Kitty start a family of their own.

The first mention of *Anna* comes not from Tolstoy himself, but from his wife in a journal entry from February 1870:

[he] envisioned the type of a married woman of high society who ruins herself. He said his task was to portray this woman not as guilty but as only deserving of pity, and that once this type of woman appeared to him, all the characters and male types he had pictured earlier found their place and grouped themselves around her.⁵

While Tolstoy would not put pen to paper for *Anna* until 1873, the ideas for the novel were forming in the early 1870s while he was undergoing a spiritual crisis. Tolstoy explored this crisis in his work, *Confession*, where he tracks his conversion to a radical anarchist Christian⁶ faith. Gary R. Jahn explains in his essay, "The Crisis in Tolstoy and

⁵ Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Penguin Group, 2000), xi-xii.

⁶ Tolstoy's later religious beliefs are found within his works *A Confession* and *The Kingdom of God is Within You*. Tolstoy held a pacifist-anarchist world view. He believed that men were only responsible to uphold the word of God, not of the state or a ruler. His non-violent view influenced the beliefs of leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi.

in *Anna Karenina*,” “The forces that drove Tolstoy to crisis and eventually to conversion were the fear of death and the inability to understand his life as possessing any meaning that would not be nullified by death... The only courageous course for a clear-thinking person seemed to be voluntary self-removal from life – suicide.”⁷ This is not to say that Tolstoy became dangerous and suicidal during this period of his life. Rather we see the writing of a man who has already accomplished so much and struggles to see where the next step might lead him. Death surrounded Tolstoy during the period before and while he was writing *Anna Karenina*. He experienced the passing of two of his aunts, as well as three of his own young children.⁸ Along with this he and his family dealt with bouts of disease and tuberculosis scares.

Jahn suggests that Tolstoy dealt with these questions by modeling Levin after himself, and putting the character through his own spiritual crisis. He points out the many similarities between Levin and Tolstoy: the two are both parentless, married to women quite younger than themselves, and desire to live a simpler life out in the country working with the land.⁹ Throughout the novel – and in much of Edmundson’s adaptation – Levin questions his place in life and his relationship with the Russian church. Yet, by the end of the eighth part of the novel,¹⁰ Levin has found peace with his surroundings, as Jahn explains:

⁷ Gary R. Jahn, “The Crisis in Tolstoy and in *Anna Karenina*,” in *Approaches to Teaching Tolstoy’s Anna Karenina*, eds. Liza Knapp and Amy Mandelker, (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2003), 68

⁸ Sydney Schultze, *The Structure of Anna Karenina*, (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1982), 3.

⁹ Schultz, 3.

¹⁰ The editor of *The Russian Messenger* refused to print the final part of the novel due to its comments on the ongoing conflict in Serbia. It was not until the novel was published in 1878 that the eighth part became available.

Tolstoy saw the center of the problem in the nullifying power of death; he sought a meaning for his life that would be able to withstand the challenge posed by the certainty of mortality. Levin, too, sees death as a barrier to meaningful life. Yet his overriding concern is not so much about his own death as about the metaphoric death represented by the self as individual. Levin brings the novel to an end not with his conversion to a radically revised understanding of life, a conversion that Tolstoy would eventually experience, but rather with his striking of a tentative and uneven truce between the competing forces of the pressures of his social context and his internal drive toward individuality.¹¹

The peace Levin finds at the end of the novel, both with his new child and with himself, may also hint at the end of Tolstoy's internal struggle.

Tolstoy's inclusion of Levin led some of his contemporary critics to feel the novel was being pulled in two separate directions. Jahn notes that critics and friends of Tolstoy were confused by the journey of the two protagonists: "Tolstoy was publicly reproached for 'promising us one novel but giving us two.'"¹² Jahn likewise points out a letter written to Tolstoy that stated, "Two themes are developed side by side, and developed beautifully, but there is nothing holding them together."¹³ Jahn however discusses the appropriateness of the double protagonists, "Both Anna and Levin pursue courses dictated by their desires as individuals and learn as a result something more than they expected about the attendant social implications of their acts."¹⁴ One of the great achievements of the novel is the choice of dual protagonists. As will be discussed below, Tolstoy's construction of the Anna/Levin stories was placed center stage in playwright Helen Edmundson's adaptation of the work.

¹¹ Jahn, 69.

¹² Jahn, 70.

¹³ Jahn, 70.

¹⁴ Jahn, 72.

Anna Adaptations

Anna and Levin's compelling stories have drawn artists to adapt the novel for stage and screen numerous times over the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. *Anna Karenina* has been adapted for film across the world, with the first adaptation created by French filmmaker Maurice André Maître in 1911. Since then there have been four distinct American adaptations of the novel for the screen. The first, which premiered in 1927, titled *Love*, starred Greta Garbo as Anna, and is known for its dual endings. The team filmed two endings for the story, one that followed Tolstoy's novel, and another where Vronsky and Anna are reunited years after Karenin's death. Both endings were released to theatres, with the individual theatres deciding which ending they preferred to show. Garbo reprised the role of Anna for the 1935 film directed by Clarence Brown. The 1948 adaptation starred the English film actress Vivien Leigh, and opened to less than enthusiastic reviews. In 2012 playwright Tom Stoppard wrote a screen adaptation of the novel, which was directed by Joe Wright and starred Keira Knightly in the titular role. Stoppard's adaptation set the entirety of the action in a theatre and focused on the attention Anna received from society as she plummeted into her affair.

Anna's story is also no stranger to the stage; at least ten operas have been composed around the novel, along with several musicals, ballets, and plays. In 1972 the Actor's Playhouse in New York City premiered Eugenie Leontoich's adaptation of *Anna Karenina* titled, *Anna K*. Leontoich wrote, directed, and starred in the piece, which was told sparingly using a few chairs, props, and costumes. Howard Thompson, in his *New York Times* review of the production mentioned that the sparse staging, "sounds perfectly

awful. Yet it works astonishingly well....Things flowed marvelously. The rest is merely intriguing.”¹⁵ With 2012 came Portland Center Stage’s production of *Anna Karenina* adapted by Kevin McKeon, and directed by Chris Coleman.¹⁶ This production was well received with many reviews commenting on the success of the actress playing Anna, who was brought in at the last minute when the originally cast actress became ill.¹⁷

Peter Kellogg and Daniel Levine’s American musical adaptation of the novel made its way to Broadway in 1992. The musical garnered four Tony Award nominations, but was unable to sustain its run due to unfavorable reviews; the *Variety Magazine* review satirized the famous opening line of the novel with its headline, “All hit musicals are like one another; each flop flops in its own way.”¹⁸ David Carlson’s 2007 operatic adaptation fared better. According to the *New York Times* review Carlson and librettist Colin Graham, “wisely chose to focus on the love triangle among Anna, her husband and Vronsky and the love story between Kitty and Levin.”¹⁹ The opera combined a period style design with Carlson’s contemporary music, in a formula that pleased audiences and critics alike.

¹⁵ Howard Thompson, “The Theater: ‘Anna K.’” *The New York Times*, May 8, 1972. Accessed February 8, 2018. <http://www.nytimes.com/1972/05/08/archives/the-theater-anna-k-conceived-and-directed-by-eugenie-leontovich.html>

¹⁶ A Baylor University alumnus.

¹⁷ Marty Hughley, “Portland Center Stage Review: ‘Anna Karenina’ arrives late but dazzling,” *The Oregonian*, April 12, 2012. Accessed February 8, 2018. http://www.oregonlive.com/performance/index.ssf/2012/04/portland_center_stage_review_a.html

¹⁸ Jeremy Geard, “Anna Karenina,” *Daily Variety*, August 28, 1992, accessed January 12, 2018, <http://variety.com/1992/legit/reviews/anna-karenina-4-1200430474/>

¹⁹ Vivien Schweitzer, “The Passions of Anna: A Period Opera Takes on a Love Triangle,” *The New York Times*, April 30, 2007, accessed January 12, 2018, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/30/arts/music/30anna.html>

Anna has even made her way into the sciences. Anthropologist Jared Diamond coined the term “Anna Karenina Principle” in his book *Guns, Germs and Steel*. He uses the first line of the novel, “All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way,”²⁰ to explain why some animals in the wild are unable to be domesticated: only animals with the appropriate traits will ever be domesticated.²¹ Anna and Levin and Vronsky and Kitty’s stories have found their way into the cultural landscape of almost every generation since Tolstoy first penned their lives. Every new adaptation finds its own way into the text of the novel, and must figure out how to condense the enormous text for a new audience. It is near impossible to fully portray Tolstoy’s work on screen or stage in its entirety. Rather, it takes the energy and talent of a skilled adaptor to bring the characters to life.

Helen Edmundson

Helen Edmundson, born in Liverpool in 1964, always had an affinity for the theatre. She told *The Times* in a 1994 profile that her mother also had an interest in the theatre, after being prevented from becoming an actress by her grandfather.²² Edmundson earned a degree in playwriting from Manchester University, where she formed a feminist agit-prop theatre company²³ called the Red Stockings,²⁴ with whom

²⁰ Tolstoy, 1.

²¹ Jared M. Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997), 157.

²² Kate Bassett, “Helen Edmundson,” *The Times* (London), April 16, 1994, accessed January 20, 2018. LexisNexis Academic.

²³ Helen Edmundson, interview by Ted Sod, *Roundabout Theatre Company*, September 24, 2015, accessed January 20, 2018. <https://www.broadwayworld.com/article/Interview-with-Playwright-Helen-Edmundson-20150924>

²⁴ Kate Bassett.

she wrote her first musical comedy, *Ladies in the Lift* (1988).²⁵ Edmundson credits her time working with the Red Stockings in helping her to better understand the relationship between performer and the audience. “We were constantly doing live shows to very different kinds of audiences...it really helped me get a sense of how to draw an audience in, how to get them emotionally engaged, when to hit them with something completely different and how to turn the tables.”²⁶ Her time with the Red Stockings likewise aided in developing her skills as a playwright.

While with the Red Stockings, Edmundson found herself drawn to telling stories featuring strong female protagonists, as she told Ted Sod of “BroadwayWorld,” “I think that’s partly because I identify with them and feel that there are so many stories to be told. I get a real kick out of watching large numbers of women being on stage and giving them voices as strong as their male counterparts.”²⁷ This is clear not only in her *Anna Karenina* adaptation, but likewise in *Queen Anne* (2015) and her adaptation of *A Mill on the Floss* (1994).

Edmundson left the Red Stockings, and continued to work as an actress until her play, *The Flying*, was produced by the National Theatre Studio in 1990. Nancy Meckler,

²⁵ *Ladies in the Lift* told the story of three women trapped in an elevator. While stuck in between floors the women discuss one another’s lives, and give each other advice. Reviewer Irving Wardle explained in his Times review,

the numbers are strenuously setting out to prove that, under the camouflage of age and class, they are all sisters; and that the two married ladies’ obsession with their men is as destructive as the young [one’s] food binges. Once the confessions get going, it also emerges that both the men are washouts; and by the time the lift –operator ex machine finally opens the gates they have escaped their inner prisons of sexual servitude,

See Irving Wardle, “Properly Stuck; Review of ‘Ladies in the Lift’ at the Soho Poly; Theatre,” *The Times* (London), March 24, 1989, accessed January 20, 2018. LexisNexis Academic.

²⁶ Heidi Stephenson and Natasha Langridge, *Rage and Reason: Women Playwrights on Playwriting*, (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 1997), 36.

²⁷ Edmundson – Sod.

the artistic director of Shared Experience Theatre²⁸ saw the play and sought out the playwright to help in her company's upcoming adaptation of Tolstoy's novel, *Anna Karenina*. Edmundson describes getting this commission as "an accident."²⁹ However, Meckler declared that she was specific in wanting to work with Edmundson who could, "break down the fourth wall and create something theatrical."³⁰ The two began to research Tolstoy, traveling to Russia to immerse themselves in his world, and together they created their adaptation of *Anna Karenina* for Shared Experience Theatre.

Edmundson recalls Meckler telling her while researching the novel, "try and think about it almost as a ballet or an opera. If it was an opera of *Anna Karenina*, what would you want to be hit with? What would you expect to see?"³¹ Meckler and Edmundson wanted to bring a new type of adaptation to the stage, one which felt "very immediate," with no narrator, allowing the audience to become swept away with the characters from the beginning.³² Rehearsals for the play started without a finished script, allowing Meckler and Edmundson to complete the creation by collaborating with actors on the stage.

Anna Karenina premiered with Shared Experience Theatre at the Theatre Royal in January of 1992. The performance earned the company the Outstanding Theatrical Event

²⁸ Shared Experience Theatre was founded by Mike Alfreds in 1975 with a mission to produce classics or adapt classical works through "physical and text-based theatre." See "Company," Shared Experience, accessed January 21, 2018, <https://www.sharedexperience.org.uk/company.html>.

²⁹ NH Books, "Stage Talk TV: Episode Six – 'Meet the Playwright' with Helen Edmundson," Youtube Video, 7:35, October 6, 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vnv-OhuQ7EI>.

³⁰ NH Books.

³¹ Kristin A. Crouch, "Shared Experience Theatre: Exploring the Boundaries of Performance," (PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 2003), 347, accessed January 18, 2018, https://etd.ohiolink.edu/!etd.send_file?accession=osu1054738772&disposition=inline.

³² Crouch, 172.

award from *Time Out Magazine* and, once on tour, the Best Touring Show award from the Theatre Managers' Association in 1993.³³ From there, Edmundson wrote her next original play, *The Clearing*, for the Bush Theatre in London (1993). The play focuses on the son of an English landowner and his Irish wife as they try to live and navigate their love under the reign of Oliver Cromwell in the seventeenth century. The play tackles the issues of ethnic cleansing which surrounded Cromwell's reign, while referencing the contemporary global issues of ethnic clashes in places like Cambodia and Ireland.³⁴ The play opened to positive reviews and was a joint winner of the John Whiting Award. Much like the world of *Anna Karenina*, *The Clearing* explores its characters on a deep emotional and metaphysical level, which can become slightly melodramatic. As critic Nick Curtis wrote in the *Even Standard*, "Trenchantly, often movingly blunt about the power of love over moral cowardice, this play wears a palpitating heart on its sleeve. That is its great strength as well as its weakness."³⁵

Edmundson returned to Shared Experience and to the task of adaptation with her next success, *A Mill on the Floss*. Adapted from the 1860 George Eliot novel, Edmundson chose to expand the narrative by triple casting the female protagonist, Maggie Tulliver. Lyn Gardner, in her *Guardian* review of the 2001 West End revival explains,

At [the play's] heart are the three Maggies, played by three actresses: First Maggie is the impetuous, wayward child, maybe her very soul; Second Maggie is the young woman who tries to suppress her nature so she can bow to the wishes of her domineering brother Tom; Third Maggie is the mature woman caught

³³ Shared Experience.

³⁴ Lexis Nexis

³⁵ Nick Curtis, "Deep in the Heart of the Country," *Evening Standard* (London), November 25, 1993, accessed January 19, 2018. LexisNexis Academic.

between the two as she struggles to reconcile her love for her cousin's beloved, Stephen Guest.³⁶

The original production was co-directed by Nancy Meckler and Polly Teale, and earned *Time Out Magazine's* Best Adaptation award as well as a nomination from the Theatre Manager's Association for Best Overall Production.

Edmundson's success with adaptation continued, and the larger portion of her oeuvre to date is adapted works for the stage. In 1996 Edmundson, Meckler, and Teale again teamed up, now with the backing of the National Theatre, to tackle Tolstoy's fifteen-hundred page epic *War and Peace*. Unlike in *Anna Karenina* where the text and scenes were being created within the rehearsal process, *War and Peace* had a different developmental history. Edmundson explains, "Certainly with... *War and Peace*, the main thing that has happened to the text once we've gone into rehearsals has been the cutting. Nothing that much gets changed. Lines get cut... With *Anna Karenina*, we were working on the hoof all the time."³⁷ In keeping with the tremendous size of the novel, the original production ran at around four and a half hours, and featured fifteen actors taking on the seventy-two roles that Edmundson called for.³⁸ The play opened to positive reviews, and cemented Edmundson's place as a theatrical adaptor and crafter of classical stories. Her more recent projects have included: Mary Webb's *Gone to Earth* (2004), Jamilaa Gavin's *Coram Boy* (2005) for which she received an Olivier nomination for best new play, Euripides' *Orestes* (2006), Calderon's *Life is a Dream*, (2009), and most

³⁶ Lyn Gardner, "Mill on the Floss," *The Guardian*, accessed January 20, 2018.
<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2001/apr/06/theatre.artsfeatures>

³⁷ Crouch, 348.

³⁸ Paul Taylor, "War of the Words; 'War and Peace' has all the Hallmarks of a Classic Shared Experience Adaptation – but is that enough?" *The Independent* (London), June 27, 1996, accessed January 15, 2018, LexisNexis Academic.

recently Zola's *Therese Raquin* for the Roundabout Theatre Company in New York City (2015). While known for these adaptations, she continued to write her own original works for the theatre including *Mother Theresa is Dead* (2006), *Mary Shelly* (2012), and *Queen Anne* (2015). She has also entered the film and television world, and is writing the screenplay for the upcoming film *Mary Magdalene* (2018).

Anna Adaptation

The decision to adapt *Anna Karenina* for the stage by Shared Experience satisfied both artistic and financial demands. They wanted new works that had name recognition to bring audiences in and could be produced with a limited cast. Nancy Meckler explained, "We're a small company with eight actors who tour, so we need familiar plays. Lots of English plays have too many characters so we had to look elsewhere for material."³⁹ The decision was both an artistic and financial. The company felt secure in producing works with a significant cultural heritage knowing audiences would respond positively.

While Meckler was confident in her choice of a playwright, Edmundson seemed to be less than enthusiastic about the prospect, and had several demands. She told Kristen A. Crouch in an interview,

I had seen a couple of adaptations; very dull adaptations where there was a Narrator on the side of the stage saying, "And this happened"... I remember saying to [Nancy], if I do [*Anna Karenina*], then I'm going to make it very, very immediate. I don't want there to be a narrator.... I want the audience to be right there from the word 'go'. I want them to be let in... I want that illusion of theatre to remain.⁴⁰

³⁹ Crouch, 169.

⁴⁰ Crouch, 172.

The two chose to think of the work as a series of images ignoring concerns about limits and boundaries as they found ways to problem solve in rehearsals.

Edmundson credits her research trip to Russia with helping her solve the issue of Anna and Levin sharing much of the text of the novel. She writes, “[we found] that Russians talk about Levin and Anna with equal familiarity and affection. ‘Levin must be part of Anna’, one man told us, ‘and Anna must be part of Levin.’”⁴¹ It is clear that the script focuses on the Anna/Levin duality: the two share the stage for almost the entirety of the play and question whose story they actually belong to.

It was during their time in Russia that Meckler and Edmundson began to formulate their ideas as to how this adaptation could be structured. In her dissertation on Shared Experience Theatre, Kristin A. Crouch discusses Meckler and Edmundson’s journey to writing *Anna Karenina*. She mentions that the two shared, “[an] enlighten experience... when [they] went to see and adaptation of Dostoyevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*.”⁴² According to Crouch the play was simple, stripped down, and performed by four actors. Meckler mentioned, “we realized how free Helen could be if she approached the project thinking she was creating a theatre piece, not a stage version of the book.”⁴³ It was this, along with Shared Experience’s unique and physical storytelling style, that would help to shape the adaptation.

The Play

⁴¹ Helen Edmundson, *Anna Karenina*, (Woodstock: Dramatic Publishing, 2000), V.

⁴² Crouch, 173.

⁴³ Crouch, 173.

Edmundson and Meckler used ideas of metaphor, ritual, and flexibility in constructing *Anna Karenina*. A synopsis of the script serves to demonstrate the choices made to theatricalize duality present in Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*:

Act I

Edmundson takes on the task of truncating Tolstoy's immense novel into the span of a two act play, and in doing so highlights the strong parallel between the books two major characters, Anna Karenina and Konstantin Dmitrich Levin (Levin). At the top of the play we are introduced to both, as Anna rushes into the space chasing a muffled figure, and Levin watches her. The two question where they are, and whose story they are a part of. They seem to be existing, for the moment, in some sort of otherworldly playing space preparing to examine their lives.

Levin tells Anna of his ill-fated proposal to the young princess Kitty (Anna's sister-in-law) and of his desire to leave Moscow and high society and settle in the country on his farm where he is happiest. Anna explains that she is on her way to Moscow to try to repair her brother Stiva's marriage after his wife Dolly has found he has been sleeping with their children's governess. As the two discuss these problems, Anna finds herself leaving the train to Moscow, having just spent the trip talking to the Countess Vronsky, who is visiting her son, the young and handsome Count Alexei Vronsky in Moscow. Anna and Vronsky cross paths, and as they see each other a Woman enters and tells that her husband has just been hit by a train, unable to hear it coming as he was bundled up against the cold. Vronsky gives the woman some money, and Anna travels with her brother to his home.

Anna and Levin discuss what happened at the train station, but Levin, still upset by his rejected proposal finds himself back on his farm, ready to dedicate his life to working the land. Anna visits with Dolly and convinces her to take Stiva back reminding her of the better days the two shared together. Anna prepares to leave, but Kitty and Dolly convince her to stay for a ball, at which Kitty believes that Vronsky will propose to her. Anna agrees, and at the ball she dances with Vronsky causing Kitty great distress. Anna leaves Moscow, and on the train ride back to St. Petersburg sees the Muffled Figure who leads her to Vronsky, the two share a moment but Anna ends it when she sees her husband. She then is whisked home and reunited with her son Seriozha. Anna discusses her trip to Moscow with her husband, but there is a clear rift in their relationship as she no longer sees him in the same light.

Levin takes us to his estate where things have not gone well over the winter. His bailiff was lazy and the upkeep on the farm was not well maintained. Levin becomes determined to write a book on farming and how to solve the issues he is facing. Stiva arrives on the farm looking to sell some neighboring land his wife owns, and tells Stiva that Kitty did not become engaged to Vronsky, but rather has taken quite ill. Anna comes to Levin looking for help as Vronsky has been following her around at her various social engagements. She is unsure of what to do, and sees him once again at a party thrown by the Princess Betsy (a cousin of Vronsky, and known gossip of Russian society). Vronsky shows up at the party and confesses his love for Anna and she tells him to return to Moscow and Kitty. Karenin arrives to bring Anna home, but she refuses to leave with him, choosing to stay and eat with Betsy and Vronsky.

Kitty runs in still upset from the ball and as Dolly tries to calm her down Anna and Vronsky begin their affair. Karenin approaches his wife and warns her of her actions, but she chooses to ignore him and continue on with Vronsky. Feeling guilty, she looks to Levin for help saying she loves Vronsky, but he refutes her ideas of love, as he sees them as illicit and purely sexual. Anna then finds herself with the Princess Betsy at the racetrack ready to see Vronsky race. The race begins and in the intensity of it all Anna reveals that she is pregnant with Vronsky's child. Time stops as Vronsky tells Anna to leave her husband so the two of them can begin their lives together. The race continues and Vronsky's horse falls. The horse's back breaks and must be shot. Karenin sees his wife's reaction and gives her his arm to leave with him. She again refuses to go with him and therefore confirms to him that she is having an affair.

We are suddenly taken back to the country where Dolly and her children are staying for the summer. Levin joins Dolly and she tells him of her financial worries and also mentions that Kitty will soon be coming to spend some time in the country. Distressed by the thought Levin goes to leave as Dolly tries to cheer him up. Anna returns and begins to question her place as a married woman carrying another man's child. Anna's son finds her and she decides she will leave her husband's house with him, and tells his governess to prepare his things. Soon after a letter from her husband arrives telling her that she must end her relationship with Vronsky, and should she decide to continue the affair he will remove her son from her care.

Anna finds Levin and complains about her husband. He listens but tells her she is not seeing things clearly. He finds himself in the fields, mowing with the peasants who begin singing. He begins to lose himself in the work and claims this is what he wants to

do with his life now. Vronsky finds Anna and tells her to ask for a divorce from her husband, but becomes lost in the peasants' song. Levin then sees Kitty's carriage crossing the edge of his farm and realizes that he loves her.

Vronsky meets up with a military friend of his named Petritsky, whom he confesses to about Anna and how he is willing to give up his professional military career for her. Karenin approaches Anna to see if she received his letter, and he warns her never to allow Vronsky into their house so long as she is living there. Levin then finds himself in his barn, holding a meeting with the peasants to begin discussing his new ideas in farming. He wants to increase the peasant's self interest in the work they do, and suggests that they become partners in the estate, and make money depending on how successful the harvest is. The workers are not happy with the idea, as an unsuccessful harvest could mean less money for them. Levin cannot convince them, and suddenly his brother Nikolai arrives very sick. The Muffled Figure enters and Anna follows him over to Levin and Nikolai. Levin sees the two there and becomes upset with Anna for leading the Figure to his brother. Levin seeing his brother so close to death, decides he must begin his own life, and prepares to leave Russia for some time to travel the rest of Europe.

Act II

The second act begins with Karenin seeing Vronsky in his house, and Anna accusing Vronsky of seeing another woman. As she grows more paranoid of her situation, she too becomes more accusatory of Vronsky and his actions. Upon returning from Europe, Stiva invites Levin to a dinner where Kitty will also be. While at the dinner Levin finds the strength to propose to Kitty again and she accepts. Simultaneously with

this action we see Anna and Karenin fighting and Anna threatening him with ideas of suicide. As Levin celebrates his success, Dolly goes to visit Karenin to seek forgiveness for Anna. He refuses, and as Levin goes to search for Anna she is brought on by the Muffled Figure. Having just given birth to her and Vronsky's daughter, she has taken extremely ill, and Vronsky and Karenin are told she will most likely die. She makes amends with her husband and asks him to forgive Vronsky. He obliges realizing that near death he no longer has the same ill feelings for her as he did when she was healthy.

Anna however cannot imagine continuing life with her husband and runs back to Vronsky. Levin, disgusted by Anna's decision, visits a priest to prepare for his wedding. Levin questions his faith, but the priest reminds him that he must begin to find answers in his life through God, as soon his children will be asking questions. Levin decides to share his diary with Kitty, so she can read of his past mistakes, but she doesn't care about them, wanting to marry Levin for who he is. The two are married just as Anna and Levin decide to leave Russia and settle for some time in Italy. They live a bohemian lifestyle, but are uncomfortable and Anna misses her son too much, so the two return to Russia.

Levin feels the need to care for his dying brother, but refuses to allow Kitty to accompany him. Upset by this decision she convinces him to allow her to join, and the two travel to Nikolai's apartment where he lays dying. Kitty cares for him, but he is too far gone and he passes. Once his body is removed by the Muffled Figure, Kitty tells Levin she is pregnant.

Anna visits Betsy, attempting to find a way to get Karenin to allow her to see her son. Betsy tells her to ask for a divorce, but Anna does not see that as a solution. She returns to her home to find her son, and is told by the governess that they were instructed

to tell him that she had died. The two share a short reunion, interrupted by Karenin who takes the child away. Vronsky finds Anna, and tells her he is going to visit some friends at the opera. She believes he is abandoning her again and begins attacking him for what she sees as his faults. Anna begins using morphine to quell her fits of paranoia, but it only serves to draw her deeper into her mind. Levin visits Stiva at a club in St. Petersburg and Vronsky joins them. Vronsky tells Levin he should visit Anna, and the men leave the club to find her. Levin has the opportunity to see Anna and is enthralled by her beauty. Anna asks Levin to send Kitty her regards, and upon doing so, Kitty becomes upset that she is to lose another man to Anna.

Vronsky finds Anna packing, as she tells him she is leaving for the country to escape the city. Vronsky asks her to wait a day longer so he can visit his mother, but this only angers her more. Anna continues to take more morphine, and Stiva decides to visit Karenin to ask for the divorce. Karenin refuses and Dolly goes to calm Anna down. Anna believes that Vronsky still loves Kitty, and decides to take revenge on her husband and Vronsky. She arrives at a train station to find the widowed woman once again begging for money after her husband has been hit by a train. The Muffled Figure follows Anna, and envelopes her as she jumps in front of an oncoming train. Just as Anna leaps, Kitty gives birth to a son, and Levin realizes he still has no answers to his questions. Kitty tells Levin to look out and the two are able to see all the stars.

Script Structure

This adaptation demanded flexibility and simplicity. The original production utilized eight actors playing a range of characters, and featured suitcases that indicated

location.⁴⁴ This emphasis on theatricality rather than realism allowed Meckler to be free with her direction and aided Edmundson in trimming down and editing her work. The two utilized moments of simultaneous staging where two or more scenes played out in different areas of the stage at the same time.⁴⁵ This technique allowed Edmundson to contract the story and focus on particular moments of interest to her. Furthermore, simultaneity allowed her to juxtapose moments of Anna's story with Levin's, such as the opening of act two where Levin proposes to Kitty just as Karenin informs Anna she will no longer be allowed to see her son.

Part of Edmundson's way into the story was the use of double casting, or casting actors into multiple roles. Of particular interest in the original staging of *Anna Karenina* is the breakdown of characters and actors. In the 1992 staging, the program lists the following breakdown for eight actors:

1. Anna; 2. Princess Betsy, Agatha, Governess, Railway Widow; 3. Dolly; 4. Karenin; 5. Vronsky, Nikolai; 6. Levin; 7. Stiva, Bailiff, Petrisky, Priest; 8. Kitty; With the addition of Peasants and muffled figures played by members of the ensemble.⁴⁶

In this breakdown the only "single" performers are Anna, Levin, Karenin, and Dolly; all other actors play multiple roles. The 1993 staging of the show lists the following breakdown:

1. Anna; 2. Princess Betsy, Agatha, Governess, Railway Widow; 3. Dolly, Countess Vronsky; 4. Karenin, Priest; 5. Vronsky, Nikolai; 6. Levin; 7. Stiva, Bailiff, Petrisky; 8. Kitty, Seriozha; With the addition of Peasants and muffled figures played by members of the ensemble.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Crouch, 175

⁴⁵ Crouch, 180.

⁴⁶ Edmundson, *Anna Karenina*, VII.

⁴⁷ Edmundson, *Anna Karenina*, VIII.

This breakdown makes a major change by double casting all the roles except Anna and Levin. Now Dolly plays all the “mother figures” of the play, Karenina plays the “religious figures,” and Kitty plays the two youngest characters. In both of these casting choices the audience is invited to make connections between the doubled characters. We see the actor playing Vronsky both give Kitty to Levin (by abandoning her for Anna), and take away his brother (by dying as Nikolai). We likewise see the actor placing Stiva as several opportunistic characters, and the actress taking on Princess Betsy and other confidants. These choices help to establish the style of Edmundson’s *Anna Karenina*, while calling attention to the scope of Tolstoy’s original novel and his dual protagonists.

Critical Reception

Meckler and Edmundson’s original staging of *Anna Karenina* toured throughout England and Europe in the early nineties before finding its way to New York at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. The show received mainly positive reviews from critics who were impressed by Edmundson’s concise adaptation and Meckler’s engaging direction. Michael Arditti of the *Evening Standard* in London was impressed by the show’s original run: “Nancy Meckler’s production skillfully suggests the period without ever degenerating into a fashion parade. Her blend of naturalism and stylization captures both the intensity of individual emotions and the formality of the social world.”⁴⁸ Reviewer John Peter of the *Sunday Times* also had praise for the production writing, “Helen Edmundson’s adaptation... grows and moves with an athletic swiftness, a sombre, adult sensitivity, and a sense of power self-assurance. Frankly I did not think

⁴⁸ Michael Arditti, “Between Love and Unhappiness; THE CRITICS,” *Evening Standard* (London), March 11, 1992, accessed January 21, 2018. LexisNexis Academic.

this was possible.”⁴⁹ Like Arditti he commends Meckler’s staging of the piece and use of simplified design elements. The American premier of the show was also commended for its theatricality. Peter Marks of the *New York Times* wrote,

The three-hour production, performed with only a few well-chosen props on the bare stage of the Brooklyn Academy of Music’s Majestic Theatre, is guided with such intelligence by Nancy Meckler and performed with such discipline by the eight-member cast that the pitfalls in reducing a voluminous 19th-century Russian novel to two cogent acts ultimately seem secondary.⁵⁰

Meckler and Edmundson created a script and a world that so concisely condensed Tolstoy’s novel that critics and audiences alike were able to become engaged in the story of Anna and Levin.

Conclusion

Edmundson’s text is purposeful in its theatricality. In attempting to condense an eight hundred-page novel one has no choice but to make certain decisions to keep the audience’s attention while preventing the play from becoming an all night affair. Tolstoy, in penning *Anna Karenina*, was exploring his spiritual beliefs, and wrote a novel about two characters who have life changing-experiences. Anna has a long fall from grace, while Levin pulls himself up out of the depths of his misery. Edmundson herself questions, “what really [occupied] my mind was why Tolstoy had chosen to put these two stories together? What is the relationship between Anna and Levin?”⁵¹ The play explores the relationship between the two characters, and attempts to answer this question

⁴⁹ John Peter, “Undone by the Enemy Within,” *The Sunday Times* (London), March 15, 1992, accessed January 21, 2018. LexisNexis Academic.

⁵⁰ Peter Marks, “‘Anna Karenina’: A Classic Russian Tale of Infidelity, Sparely Told,” *The New York Times*, November 13, 1998, accessed January 21, 2018.
<http://partners.nytimes.com/library/theater/111398anna-theater-review.html>

⁵¹ Edmundson, v.

by playing out the story of *Anna Karenina* in a theatrical manner. The chapters which follow document my process in analyzing and staging *Anna Karenina* at Baylor University, exploring the research which lead to my directorial concept and the analysis that informed my choices with designers and actors.

CHAPTER TWO

Theory and Analysis

Introduction

Helen Edmundson's *Anna Karenina* does more than reduce an eight hundred plus page novel into a single night's entertainment. The play theatricalizes the question of Anna and Levin's shared presence in the novel. The play takes the novel's two major characters and forces them to interact with one another for three hours on stage. Anna and Levin, who serve as literary foils for one another, become, on the stage, a metaphorical and symbolic dialectic on life and lived experiences. This chapter explores the structure of Edmundson's text, along with the nature of its two major characters, Anna and Levin, as representations for two ways of knowing life.

Style and Structure

In Edmundson's play, Levin and Anna are eternally searching their pasts to find some answer to their story. Using a nesting sense of time the audience sees Anna and Levin interacting in a cyclical time and space, sharing and remembering their individual stories. Rather than a suggestion of the afterlife, this use of time evokes a dream state where memories waltz on and off the stage replaying past events and making new associations. And, like a dreamer, the characters have an awareness of this yet have little power to control it. For instance, Anna's first small speech in the play relates to a memory. She says as she enters, "Anna Karenina. Anna Karenina. I was a shy girl with red hands. Now people nod and bow to me and call me Anna Karenina and kiss my

hand, which is white. I am Anna. Anna.”¹ In this speech alone she rediscovers herself, taking on the role of Anna once again. She is preparing to delve into her story to relive and retell her memories.

Levin is there with her at the start, and also curious about exploring his life. The two even begin to wonder whose story this is,

ANNA. You are Levin. You are Constantine Levin. Why are you here?

LEVIN. I don’t know.

ANNA. This is my story

LEVIN. It seems it is mine too.

ANNA. I don’t understand.

LEVIN. Neither do I.²

This short interaction becomes otherworldly, something devoid of normal time, and introduces the audience to this particular story: one in which Anna and Levin will be exploring their own lives searching to solve an unnamed mystery of their own existence. This moment sets the audience up to understand much of the structure of the piece. *Anna Karenina*, in Edmundson’s adaptation, is a highly episodic work that frequently changes location and time at a moment’s notice. Anna and Levin establish the conventions, and give us a late point of attack into their stories. They already know each other, and seem to know what is going to happen to themselves. The audience watches these two characters tell one another their stories and recount their lives.

However Anna and Levin are not traditional narrators of their own stories, instead they become guides for one another and adventurers into each other’s and their own lives. They put on the role of themselves as their stories unfold, and live and relive through their traumatic and happy moments alongside one another. Anna and Levin waltz in and

¹ Helen Edmundson, *Anna Karenina* (Woodstock: Dramatic Publishing, 2000), 1.

² Edmundson, 1-2.

out of their stories in order to sift through their experiences. The two inhabit a time and space outside the reality of their lives.

The play lives in several different “times,” and becomes more and more multi-layered as it moves forward. We are introduced at first to what could be called the eternal time of Levin and Anna, where they can discuss and examine one another’s lives and choices separate from the world around them. Second, we have the real time of the Tolstoy novel, the one that plays out the temporal lived lives of the other characters. And finally, we have a third layer, a tortured, existing outside of the other two, that encompasses Levin, Anna and the Muffled Figure that follows her. Each of these times serves a specific purpose and can be examined to help uncover the inner questions and issues the play is tackling.³

Anna and Levin’s private conversations with one another in their intimate eternal time allow the audience to see into the minds of the two major characters of the novel. While Tolstoy can directly tell us exactly what Anna or Levin are thinking and feeling at a particular moment, the play has a more difficult time narrating ideas and feelings inside of a character’s head. The short and interspersed conversations Anna and Levin have give the audience an opportunity to get key information in a theatrical way. Take for instance Anna and Levin’s conversation after she has started her affair with Vronsky:

³ Edmundson’s choice to adapt *Anna Karenina* by using time erratically is actually a nod to the novel itself. While the novel is held as an exemplar of western realist writing (or at least a close second to Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*) it is not free from some artistic jumps in time. Tolstoy, like any other literary writer, uses times as a means to heighten action and show his readers moments that they should look out for. One example we can find is during the first interaction between Anna and Vronsky, as the two lock eyes at a train station. Tolstoy writes, “In that brief glance Vronsky had time to notice the restrained animation that played over her face and fluttered between her shining eyes and the barely noticeable smile that curved her red lips. It was as if a surplus of something so overflowed her being that it expressed itself beyond her will, now in the brightness of her glance, now in her smile.” (Tolstoy, Part II, Chapter XVIII), Time for Vronsky slows down here as he looks into the eyes of Anna for the first time.

ANNA. Levin, Levin... Levin, look at me, I can't help it. Do you think I don't know what I have done? Please don't turn your back on me... Please – I know what I have done and God knows what will happen to me now, I am in his hands, I am just a girl, I am Anna... I had to. I had to do it. I love him.

LEVIN. Love?

ANNA. Yes Love. It is not just an affair like other people have. It is not just throwing a body down on a bed and...

LEVIN. Stop.

ANNA. It is love. The same love which you feel for Kitty and for the Spring and for your child who isn't born yet.

LEVIN. Don't compare yourself to those pure things.

ANNA. I know I am bad, but there is good here too. He would give his life for one moment of that happiness and I would – I would give my life. I will have to face what comes to me but I know now what it means to live... It is shameful, it is rapturous, it is frightening....

LEVIN. Where are you now?⁴

This moment, occurring about halfway through the first act is fascinating. From one end, we see Anna and Levin in their private world discussing their roles in their own stories: Anna defending herself and her decisions, and Levin trying to be distant with the world around him because of his own perceived “goodness.”

Anna's statement to Levin, “I will have to face what comes to me but I know now what it means to live,” hints that she knows how her story will end. Levin shuts down the conversation and changes the subject by asking Anna where she is, knows that doing so will cause the scene to shift and release him from talk of Kitty and love. Anna and Levin rely on each other to tell their own story, but are at odds about the means by which to remain the protagonist in their own. Anna protects herself by falling into her love affair and doing what she can to keep Vronsky and her sanity close, while Levin chooses to shut the outside world away and spend his time farming in the country.

⁴ Edmundson, 31.

Edmundson uses this device of one character asking “where are you now?” to allow Anna and Levin to jump in and out of their story. Anna and Levin merely need to ask and the accompanying answer will place them in the real time of Tolstoy’s novel, and more of the story will unfold. For instance, the audience is swung into Anna’s story by her simply answering Levin’s question,

LEVIN. ...Where are you now?

ANNA. I am on the train from St Petersburg on my way to see Stiva. We’re slowing down. We’ve stopped. I have arrived in Moscow.

There is the sound of a whistle. Music. VRONSKY enters. He looks about and sees ANNA. She turns her head slowly and looks at him. Their eyes lock.

*After a moment, the music fades. The stage is filled with a throng of people and the noise of a busy station. Vronsky’s mother, the COUNTESS, enters and he goes to greet her.*⁵

While Anna’s answer suffices to help set our location, Edmundson utilizes other elements to help establish the train station. Along with Anna’s dialogue, Edmundson asks for the sound of the train, and the addition of the ensemble’s bodies to create the space. It is not only the characters language that helps to set where and when we are, but other theatrical elements that come together to create the different locations of this world.

While these real time scenes play out with traditional dramatic devices they occur in rapid succession. Due to the sheer mass of the novel, the play must sweep from place to place in order to keep up with the story. This creates a waltz-like movement to the narrative. Edmundson’s adaptation includes about fifty scenic switches, the majority of which are accomplished through Anna and Levin declaring where they are at a given moment. Nowhere does Edmundson mention that these moments need to be fully realized scenically, like the entrance of the ensemble in the train station, many of these locations are defined by a few elements and placement of characters.

⁵ Edmundson, 6.

At the same time, there are some scenes that do follow a more realistic style. Levin's conversation with the peasants in his barn is a moment of traditional dialogue. There is no heightened language, no stopping of time, and no interruption by Anna. This time is entirely Levin's and dedicated to his work. And while such scenes do not last long, they are important and serve two major functions. First and foremost, they drive Tolstoy's story of *Anna Karenina* forward. Second it prevents Anna and Levin from simply serving as narrators to their story. The world around them may be fluctuating and unstable, but there are moments of real life with other characters that includes peace, stillness, and discovery. These scenes in real time seem to occur more with Levin's story suggesting his connection to an authentic tangible lived life.

The third time that Anna and Levin inhabit is shared with the mysterious Muffled Figure. In Edmundson's stage directions, it is the appearance Muffled Figure that causes Anna to enter the space.

*A bent, muffled figure enters, dragging a sack. He mutters. There is the sound of a hammer on iron. A woman, ANNA, follows the figure. She is scared, agitated, but she wants to see his face and hear his words.*⁶

This figure, which haunts Anna, inhabits her personal world and torments her throughout the play. The Muffled Figure likewise haunts Anna in the novel. Towards the middle of the novel she begins to become paranoid about her security in society and her relationship with Vronsky. The situation is affecting her subconscious and she explains a dream she had to Vronsky about the railway worker she saw get mangled on the tracks in Moscow.

Yes, a dream... I saw it was a muzhik⁷ with a disheveled beard, small and frightening. I wanted to run away, but he bent over a sack and rummaged in it

⁶ Edmundson, 1.

⁷ Russian for peasant

with his hands...He rummages and mutters in French, very quickly... *‘Il faut le batter le fer, le broyer, le pétrir’*⁸...’ I was so frightened that I wanted to wake up, and I woke up... but I woke up in a dream. And I wondered what it meant. And Kornei says to me: ‘You’ll die in childbirth, dear, in childbirth...’ and I woke up.⁹

Here Anna is given foresight into the future, and perhaps into another realm. After this moment the figure continues to haunt Anna in the novel, not letting her forget about the train accident she witnessed at the beginning foreshadowing her own death.

The figure, in its basic form, is the personification of death that leads Anna to her mental downfall and eventual suicide. In the play the Muffled Figure exists outside the realm of the ensemble much like Anna and Levin, however it seems to inhabit a world even separate from theirs. Anna is fascinated by the figure throughout and it is able to lure her into scenes and moments dragging her through parts of the story she does not want to experience again. Levin is able to ignore the figure, and questions why Anna follows and listens to it. Anna on the other hand tries to uncover the mystery of the figure and chases it throughout the play.

Levin is less disturbed by the Muffled Figure. However, in the final moments of the first act, Levin recognizes the figure for what it is. With Levin’s brother, Nikolai, sick and close to dying, he sees the proximity of death in the form of the Muffled Figure. Levin realizes what will happen to his brother and blames Anna for luring the figure into this scene,

LEVIN, (*To ANNA and himself*) He is so thing... He’s dying. Isn’t he? And I will die too. If not today, then tomorrow, if not tomorrow, then in thirty years time – what difference does it make? Here am I working, wanting to make something of my life, and forgetting that it will all end... He’s lying there struggling to breathe with what’s left of his lungs.

⁸ “You must beat the iron, pound it, knead it...”

⁹ Tolstoy, 361-362.

The muffled figure has entered and is crouching next to NIKOLAI. ANNA has moved close again, fascinated. LEVIN sees the figure.

[LEVIN.] What are you doing here? (*Turning on ANNA*) You knew didn't you?

You knew what it meant?

ANNA, (*Frightened*). No.

LEVIN. But you follow it... you follow it and you listen.

ANNA. Levin...

LEVIN. Stay away from me.¹⁰

Here Levin begins to uncover what the figure is, or at least how it functions in his and Anna's world.

In the end, it is the Muffled Figure that lures Anna to her death. While her suicide is her own decision, the figure accompanies her to the brink and is present when she jumps in front of the train. Edmundson chooses to include the entire ensemble in Anna's final action, casting them all as Muffled Figures, and having them form the train that eventually envelopes Anna as she jumps in front of it. In Anna's world, death has completely taken over and she has no escape from it. At this same moment Kitty gives birth to Levin's son, leading him towards life and away from the figure.

Symbolism, Carl Jung, and Anna

In exploring the dream-like use of time inside of Edmundson's *Anna Karenina* I decided to turn to dream psychology, and specifically to the psychologist/writer Carl Jung and his exploration of dream logic and its application to the creative process. In her article "Creativity in the Theatre: Robert Edmond Jones and C. G. Jung," Dana Sue McDermott explores theatre scenographer Robert Edmond Jones's relationship with Jungian psychology. She explains the importance of examining modern psychology in the modernist theatrical design movement. She uses a speech given by Jones as an example,

¹⁰ Edmundson, 46-47.

“We have learned that beneath the surface of an ordinary everyday normal casual conscious existence there lies a vast dynamic world of impulse and dream, a hinterland of energy which has an independent existence of its own and laws of its own: laws which motivate all our thoughts and actions.”¹¹ Jung himself saw a strong connection between dream logic and the theatre writing, “[a] dream is a theatre in which the dreamer is himself the scene, the player, the prompter, the producer, the author, the public, and critic.”¹²

According to McDermott, “Jung’s method involved analyzing his patient’s dreams through a process he called amplification. By this he meant enlarging the images or symbols present in a dream through mythological and archeological material as well as the patient’s personal associations.”¹³ For Jung there is a strong connection between understanding and symbols. In his work, “Drama and Symbol,” Richard Courtney further explains Jung’s understanding of symbols. He writes, “[Jung] accepted the necessary vagueness of a symbol as an analogy, making a comparison between expression and content. To this he added the collective unconscious, in which symbols express a deep, innate layer in the human psyche where content and action are similar for all people.”¹⁴ According to Jung this collective unconscious is, “a sphere of unconscious

¹¹ Dana Sue McDermott, “Creativity in the Theatre: Robert Edmond Jones and C. G. Jung,” *Theatre Journal* 36, no. 2 (1984): 214, accessed September 21, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3206993>.

¹² McDermott, 216.

¹³ McDermott, 215.

¹⁴ Richard Courtney, *Drama and Intelligence: A Cognitive Theory*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990), 113.

mythology whose primordial images are the common heritage of mankind.”¹⁵ While many contemporary scholars reject the modernist theory of the collective unconscious, Jung’s ideas of symbolism remain influential.

For McDermott it is the work of scenographer Robert Edmond Jones that makes this connection between the unconscious and the realized artistic endeavor. But according to Courtney it is not only the visual side of theatre that creates symbolism, but the performance side as well. He writes, “When these figures (signs, metaphors, symbols) are externalized through dramatic action, *each can be transformed into symbols*. This occurs in degrees of intensity from the least symbolically significant to the most.”¹⁶ In other words every action undertaken by an actor on the stage can be read as a symbol. Some are more significant than others, but in the end each are a part of the building blocks of understanding for the audience.

This provides a framework to understand what Anna and Levin are doing in Edmundson’s play. From the start, Anna and Levin have no conscious way to identify their situation. The eternal time constitutes an unconscious world from which they are able to wander into the real world, changing time and locations at any moment by simply asking “Where are you now?” In this dream and theatrical like state logic fails and symbols become important. As Cortney explains, “The transformation of figures into symbols is an instance of *deixis*, the deliberate choice of the player (or, in the playhouse, the director) to point to a specific element in the performance, giving it more power than

¹⁵ C.G. Jung, *The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 80.

¹⁶ Cortney, 117.

other elements.”¹⁷ In Jungian thought, the reason we are able to read these signs is because we have a connection to the “collective unconscious,” or at least an understanding of cultural and mythological archetypes present throughout various forms of media.

In her work, *Dance and the Body in Western Theatre: 1948 to the Present*, Sabine Sörgel unpacks the meaning of Jungian archetypes:

Considering the significance of myth in human experience, Jung suggests that it provides us with a language that expresses our ‘unconscious psychic process’... Myth and the collective unconscious form the realm of Jung’s so-called archetypes. According to Jung, such archetypal figures are the mother, the child, the trickster, the wise old man, the hero, the fool, the devil, the temptress, the scapegoat, the healer and ultimately also our much cherished idea of self.¹⁸

Understanding how archetypes function on a symbolic level can help to open up certain aspects of Edmundson’s script. The characters are functioning in a dream like state.

Their ideas and the images they evoke can be read on many levels. As Courtney writes, “The key question is not what the figure is in abstract, but *what it becomes in dramatic practice*... The figures of dramatic action are in constant flux; they are not objects but dynamics. Metaphors, for example, change their nature under dramatic conditions.¹⁹” As the symbols pile up on top of one another in the form of theatrical images, they begin to form metaphors that audience reads and uses to formulate their own thoughts and opinions on what is being presented.

¹⁷ Courtney, 117.

¹⁸ Sabine Sörgel, *Dance and the Body in Western Theatre: 1948 to the Present*, (London: Palgrave, 2015), 47.

¹⁹ Courtney, 118.

Shared Experience Theatre's aesthetics and the rehearsal process imprinted an image-based sensibility on the text of Edmundson's *Anna Karenina*. It is also evident in Tolstoy's novel that acclimating images was a major force in work. In her book, *The Structure of Anna Karenina*, Sydney Schultze lists the "image clusters" of five major scenes from the novel. The following five lists form the major symbols and archetypes that are found within Tolstoy's novel.

Train station meeting: train, French, red, peasant... death...²⁰

Anna's trip to Petersburg: train, peasant... red, falling (sinking).

Frou-Frou's ride: ... devil, death, French... red...

Anna's meeting with Levin: red, heat, devil.

Anna's suicide: train, peasant, death, French...²¹

What is interesting is that Edmundson keeps all of these scenes in her adaptation and includes many of the symbols in the text and action of the play.

Of the symbols present in the play the most striking is probably the Muffled Figure that haunts and torments Anna throughout. Gary Browning's article, "Peasant Dreams in Anna Karenina," offers a starting place to explain the figure's meaning and purpose in Tolstoy's novel. In his article Browning, quoting Edward Wasiolek who believes the figure to be a manifestation of "the remorseless, impersonal power of sex."²² Browning continues, "additionally... the peasant symbolizes Karenin and Vronsky's degradation, in large part through Anna's exaggeration of their real and substantial faults and her debasing mental transformation of them. Anna encapsulates their perceived

²⁰ I have omitted several item's from Schultze's original list that do not seem to occur in the play. The symbols omitted are: telegram, light, heat, falling (sinking), and drowning. While important to the novel, these few images do not seem to occur or re-occur in the play.

²¹ Sydney Schultze, *The Structure of Anna Karenina*, (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1982), 131.

²² Gary Browning, "Peasant Dreams in Anna Karenina," *The Slavic and East European Journal* 44, no. 4 (2000): 534, accessed September 11, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3086282>.

grotesqueness in a perversion of physical intimacy with her, now brutish, violent, and bereft of affirming sincerity and responsive love for her.”²³ There is a strong connection between the peasant figure rampant in Anna’s dreams and the suffering that sexual desires can bring. Take for instance the word’s muttered by the Muffled Figure, “*Il faut le batter, le fer: le broyer, le pétrir...*”²⁴ or, “you must beat the iron: pound it, knead it.” Browning notes that “little imagination is required to form a semantic field consonant with a brutalization of sexual intimacy.”²⁵

The figure is then a symbol of the brutal and lustful act of sexual intimacy. Anna and Vronsky’s affair starts off lustfully, and Anna cannot seem to maintain it once it transforms beyond that into love. More than that most of the sexual encounters that Anna has in the play are impersonal or brutal. For instance, there is the first example of intimacy between Anna and her husband Karenin once she returns from Moscow.

KARENIN: I’m sure [Seriozha] missed you, but he did not show it. Well Anna, it is almost midnight. I have had my bath and brushed my hair, and now it is time for bed. *The strokes of midnight begin to chime. On each stroke, Karenin touches Anna in a different place, as if he has a routine of love making which he always observes. It is a systematic approach, but he does want her.*

The preplanned and expected approach that Karenin uses lacks any feeling of intimacy and once the act is done, Anna cannot even recognize her husband.

Karenin finishes with his head in Anna’s lap. He sleeps. She strokes his hair.
ANNA (*To Levin*). You see, everything is fine. He is good and kind and remarkable in his way. Why do his ears stick out like that? Perhaps he has had his hair cut too short.²⁶

²³ Browning, 534.

²⁴ Edmundson, 48.

²⁵ Browning, 530.

²⁶ Edmundson, 21

This is the second mention of Karenin's ears in the play, and again is a representation of the lack of intimacy between the couple. Even after Karenin's systematic and repetitive acts of lovemaking, Anna seems to be unable to recognize her husband's ears. She has never truly looked at the man she has shared a bed with.

The most brutal representation of sex in the play is found in the horse race scene towards the end of the first act. In this scene Vronsky has entered a military horse race and Anna watches, with baited breath, to see if he will succeed or fail. In terms of the play the horse race occurs at a crucial moment, as Anna informs Vronsky she is pregnant with his child. The scene already has strong sexual connotations and the staging described in the script emphasizes that quality:

ANNA. I am at the race track. He is riding in the last race... I can just see Alexei [Vronsky] in the enclosure. All the other riders have stallions – big, powerful horses which stamp the ground, but Alexei has a mare called Frou Frou. She is delicate, with fine soft skin and a gentle hear, but she is spirited too and her neck is strong and she has good blood in her veins.²⁷

Edmundson has drawn a connection between Anna and Vronsky's horse Frou Frou. While critic Gary Saul Morson, author of *Anna Karenina in our Time: Seeing More Wisely*, warns of making Frou-Frou's death an allegorical Anna's, he notes that there is still a connection. "Of course there are similarities between Anna and the mare. After all, Vronsky has chosen them both."²⁸ Amy Mandelker, in her work *Framing Anna Karenina: Tolstoy, the Woman Question, and the Victorian Novel*, writes "the comparison of a woman to a horse and man's command over woman to his horsemanship is a commonplace in literature... In Russian literature, brutalizing horses has

²⁷ Edmundson, 31-32.

²⁸ Gary Saul Morson, *Anna Karenina in Our Time: Seeing More Wisely*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 123.

traditionally been used as a metaphor for the abuse of women”²⁹ Edmundson takes the opportunity in her play to use this symbol on the stage,

Vronsky calms Anna as if she is the horse.

[ANNA.] She is nervous. He is calming her, whispering to her and now he is straightening a lock of her mane... Frou Frou is jumpy, her legs are on springs.... *Vronsky has seduced Anna down onto the ground and now he is riding her like the horse*³⁰

Vronsky continues to ride Anna like the horse as the race grows more intense.

Vronsky and Frou Frou then jump over a hurdle, and Anna stops time to tell

Vronsky she is pregnant. Once time as resumed Vronsky continues riding Anna,

The race scene comes to life again. Vronsky is riding Anna

SPECTATORS. They're up in the air.... She's going down, she's going down, She's fallen on her side...

He kicks the horse

She can't get up...

He kicks her again

She can't get up... Her back is broken. He's broken her back.³¹

The sexual intimacy that Anna and Vronsky share becomes public and violent in this scene. Vronsky treats Anna like his horse, something to be tamed, ridden, and destroyed once useless. Vronsky winds up shooting the horse, which greatly affects Anna, creating no doubt in her husband's mind that she is having an affair. The sexual encounter she has shared with Vronsky in this moment continues to lead to her downfall.

The violent repressions of Anna's sexual desires creates trauma and leads to the manifestation of the Muffled Figure. In Jungian terms the Muffled Figure is a shadow figure as Mandelker explains,

²⁹ Amy Mandelker, *Framing Anna Karenina: Tolstoy, the Woman Question, and the Victorian Novel*, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1993), 156-157.

³⁰ Edmundson, 32.

³¹ Edmundson, 33-34.

Jung's description of the shadow figure as a psychic projection matches Freud's view of novelistic personae as component egos. According to Jung, the shadow is a symptom of repression, a form of psychic disturbance resulting from the repression of taboo libidinal impulses: 'where [vital forces] are repressed or neglected, their specific energy disappears into the unconscious with unaccountable consequences... Such tendencies form an ever-present and potentially destructive 'shadow' to our conscious mind. Even tendencies that might in some circumstances be able to exert a beneficial influence are transformed into demons when they are repressed.'³²

In this sense, the Muffled Figure haunts Anna because it is a part of her. It represents her own inner demons and has come to inflict pain on her. Anna's disturbed soul has personified itself in the form of the mangled peasant whose death she witnessed.

Because of this representation of Anna in the Muffled Figure, the play can be read on a level of dualities and parallels. The play includes many parallels that haunt Anna, and often times surround and include Levin. Both Anna's husband and lover are named Alexi, and she names her daughter Anni, after herself. Anna enters and leaves the story by train, and announces her pregnancy in the moments before Frou-Frou is killed while conversely Kitty announces she is pregnant moments after Nikolai dies. In terms of the bigger picture of the play, Anna is drawn to the city, while Levin to the country. And as Anna falls deeper and deeper into her madness, Levin finds the means to rise above himself. There is an interesting internal logic to the play, something repetitive and cyclical, all tied to the Muffled Figure that lures Anna into the playing space.

Mandelker further informs that, "Anna's repression and internal conflict are easily described as a classic case of study of psychic dissociation... Her very name, being

³² Mandelker, *Framing Anna Karenina*, 157.

palindromic,³³ suggests a doubled self, a reflecting center.”³⁴ Anna’s first entrance, and last moments before her suicide reflect a disassociation with herself,

ACT I

ANNA. Anna Karenina. Anna Karenina. I was a shy girl with red hands. Now people nod and bow to me and call me Anna Karenina and kiss my hand, which is white. I am Anna. Anna.³⁵

ACT II

ANNA. I was a shy girl with red hands... There was happiness... Where am I? What am I doing? Why?³⁶

Anna cannot seem to recognize herself at the start or end of the play. She is disconnected from the Anna Karenina of *Anna Karenina*, and while she takes on the role and is the person, she seems to always be a step away from herself. “The novel promotes a schizoid version of multiple Annas as she is surrounded by doubles of herself,”³⁷ Mandelker notes. When Anna becomes ill after childbirth, Edmundson uses Tolstoy’s dissociative language. After giving birth to Vronsky’s child in the second act Anna is struck with puerperal fever and fears she will die. As she lays sick and near death she sees Karenin crying and say,

ANNA. Stay – stay a moment. Yes, this is what I wanted to say. Don’t be surprised at me. I am still the same. But there is another woman in me, I’m afraid of her; it was she who fell in love with that man. I am not that woman now. I’m my real self, all myself. My feet are heavy as lead, and my hands – look how huge my fingers are. It will soon be over. I want only one thing... forgive me, forgive me completely. I am wicked, but my nurse used to tell me the holy martyr – what was her name? She was worse. I’ll go away, I won’t

³³ Anna’s name in both English and Cyrillic is a palindrome: Anna and Анна.

³⁴ Mandelker, *Framing Anna Karenina*, 157.

³⁵ Edmundson, 1.

³⁶ Edmundson, 85.

³⁷ Mandelker, *Framing Anna Karenina*, 158.

be in anyone's way, I'll take Seriozha and the little one... No, you can't forgive me. It cannot be forgiven... No, no, go away, you are too good.³⁸

Anna refers to the self that had an affair with Vronsky as another person. She is disassociated from herself, and Anna, in her feverish state, begins to see that she may be two separate people. It is possible that the woman in her is a manifestation of the Muffled Figure.

She references this person inside of her, or this demon, twice in the play, both during moments when she was toying with the idea that Vronsky is cheating on her. The first instance is early in the second act when she is arguing with Vronsky,

ANNA. Yes, yes. You just don't understand what it's like for me. How can I go out like this and with the way people are talking? I don't think I'm jealous, I'm not jealous – I trust you when you're here but when you're away leading your own life... oh, I believe you, I do believe you. Alexi, I've stopped now. The demon is gone.³⁹

Anna references this demon again later in the act while in Italy with Vronsky.

ANNA. But I got upset and the demon visited me again and we argued. And I don't like the way he looks at Anni's Italian nurse. She is beautiful, and he is using her as a model for one of his paintings. I try to be nice to her. I do not think Alexei is happy. He has stopped painting since you started coming.⁴⁰

Anna is terrified of the demon and knows any interaction with it will result in heartbreak.

Because of the dissociative episodes and self-awareness Anna has, she becomes a image of herself. The search for meaning and symbols ultimately appears to be empty in the character of Anna Karenina. Gazing into a mirror she contemplates she sees herself

³⁸ Edmundson, 57.

³⁹ Edmundson, 49.

⁴⁰ Edmundson, 64.

as a character of pain and guilt. Anna has been chasing herself throughout the play, and when she finally catches up the result is death.

Levin and Phenomenology

Anna's decision to throw herself under the massive iron train correlates with her function inside the urban world of high society and the Russian aristocratic systems. Levin sees a problem with city life and city folk, and almost immediately in the play expresses this opinion,

LEVIN. Because [Moscow] disgusts me. That's all. It disgusts me to see men with their finger nails so long, they can't use their hands, and people sitting and gossiping and flirting and spending hours over meals, stuffing themselves with oysters and caviar. In the country we eat our food quickly, then we get back out and work. You work so you eat so you live. Moscow makes me ashamed – of my friends, of my whole class. Sometimes I wish I'd been born a peasant.⁴¹

Shortly after which he tells of the benefits of the country,

LEVIN. I walk in the forests among the aspens and the birches, and sometimes, when it grows dark, I watch the stars come out. They are so clear and so close. No-one in Moscow looks at the stars.⁴²

For Levin, seeing is believing; nature is tangible and experiential and therefore superior to the concept of happiness. Thus Levin represents a phenomenological way of knowing the world which contrasts with the symbolic epistemology of Anna.

Phenomenology is a theory for understanding the lived and experiential quality of performance. As Sörgel explains, "A phenomenologist seeks to relate the world via returning to such immediate perception which simply means that one starts to account for

⁴¹ Edmundson, 3-4.

⁴² Edmundson, 4.

an experience as first inwardly felt and given to the senses.”⁴³ According to Alice Rayner, in her work *To Act, To Do, To Perform: Drama and the Phenomenology of Action*,

Drama in performance employs each of three areas... it is textual, material, and public. As Bruce Wilshire has put it, ‘theatre as phenomenology is a fictive variation of human relationships and of human acts *in act*. Theatre should not be regarded as contemplation set over against action and creation, but as contemplation through action and creation.’ Understandings and experiences about the nature of an act, that is, exhibit both epistemological and ethical constructions of human behavior.⁴⁴

It is the actions of the characters, of the actors in the space that helps us to create understanding in theatre. The audience has experiences alongside the character’s onstage which inform the performance as much as the fictional character’s onstage discoveries.

The audience’s experience is the primary goal in understanding Levin and his ties with nature. Levin is in constant touch with his senses, relates to his surroundings through them. Take for instance Levin’s monologue describing his love for farm work:

LEVIN. The swish of the scythe, the smell of the cut grass, the flower heads falling the sweat on the end of my nose. God gives the day and the strength for it... If I could just hold on to that, to this feeling that I have now... I’ll buy a small plot of land – grow just enough to eat. I’ll marry a peasant girl. She’ll be healthy and strong. We’ll have children. Lots of children... For so long I’ve been searching for how I can live with peace and integrity and the answer was here all the time in my own fields... I’ll sleep here tonight. I’ll lie down under the stars, like the peasants... Can you hear the bells?⁴⁵

In this speech Levin is describing a phenomenological experience of the country. He revels in sensation: he smells the grass, feels the sweat, talks about eating what he grows,

⁴³ Sörgel, 10.

⁴⁴ Alice Rayner, *To Act, To Do, To Perform: Drama and the Phenomenology of Action*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994), 7.

⁴⁵ Edmundson, 41.

and hears the bells. For Levin, the country is all encompassing and the meaning of life is to be found in that lived experience.

Levin believes that the countryside is where real experiences can occur; where he can actually live his life. Edward Wasiolek in his work, *Tolstoy's Major Fiction*, discusses Levin's fascination with the land and farm work. He writes, "As Levin mows with the peasants, he forgets about the idle argument he has had with his brother. The mowing is real, and the argument appears unreal."⁴⁶ The scene in the novel where Levin mows with the peasants is a major turning point for his character's journey. He spends the entire day working amongst the mowers, sleeps and eats with them, and returns home fully charged and feeling new again after being rejected by Kitty. Edmundson's play does something particularly interesting with this scene in showing us how the mowing supersedes the arguments of other characters and becomes more real for Levin, more like the life he wishes to be a part of.

Levin begins his mowing while arguing with Anna about Karenin's response to her desire to continue with Vronsky. Levin seems to become weary of Anna's complaining and is drawn to his farm work after she reads a letter from her husband,

ANNA. I am very, very good at pretending, at playing the wife and mother, I have become an expert. And I've tried, tried to love him and I clung to Seriozha in the hope that it might make me love him but it has not. I will not go on like this anymore. I am alive and God has made me so that I need to love and live.

LEVIN. I won't listen to this. He tried to stop you. He came to you with an open heart and tried to help you. *There is the sound of singing in the distance.*

ANNA. To help himself. He only cares about his career and his precious reputation. A tight little knot of ambition, that's all he is, a tight little knot with no beginning and no end. *The music grows louder. The peasants enter,*

⁴⁶ Edward Wasiolek, *Tolstoy's Major Fiction*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 159.

a sweeping wall of them, singing and mowing with scythes. Levin joins them and tries to copy their action.

[ANNA] Where are you going? Where are you now?

LEVIN. I am in the fields. I am mowing with the peasants.

ANNA. You can't. Not yet.

LEVIN. I don't want to listen to you anymore. I don't want to think about you or Kitty and her stupid illness, or life or happiness, I don't want to think.⁴⁷

Levin is able to get out of the enteral time and into the real time through the farm work he labors in. It grounds him literally in his own life.

What is even more telling about this moment and about Levin's strong desire to work is Anna's interactions with him and the peasants once their mowing has started and grown.

ANNA. He's not getting my son. He will never take him from me. *She is forced to move out of [the peasants'] path. I will tear it down – the deceit, the lies, his whole world, I will tear it down. No one is listening. The singing drowns her words. She does not know what to do. She collapses on the floor, crying like a child, exhausted with halting so much. I will not tear anything down. My story will go on as before, but it will be worse. I will be the guilty wife, always frightened of exposure and shame and no-one will want to know me. The peasants sing more quietly. Levin is perfectly in step with them now.*⁴⁸

Levin has a strong desire to keep on mowing and enhancing his senses. He is searching for a truth about his own life, while Anna cannot help but bemoan her situation and try to tear down her husband's life. Wasiolek sees a disconnection between the two characters because of this scene. He writes, "The mowing scene is something of a confirmation of the epiphany that Levin experiences near the end of the novel after all this searching for the truth."⁴⁹ Levin's search for the meaning can be seen in his actions mowing with the

⁴⁷ Edmundson, 39-40.

⁴⁸ Edmundson, 40.

⁴⁹ Wasiolek, 161.

peasants. His short monologue about living as one of them, growing his own food and taking a wife, comes shortly after he has finished his mowing. This type of work seems to be what draws Levin closer to his own internal realizations, while Anna scoffs at it. In the end, this scene does not allow Levin to find his peace, but draws him deeper into his desires for Kitty who will eventually help lead him to clarity.

Throughout the play Levin references seeing or trying to see the stars several times. In the final moment, following the climax of Anna's death, he opens up to Kitty and lets his own personal demons go. At this point Kitty shows him the stars.

KITTY. We have a beautiful son, Koysta.

LEVIN. ... Yes. I prayed... I prayed for Nikolai, I prayed for you, I prayed... And in those moments I believed – with all my heart, I believed. But now everything is dark again and I understand nothing.

KITTY. It's strange; you say you have no faith, and I know I should fear for your soul but I don't. You are a good man Koysta; you care for others, more than yourself, you live for your soul. That is enough. *He looks at her and is struck by what she has said...* That is enough... Come with me to see the baby... All the stars are out tonight.

LEVIN (*looking up*). Yes. All the stars.⁵⁰

Herein lies what Levin has been searching for through the play. Seeing the stars must be an experiential and sensual moment for both Levin and the audience. We, much like him, must be able to see and experience the stars for ourselves. We must have our own phenomenological experience in order gain the same clarity Levin does.

The Jungian and symbolic reading of Anna I have suggested is not in simple conflict with a phenomenological understanding of Levin. Anna and Levin are not opposing characters, rather they are compliments to one another. States writes, "We arrive, inevitable, at something like a law of complementarity; to the extent that

⁵⁰ Edmundson, 86.

something on stage arouses awareness of its external (or workday) significations, its internal (or illusionary) significations is reduced.... Theatre is intentionally devoted to confusing these two orders of signification, if not trying to subjugate one to the power of the other.”⁵¹ In her article, “Illustrate and Condemn: The Phenomenology of Vision in *Anna Karenina*,” Mandelker points out a moment in the novel, which is repeated in the play, where Levin has the opportunity to meet Anna with Stiva just prior to her suicide. She writes, “the reader witnesses a reversal of [Levin’s] initial blanket rejection of all fallen women as “vermin” which dissolves into compassion as he views Anna’s portrait.”⁵² Levin experiences an internal change in his opinion because he sees Anna and her portrait.

Anna enters and poses as she did for her portrait. Levin stares at her in amazement.

LEVIN. She’s beautiful.

STIVA. I knew you’d like her.

ANNA.... I’m so pleased...

STIVA. Levin was just admiring your portrait. He thinks it’s marvelous, don’t you?

LEVIN. I have never seen such perfection.

ANNA. It was painted in the old French style. I much prefer it to this new realism of theirs.⁵³

While the onstage figure of Levin has been interacting with Anna throughout the entire show in the eternal time sphere, this is the first moment they come in contact within the real time of the story.

⁵¹ States, 36.

⁵² Amy Mandelker, “Illustrate and Condemn: The Phenomenology of Vision in *Anna Karenina*,” *Tolstoy Studies Journal* 8, (1995): 54, accessed September 11, 2017, <http://ezproxy.baylor.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1306230100?accountid=7014>.

⁵³ Edmundson, 75-76

It is significant that Levin sees her portrait first. In his work *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theater*, Bert O. States quotes and comments on Viktor Shklovsky's work "Art as Technique,"

'Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important.' Such a concept of art arises from, or at least leans into, the phenomenological attitude. Here art is perceived as an act of removing things from a world in which they have become inconspicuous and seeing them anew."⁵⁴

Levin has a phenomenological response to seeing the portrait of Anna next to the woman herself. He cannot seem to disconnect the two; the person of Anna becomes the painting of Anna. This doubling experience allows him to see the complete and better Anna, unlike the dissociative doubling that Anna experiences for herself.

Conclusion

Anna and Levin seek the same thing, which is to understand their lives and their loves better. Anna searches for her desires, she is pulled by the Muffled Figure and troubled by her own reflection. Levin on the other hand is grounded in his lived experiences, and this gives him clarity to see the stars.

And perhaps it really is Levin's ties to the land that allow him to find his clarity. For the world of *Anna Karenina*, in both novel and theatrical versions, it seems that the authors are arguing for a more pastoral lifestyle. In his article "Tolstoy's Urban-Rural Continuum in "War and Peace" and "Anna Karenina," Harold K. Schefski ties together Tolstoy's personal experiences in the city and country with his characters. Schefski writes,

⁵⁴ Bert O. States, *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theater*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 21-22.

Imbued with a total awareness of life's insignificance on an individual level, the urban environment contrasts with the idyllic country atmosphere which is free of the conflicts of civilization and characterized by the harmonious relationships of the single family unit. In view of this duality, it is not surprising that the greatest moments of spiritual ecstasy and internal harmony in Tolstoy's work occur in a clearly defined rural habitat.⁵⁵

There is a clear duality set up in the early moments of the play between the differences of the city and country. Levin bemoans the fact that he cannot see the stars while visiting the city; all of the artificial light, the pollution, and the sheer mass of the cityscape obscures what is really there all along.

⁵⁵ Harold K. Schefski, "Tolstoy's Urban-Rural Continuum in "War and Peace" and "Anna Karenina," *South Atlantic Review* 46, 1 (1981): 28, accessed September 30, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3199311>.

CHAPTER THREE

The Design Process

Introduction

Time spent reading the novel, researching the context, and analyzing the play led me to understand that *Anna Karenina* is about seeking an understanding of one's own life. It is about pain and loss, about birth and renewal, about memory, and about reveling in lived and sensual experiences. The play is highly theatrical, rather than realistic in style, and uses techniques such as doubling, shifts of time, music, movement, dance, and metaphor. In her work, *What's the Story: Essays about Art, Theatre and Storytelling*, director Anne Bogart writes about metaphor and theatre,

Metaphor has the exceptional capacity to activate wide-ranging mental activity by stimulating the understanding of one element through the experience of another. In the imaginative hunt for similar experiences, metaphors can activate a part of the brain called the insula, which helps to identify analogous incidents of revulsion, pain, joy or whatever else held power over our attention previously. The French theatre director Ariane Mnouchkine believes that theatre is *all* metaphor.¹

As previously discussed, Jung's theories of symbolism as they relate to theatrical metaphor became important to this endeavor as well. The world of *Anna Karenina* is a dream-like state, one in which logic is not trustworthy, but rather symbols and metaphors become important in understanding the play's meanings. The dream-like quality of Edmundson's script, along with its waltzing tempo, and repetitive nature is overwhelming. Within this world nothing has a singular meaning. Instead every motion, object, and character carries an immense weight of significance. To help orient myself to

¹ Bogart, 11

the project, I turned to eminent directors whose work I wished to emulate while staging *Anna Karenina*. Specifically, I studied Robert Wilson, Vsevolod Meyerhold, and Ariane Mnouchkine. It was important to look at the work of directors who treat theatre as a very theatrical event; who serve as sculptors of theatre, rather than just interpreters. *Anna* is a piece that needs more than a “traditional” theatre director to guide the cast in their acting choices: it needs someone to shape the images within it.

The work of Robert Wilson (b. 1941), can be particularly difficult to decipher, due to his non-naturalistic and non-realistic approach to directing and concept. However, his productions build striking images and montages that permeate the stage. According to Christopher Innes and Maria Shevtsova in their *Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Directing*, Wilson’s work is best described as a “theatre of images.”² They mean that Wilson’s work, “disturb[s] the standard frames of everyday perception... that illuminates enigmatic and cryptic levels of subjective existence that can only be expressed, visually.”³ Wilson’s theatre presents montages and succeeding images that when constructed and patterned together create productions with a bold overlying structure and unity.

In Wilson images take the place of text: they are the material. I want to stage *Anna* using images to radically tell the story. Wilson speaks of his own work,

Go [to my performances] like you would to a museum, like you would look at a painting. Appreciate the color of the apple, the line of the dress, the glow of the light.... You don’t have to think about the story, because there isn’t any. You don’t have to listen to the words, because the words don’t mean anything. You

² Christopher Innes and Maria Shevtsova, *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Directing*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 163.

³ Innes and Shevtsova, 144.

just enjoy the scenery, the architectural arrangements in time and space, the music, the feeling they all evoke. Listen to the pictures.⁴

Like Wilson, I believe it is important to think of the larger picturization of *Anna*.

Edmundson infuses her script with images and movement, and like Wilson, I had to be attentive to those images. The audience will learn the story through the movement and design. I did not need to rely solely on the text.

Vsevolod Meyerhold (1874 – 1940) was a leading theatre maker and experimenter of the early twentieth century who created theatre productions that are described as overtly theatrical. He used the term *teatralnost*, or “theatreness,” to describe his sensibilities. As Innes and Shevtsova explain, “[It] refers to what makes theatre irreducibly itself... Meyerhold direct[ed] in such a way as to heighten quite deliberately the playfulness, artfulness, artifice and joy of making theatre understood as an activity in its own right.”⁵ The choice to have Anna and Levin relive and retell their story shows an inherent theatricality in Edmundson’s script. The audience is not watching the events of Tolstoy’s novel unfold in real time; rather they are watching two of its characters live and function in a temporal space. We are watching the artifice of storytelling take over the stage.

Tied to Meyerhold’s *teatralnost* is his use of the grotesque. According to James Roose-Evans, in his work, *Experimental Theatre: From Stanislavsky to Peter Brook*, “Realism concentrated on the typical and in so doing impoverished life by reducing the richness of the empirical world. The grotesque, on the other hand, sharpened the senses

⁴ Shomit Mitter, “Robert Wilson,” in *Fifty Key Theatre Directors*, eds. Shomit Mitter and Maria Shevtsova, (London: Routledge, 2005), 186.

⁵ Innes and Shevtsova, 81.

by mixing opposites and creating harsh incongruities... It was a means of making situations and events startling and dynamic....”⁶ Grotesque in terms of Meyerhold’s theatre is a device, which “mixes opposites, consciously creating harsh incongruity and *relying solely on its originality*... It’s simply a theatrical style that plays with sharp contradictions and produces a constant shift in the planes of perception.”⁷ *Anna Karenina* is filled with examples of theatrical grotesque. Anna and Levin’s eternal time rapidly switches to the real time creating a sense of montage. The pace of the play is jarring, not smooth, with moments of simultaneous staging as events happen concurrently. “Theatre should not mirror reality but should transcend the commonplace of everyday life by deliberately exaggerating and distorting reality through stylized theatrical techniques.”⁸ Mixing and juxtaposing these moments and images, much like Wilson’s “theatre of images” also became important in creating my concept. I needed to find a way to blend together the images to create the dream like quality of the play.

Ariane Mnouchkine (b. 1939) is a director who seeks theatricality or *théâtralité*, which, like Meyerhold’s *teatralnost*, reveals to her theatre’s aim to tear down realism. Mnouchkine believes that realism “is the enemy” because ‘theatre is the art of transposition or transfiguration. A painter paints a painted apple, not an apple.’⁹ She uses tools to “save the actors, to save us, from the psychological, from realism, from

⁶ James Roose-Evans, *Experimental Theatre: From Stanislavsky to Peter Brook*, (London: Routledge, 2004), 23-24

⁷ Innes and Shevtsova, 82.

⁸ Roose-Evans, 24.

⁹ Innes and Shevtsova, 97.

naturalism.”¹⁰ Much like Bogart, Mnouchkine sees the importance in metaphors in the theatre:

Although European physical theatre helped to shape her work, Asian theatre became Mnouchkine’s main reference because it provides the technical, emotional, sensual and imaginative resources she needs for an optimal ‘theatricality’: words, music and dance, together with sumptuous textures and colours in costumes, headgear and makeup..”¹¹

Théâtralité, and likewise *teatralnost*, work best when tied to deeper meanings.

Théâtralité requires density, packed images, and a quick and layered pace. In this production of *Anna Karenina* nothing on stage can be arbitrary: every prop, costume, set piece, gesture, and movement should participate in making meaning.

Conceptual Approach

My concept for *Anna Karenina* is formulated around a quote in the novel from Anna’s husband, Alexei Alexandrovich, shortly after Anna and Vronsky’s affair begins. Alexei questions Anna about the relationship but Anna dodges the question. In response Alexei says, “Rummaging in our souls, we often dig up something that ought to have lain there unnoticed.”¹² In my analysis of the play this is what Anna and Levin are doing in Edmundson’s *Anna Karenina*. The two are rummaging and searching through their stories to find something that they left behind. While Levin finds what he is looking for in Kitty, Anna uncovers that thing that is meant to lay unnoticed – the Muffled Figure – which leads to her death. Rummaging becomes a repeated gesture in the piece, the theatrical action that all the characters engage in while retelling their story.

¹⁰ Innes and Shevtsova, 99

¹¹ Maria Shevtsova, “Ariane Mnouchkine,” in *Fifty Key Theatre Directors*, eds. Shomit Mitter and Maria Shevtsova, (London: Routledge, 2005), 165.

¹² Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 147.

There is another important moment in the novel that helped shape my concept. This moment, from the first part of the novel, foreshadows Anna's mental state and how easily she can disassociate from reality. Sitting on the train traveling back to St. Petersburg Anna begins to doze off,

She kept having moments of doubt whether the carriage was moving forwards or backwards, or standing still. Was that Annushka beside her, or some stranger? "What is that on the armrest – a fur coat or some animal? And what am I? Myself or someone else?" It was frightening to surrender herself to this oblivion. But something was drawing her in, and she was able, at will, to surrender to it or hold back from it... For a moment she recovered and realized that the skinny muzhik coming in, wearing a long nankeen coat with a missing button, was the stoker, that he was looking at the thermometer, that the wind and snow had burst in with him through the doorway; but then everything became confused again... This muzhik with the long waist began to gnaw at something on the wall; the old woman began to stretch her legs out the whole length of the carriage and filled it with a black cloud; then something screeched and banged terribly, as if someone was being torn to pieces; then a red fire blinded her eyes, and then everything was hidden by a wall. Anna felt as if she was falling through the floor. But all this was not frightening but exhilarating. The voice of a bundled-up and snow-covered man shouted something into her ear. She stood up and came to her sense, realizing that they had arrived at a station and the man was the conductor.¹³

Anna effortlessly falls succumbs to the tricks of her own mind and begins to explore the darker regions of her soul. While in this darker place, she encounters the "muzhik," or the peasant she witnessed get hit by the train. This is why the Muffled Figure is such a central character, and why it must be included in the concept. It is the thing that Anna uncovers within herself, which continues to haunt her and leads her to her eventual demise.

Armed with my concept statement – "Rummaging in our souls, we often dig up something that ought to have lain there unnoticed."¹⁴ – I started the design and production process and worked side by side with the design team to create the world of

¹³ Tolstoy, 100-101.

¹⁴ Tolstoy, 147.

Anna Karenina. What follows is an exploration of the design development and how I implemented the theoretical analysis of *Anna Karenina* to help create the visual and aural aspects of the play.

Scenic Design

LEVIN. Where are you now?

ANNA. At a station.

LEVIN. Where?

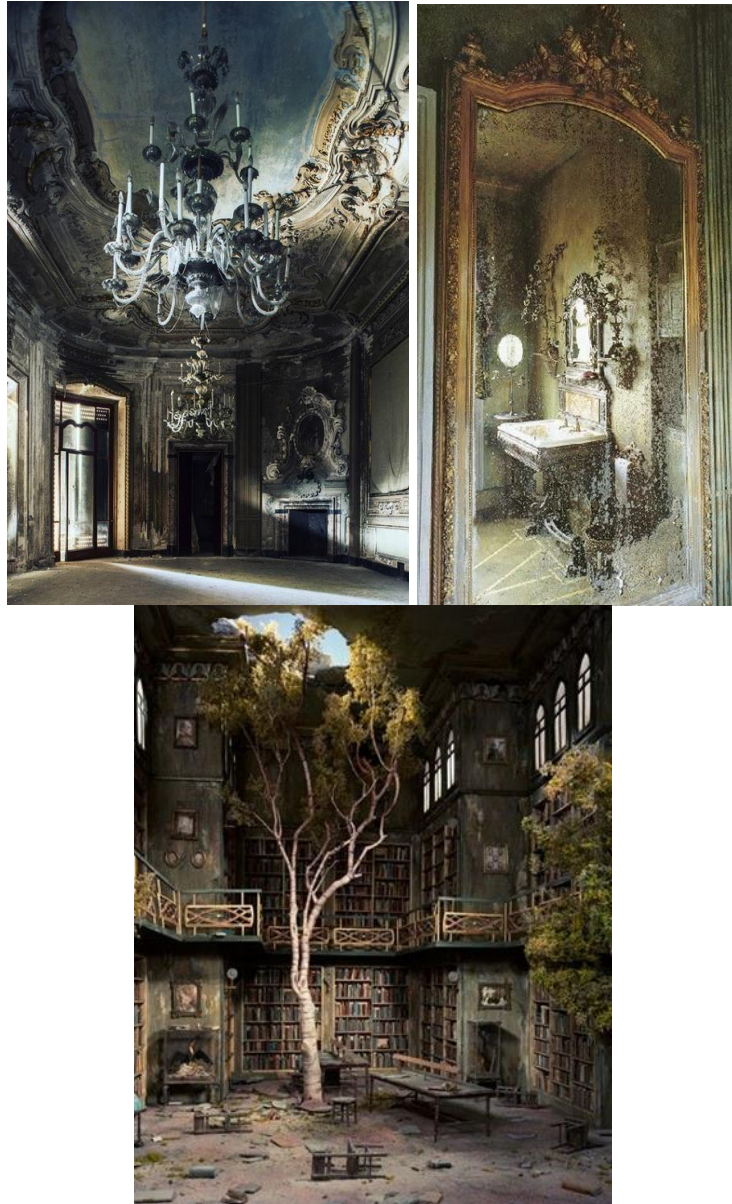
ANNA. I don't know.¹⁵

- Helen Edmundson, *Anna Karenina*

From the beginning, I knew that the scenic design of *Anna* would present one of the largest challenges in this production. As mentioned, the play is a waltz; it jumps from location to location without skipping a beat. All in all, the scenic designer and I tracked forty-eight specific looks or locations in the text, seen in Appendix B, and we needed to develop a plan to represent these on the stage. The scenic designer and I knew that it would not be possible to realistically render all of the locations for this play. Instead we had to create something more theatrical. I wanted to see if we could build a set which, like time in the play, fluctuates, bends, and dances.

From a purely practical standpoint, the set of this play needed to be flexible. From the start, I had the idea of setting the entirety of the play within an abandoned and dilapidating mansion: a place of elegance that was once full of life but now is falling apart. I began searching for images that I could share with the designer and chose three key images to bring to our first meeting. These images are found below as figures 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3.

¹⁵ Edmundson, 84.



Figures 3.1 (top left), 3.2 (top right), and 3.3 (bottom). Inspirational images shared with the scenic designer.

I shared Figure 3.1 because I felt it emulated the mood and style of location I was looking for. In particular the chandelier and rococo elements throughout the architecture of the room stuck with us. We didn't want to lose sense of the grandeur and elegance that the Russian Imperial world brought. Figure 3.2 is another image I shared with the scenic designer. I was drawn to the grime and dilapidation of the mirror in this image

because it gives a feeling of decay and abandon. The colors felt similar to those in figure 3.1, and we were able to begin discussing the color palette for this world.

Figure 3.3 is an interesting image that I shared with the designer because it shows an abandoned place that had natural regrowth in it. However, using this idea for the production was abandoned as I began to realize there is no regrowth in this play.

Because Anna and Levin are looking for new life in their stories it cannot be present for them in their space except perhaps at the very end. Instead of filling the space with trees or other signs of nature and life, the designer and I discussed the idea of finding images with rot and mold. Figure 3.4 is image that I decided to use when presenting my concept statement to the production team.



Figure 3.4 The director's concept image.

Figure 3.4 encapsulates much of what I discovered about Anna and Levin in my analysis. To me it is particularly haunting: it looks like it was left suddenly and without any thought of coming back. This images suggests a place to which people will return

and rummage through to find out what happened. There is no growth in this image; instead we see decay. Notice the ceiling in the upper left-hand corner of the image; it seems to be rotting away. This is not a safe place to be in; it is a place that could collapse at any moment. Anna and Levin can share this timeless and dangerous world together. This location can be their eternal time.

While the idea of the abandoned mansion was important, the designer and I realized that we could not fully represent this on the stage because of the numerous locations. Anna and Levin need to fly through their story, so making sure our space allows for movement became important. The scenic designer came up with the idea of creating several moving units, each designed with the architecture of the Russian Imperial period in mind. However, none of these units would be complete. Instead they would feel unfinished and decaying, partially to allow them to be movable, but also to help them transform into several different things.

At first the plan was a series of movable Romanesque columns along with two archways and a window, as seen in Figure 3.5. This figure shows the three archways in their “natural” position. Each of the archways is flanked by two Romanesque columns based off of the scenic designer’s research into Imperial Russian Palaces. Likewise, each unit would be built on casters to allow them to move around the stage. Figures 3.6 and 3.7 show the flexibility of the set.

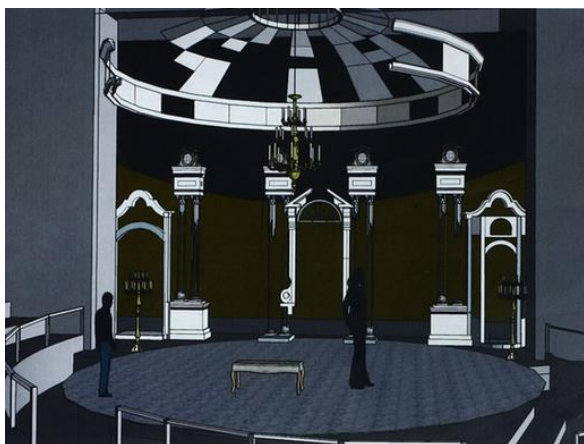


Figure 3.5



Figure 3.6

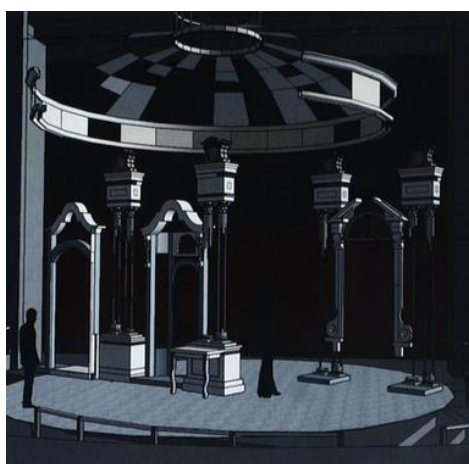


Figure 3.7

As the designer and I explored this, we realized that the stage felt cluttered and that we should remove some of the objects. The designer simplified the idea down to three movable units: a singular column, and two archways each flanked with columns, as shown by figure 3.8. The set is able to become the different locations by simply moving their positions. The window unit can become an archway by removing the base and the base itself can transform into a desk. The set is scaffolding of Anna and Levin's dream, able to move from location to location as they dance their way through their stories.



Figure 3.8 The model showing the columns in their neutral position.

Included throughout these images in the most upstage part of the set is a large, loosely hung drop. This drop, which was designed in tandem with the lighting designer, was painted in a neutral color and lit in several different directions to allow the backdrop of the scene to change fluidly with the set. Figure 3.9 shows the drop backlit in green as Anna prepares to end her life.



Figure 3.9 The drop lit green.

Behind this drop, the lighting designer decided to hang the theatre department's "star curtain"¹⁶ to emulate the stars for the final moment of the play. The drop was hung on a trip wire, so it could fall at the climax of the play to reveal the stars for the final moments. Figure 3.10 shows the star curtain lit during the curtain call.

¹⁶ The "star curtain" is a large curtain unit built for the department's production of *Crazy for You* earlier in the 2017-2018 season, and recycled for the production of *Anna Karenina*. In essence the unit is a large black curtain with a series of LED Christmas lights poked through that when lit up creates the appearance of a black sky with small stars throughout.



Figure 3.10 The Star Drop lit during Curtain Call

The designer and I both felt early on that we needed an additional scenic element above the stage to tie the whole picture together. At our rough sketches design meeting, where the designers present preliminary ideas after hearing the concept, the scenic designer suggested adding a large dome or rotunda in the theatre space directly above the stage. The initial thought for this dome was to have it serve as a track to fly various pieces of the set around the stage, but this idea was abandoned early on due to build schedule concerns. However, the dome remained and as I began to think about Levin and his world, I realized that this could be a way to include the audience in space.

The dome serves to invite the audience into the playing space; it allows them to become a part of Anna and Levin's world as they become encapsulated within it. We can

share in Levin's experiences and really be in the room with Anna as she begins to break down. The dome likewise reflects the dilapidation of the other scenic units. The structure of the dome is missing panels and feels as if it is falling apart; it adds to the overall idea that this space is dangerous and crumbling. Figure 3.11 shows the finalized realization of the dome in the space.



Figure 3.11 Dome hovering over the stage.

Another major area that the scenic designer and I discussed at length was the furniture to be used in the production. I knew early on that I wanted numerous chairs to help create the various locations. For example, I knew I wanted to create train cars by simply placing rows of chairs along the stage to create the look of train cabins as seen in figure 3.12. The designer liked that idea and provided twelve mismatched chairs along with two long eighteenth century benches, a footstool, and the desk built into the scenic unit. Each piece of furniture had multiple functions in the world of the play.



Figure 3.12 Chairs arranged to form the “train.”

The scenic design choices were made to reflect my directorial concept and analysis of *Anna Karenina*, and also served to create the world that Levin and Anna live in. The mobility of the set units, along with their sparse and crumbling construction created a world of decay and dreams. The movement of the columns throughout the play creates a strong sense of theatricality and suggested the dance quality of the script. The designer and I chose not to hide anything from the audience; we want the audience to experience the creation of the world alongside Anna and Levin.

Property Design

ANNA. But I am reading an English novel on the train and the hero is getting what he wants from life, and I can hardly bear to read it because his story is better than mine.¹⁷

-Helen Edmundson, *Anna Karenina*

While *Anna Karenina* is a period show, the properties called for by the script did not demand an intense amount of attention. Appendix C shows the initial property list created by the director and the property master, which calls for items included in the script as well as items added, to help give the audience information about location, or give the actors opportunity for stage business. For example, during Anna and Dolly's discussion early in the first act, I asked the property master to provide a tea set. Anna was able to pour a cup of tea for Dolly while she was upset to try and calm her nerves. I had an ensemble member dressed as a maid bring the tea set on and off to also indicate that Dolly and Stiva are characters of wealth.

I also wanted the props fit into the dream-like world that the design team was creating. I wanted certain items to rise to the level of metaphor and carry on and off the stage a multiplicity of meaning. As props were added during the rehearsal process the cast and I played with the idea of using items in ways different from what one would normally think to use them. For example, figure 3.13 shows the first train that appears in the play. Two ensemble members sat alongside the cabins created by the lights and spun umbrellas to indicate wheels.

¹⁷ Edmundson, 17.



Figure 3.13 The first train

This, and other examples, also playfully added to the theatricality of *Anna Karenina*.

Costume Design

LEVIN. Yes. Anna, what are you doing?

ANNA. Getting ready for the ball.

LEVIN. Are you wearing lilac?

ANNA. No. I'm wearing black.¹⁸

- Helen Edmundson, *Anna Karenina*

The costumes for this show created a particular challenge. I wanted the costumes to be as close to a period look as we could get, but with budget, time, and labor restraints this would not be entirely possible. In order to accommodate these issues, the costumes fell into two categories: the principal characters and the ensemble. The costume designer and I decided early on that the principal characters would be costumed in period clothing,

¹⁸ Edmundson, 16

while the ensemble would get a more conceptual look. I also knew it would be important to track the characters' personal arcs through the show in their costume choices. Luckily, I had an experienced designer helping me who has a strong talent to tell a character's story through costume.

Much like the immense amount of scenic locations, the production, if done in a realistic manner, would require hundreds of costumes and numerous looks for each character. The designer came up with a solution to this problem. Just as the set would transform to become several different locations, the costumes were designed to be flexible as well. Both the principal and ensemble actors would be fitted with a base costume and then given pieces to add or take away to create different looks and outfits. The principal characters would have more elaborate pieces, while the ensemble would be simpler and more suggestive. For example, Anna's first look in the show, figure 3.14, is actually her first three looks.



Figure 3.14 Anna's first look.

Anna's first costume is her traveling clothes as she meets her brother at the Moscow train station. The jacket she is wearing can be removed to reveal a day bodice, and that day bodice along with the front apron of the dress can likewise be removed to reveal Anna's ball gown, figure 3.15.



Figure 3.15 Anna's ball look¹⁹

The designer paid close attention to the details of Anna's costumes. Beyond her immense amount of stage time, we knew that she was a figure that needed to stand out above the rest of society. The designer chose to put Anna in jewel tones, that would portray the grace and social standing of Anna's character. Likewise, the designer and I knew early on that Anna's looks had to become more and more disheveled as the play progressed to show her slow descent into madness and nightmare. Mainly we would show this by changing the color of her costumes. Figure 3.16 shows Anna's second act costume.

¹⁹ Anna's ball look had its own challenges in that Vronsky describes the dress at the ball when he sees her. She says, "A black velvet gown with Venetian lace. Her shoulders and breasts look as if they are carved out of fine ivory. In her hair there is a little wreath of pansies and there are pansies on the black ribbon that winds through the lace at her waist. There are willful black curls escaping at her temples and around her strong neck there is a string of pearls." Edmundson, 16.



Figure 3.16 Anna's Act Two costume

Levin's story like Anna's is told through his costumes. Menswear of the period had a simple construction, therefore we were able to design a specific look for Levin for each act, and allow him to remove pieces as needed. Figures 3.17 and 3.18 show Levin's act one and act two costumes respectively. Levin, while a member of the aristocratic class, likens himself to a peasant and prefers to live among the recently emancipated serfs rather than members of his own ranks. Therefore, the overall color palette chosen for Levin was browns, greens and blues. These colors symbolized Levin's closeness to nature and the natural world. For Levin's second act look he changes his overcoat and vest. The overcoat will become less disheveled, and the blue vest with gold inlay shows Levin's search for the stars. Levin's costumes, while simpler in construction, when compared to Anna's, still show the intense journey he goes on throughout.



Figure 3.17 Levin's act one look



Figure 3.18 Levin's act two look

Kitty, like Anna, has costumes that can be deconstructed to form several different looks. Kitty's act one costume is designed around her ball gown, allowing her to have two separate looks in one, as shown by figures 3.19 and 3.20. Kitty's act one looks are in a pastel pink palette. We wanted Kitty to exude youth in the first act as she is shunned by Vronsky. Her costume is designed to feel girly and light: she has just recently debuted in society, and is still wearing "rose-colored glasses," unaware of the heartbreak faced in love and life. However, she still needs to be connected to Levin in this act, and the designer did so by adding flowers to Kitty's dress. Kitty's act one ball gown includes floral patterns, as well as flowers on it as seen in the upper-left hand corner of Figure 3.20.



Figure 3.19 Kitty's act one day look

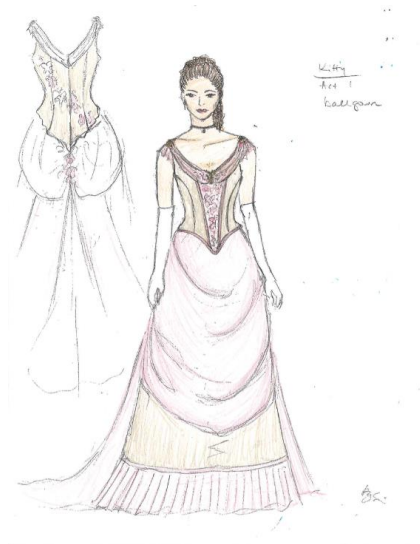


Figure 3.20 Kitty's act one ball gown

Kitty has the one of largest character arcs in the play. At the start, she is a young and naïve child unaware of the world around her, and by the end she has transformed into a mother and grown woman. Therefore, Kitty's costume depicts this drastic change. Figure 3.21 shows Kitty's act two look, which she wears after she is married to Levin. Kitty has now left behind the pinks of her past, and matured into deep purple and blues. As she moves to the countryside with Levin, she puts away the stylized city look and wears a simpler more country-style dress. This particular costume allows Kitty's stomach to grow as she becomes pregnant in the second act. The apron is designed to be adjustable allowing for a pregnancy stomach to be added to show her along her journey.



Figure 3.21 Kitty's act two costume

The majority of the costume research for Dolly came from an earlier period, unlike the other two women. I made this choice to make her stand out and feel older than Anna and Kitty. Dolly also stands out from many of the other characters, as she is nearly always pregnant in the play. The designer made the choice to give Dolly the same costume in the first and second acts to show her inability to escape the cycle of pregnancies and infidelity her husband puts upon her. Figures 3.22 and 3.23 show the design of Dolly's costume.



Figure 3.22 Dolly's costume Figure 3.23 Dolly's ball costume

The principal male character that received the most attention from the costume designer and myself was Vronsky. We needed to emphasize his physical prowess and external qualities, while ignoring some of the more internal struggles the character is facing. Vronsky's act one costume was built based on research of Russian Imperial military uniform. Figures 3.24. and 3.25 depict the design of Vronsky's first act costume. While the colors of Vronsky's Imperial uniform are not completely accurate – officers would have worn green – the designer had a strong desire to put Vronsky in blue and I did not mind the change in color.

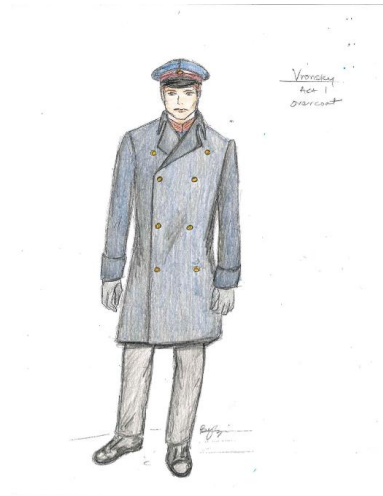


Figure 3.24 Vronsky coat costume

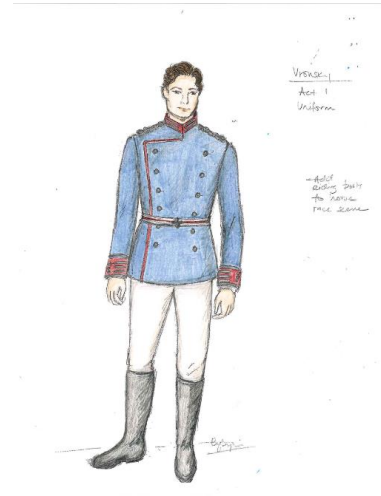


Figure 3.25 Vronsky uniform costume

Vronsky, much like Kitty, undergoes a major costume change between the first and second acts. However, unlike Kitty, whose change shows deep internal growth, Vronsky's is due to external reasons. He has quit the army and begins to live a “married” civilian life with Anna. Vronsky changes into more casual clothing to drastically differ him from his first appearance in the production, as seen in figure 3.26.



Figure 3.26 Vronsky act two look.

About halfway into the second act, Anna and Vronsky travel to Italy. The designer and I felt that Anna and Vronsky both needed to have a costume change for this scene as they try to hold up a façade of happiness while on their “Italian honeymoon.” Both try to dress and live the Bohemian lifestyle, but find themselves unable to do so. Figures 3.27 and 3.28 show these designs.



Figure 3.27 Anna in Italy



Figure 3.28 Vronsky in Italy

The designer and I felt that we could have a little fun with figuring out Stiva's costume to help portray some of his more comedic features. The designer found an image in her research, figure 3.29, which I felt perfectly embodied Stiva. From there the designer sketched out figure 3.30 which shows Stiva's daywear costume. The only other costume designed for Stiva was a period tuxedo to be worn at the ball and at Kitty and Levin's wedding.



Figure 3.29 Stiva inspiration

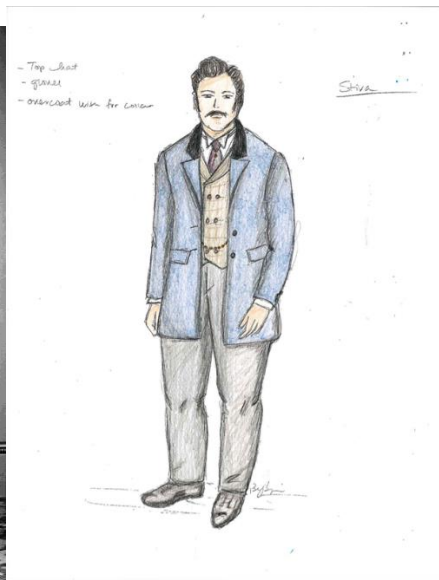


Figure 3.30 Stiva daywear costume

Karenin was the final male to be designed. The designer and I discussed how Karenin had to feel cold and slightly uninviting. At the same time he needed to show his position and status in the world. He follows the rules society puts forth for him, and has no reason to be flashy or gaudy in anything he wears. Karenin is not a man to show emotion, color, or warmth. For the costume designer, this meant creating one look for Karenin that showed his decorum and not much else. In terms of costume, Karenin has

the least number of changes of any principal character. Figure 3.31 shows Karenin's act one and two costume.



Figure 3.31 Karenin's Act one and two costume

The designer and I spent just as much time discussing and refining the principals' costumes as we did the ensemble's. In the waltz of *Anna Karenina*, the ensemble is the chorus of dancers. The ensemble members also take on the roles of the secondary characters in the play, e.g., Nikolai, Princess Betsy, Agatha, and Vassily. Each member of the ensemble serves as a supernumerary for the production and needed to fill out the composition of the world. In creating the ensemble's costumes the designer and I decided to give each actor a base costume, and then add accessories or pieces of clothing to make them become the various characters they play. Much like the set, they transformed into various people without making large costume changes. One of the original thoughts was to give each ensemble member pieces of a period costume to help create their overall look for a scene. For example, the women would have deconstructed parts of a ball gown to add to their base looks to become the dancers at the ball.

However, this idea had to be abandoned due to time and budget constraints. Figures 3.32 and 3.33 show two of the ensemble member's base costumes.



Figure 3.32 Female ensemble



Figure 3.33 Male ensemble

The Muffled Figure became the most difficult character to figure out. In the novel, the figure is a poor railroad worker described as a peasant. However, Edmundson does little to describe the figure in her text. I knew we needed to make a strong connection between this character and Anna because of Anna's dissociative tendencies. In discussing the Muffled Figure with the costume designer, I turned to image figure 3.34, which expresses the otherworldly nature of the character. The smoke around the dark railway worker in this image felt directly related to the Muffled Figure's role in the dream-like world of *Anna Karenina*. Figure 3.35 shows the final rendering.



Figure 3.34 Muffled Figure research.



Figure 3.35 Muffled Figure Costume

Another major hurdle in designing the Muffled Figure costume was making the figure double Anna in the final moment of her life. Once Anna is able to uncover the figure's face she needed to see her own. My initial plan was to see if two identical Muffled Figure costumes could be created, one for the actor cast as the figure, and one for an actress who resembles Anna to wear, however, the costume shop was unable to do this. The costume designer could not make two unique costumes and decided to have the two actors share the Muffled Figure's jacket, hat, and scarf, and make the switch offstage before the climax of the play.

Lighting Design

Levin... I walk in the forest among the aspens and the birches, and sometimes, when it grows dark, I watch the stars come out. They are so clear and so close. No-one in Moscow looks at the stars.²⁰

Helen Edmundson, *Anna Karenina*

Just as the scenic design helps to provide tangible information about location, the lights for *Anna Karenina* aid in guiding the audience's eye. Because of the presentational

²⁰ Edmundson, 4

nature of the show, lighting became an important part in the storytelling. Lighting also was an opportunity to emphasize theatricality through use of follow spots, gobos, and the stars. The lighting design process itself was unlike the other areas of design; there really is not a way to see the process of the designer as we move forward. The lighting designer cannot show me renderings or models of the lights, rather we can only plan ahead for technical rehearsals.

A major hurdle the lighting designer and I faced was implementing the stars in the theatre space for the final moment. Levin and the audience had to experience seeing the stars at the conclusion side by side. When I first approached the lighting designer, I explained that I wanted the theatre to become covered in stars, if not near illuminated by them. The designer decided to use the theatre department's "star curtain," originally built for the musical *Crazy for You*,²¹ to add stars to the space.

While I was excited at the prospect of using the star curtain, I needed more stars in the space over the heads of the audience. I found some inspiration for this moment while watching Stefan Herhiem's staging of Tchaikovsky's opera *The Queen of Spades*, for the Dutch National Opera. During an aria in the second scene of the first act, a series of crystal like units fly down over the stage and create a star-filled dream moment (see Figures 3.36 and 3.37).

²¹ Thank you, Aaron Brown and *Crazy for You* (2017).



Figure 3.36 Svetlana Askenova in Stefan Herheim's staging of *The Queen of Spades*, for the Dutch National Opera. Set and costumes by Philipp Fürhofer, lighting by Bernd Purkrabek.



Figure 3.37 Svetlana Askenova in Stefan Herheim's staging of *The Queen of Spades* for the Dutch National Opera. Set and costumes by Philipp Fürhofer, lighting by Bernd Purkrabek.

My initial thought was to try and replicate this by actually having crystal like units fly down over the audience's heads for the last moment but unfortunately this was not possible in the theatre space. Instead the designer came up with the idea to string a series

of fiber-optic cables over the audience's heads, which once lit would create the effect of stars strung around the theatre. The fiber optics, along with the star drop, transformed the space for the final moment of the play, surrounding the audience and Levin with stars.

The lighting designer made three other important decisions in the creation of her design for *Anna Karenina*. First, she decided to include four follow spots to help highlight various characters throughout the play. Much like one would see in an opera or musical, follow spots create a very specific and highly theatrical look on the stage, shining a pool of light on an actor's face. The second major decision the lighting designer made was to include a series of gobos,²² specifically chosen to highlight a particular location, character, or mood. For example, Figure 3.38 shows a gobo chosen to illustrate the train station.

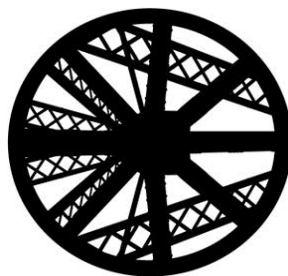


Figure 3.38 Train station gobo

I picked this gobo because it emulated the steel structure found in late nineteenth century train stations. When used in the theatre, the shadow created the look of the steel structures without having to actually build any. Another gobo chosen by the designer is shown in figure 3.39.

²² A gobo is a small metallic sheet placed in a lighting unit to create a shadow effect. The metal fitting will often have patterns or shapes cut into it to create specific shadows on the stage floor.



Figure 3.39 Drug trip gobo

This gobo appeared during the scene of Anna's drug induced hallucinations. As opposed to showing a specific location, like figure 3.38, this gobo created a mood. This particular gobo is akin to a whirlpool in the ocean, or a black hole in space. It is something that one falls into, and cannot escape from, much like Anna while she is experiencing her hallucinations. The designer also decided to place this gobo in a device that allowed it to spin, creating a hypnotic effect as Anna succumbs to the morphine.

The third major choice the lighting designer made was color. She chose a specific color for each character that helped to give the audience more information about their personality. For example, Karenin's colors are light blues and greys which are icy feeling to show his coolness. Anna's color is a striking red, and Vrosnky's a blue that when combined together form what she calls "passionate purple." Each principal character had a specific color, gobo, or combination of the two chosen for them to help give the audience key information.

Sound Design

ANNA. I'm afraid I didn't hear anything, but then people don't talk to me about those things unless I ask.²³

-Helen Edmundson, *Anna Karenina*

The sound design for *Anna Karenina* became an important aspect of the process very early on. I like to include music in my work, and if given the opportunity I prefer to have original music written for the projects I direct. That being said, the journey that the sound design took for this production was unexpected and had a few bumps at the beginning due to my own fault.

Edmundson's script calls for music throughout the play. The script includes many stage directions that simply state, "*Music*" indicating that particular moments are meant to be underscored. I came up with the idea to have music composed for the show, and reached out to a faculty music director to speak to her about the possibility of writing music for *Anna Karenina*. Appendix D shows the initial music tracking list I created for the music director. When putting together this list I decided to have three themes composed for the show, an Anna/Vronsky theme, a Levin/Kitty theme, and a Muffled Figure theme, that could possibly be played over one another to create several different soundscapes. The music director was excited by this challenge, and ran with the idea.

Over the course of the following weeks the music director sent me clips of the various themes she was composing. While I appreciated all the work she was doing, it did not seem that any of these satisfied my vision. The two of us decided to meet in person to discuss where the music should go. At this meeting, she reminded me that I needed to include the sound designer in these conversations to make sure the

²³ Edmundson, 20.

communication stayed open and flowing. I realized then I had made a huge mistake in not actively discussing any of this with the sound designer. The sound designer is a professor in the theatre department, but he was on sabbatical during the design process, and was only available periodically. And while he was present at the production meetings, with his absence from the theatre building, I neglected to include him in these important conversations. The music director and I set up a meeting with the sound designer to discuss our progress. Fortunately, the sound designer was not only understanding of my error but was proactive in working on his design as the production meetings moved forward. The designer suggested that we drop the idea of composing music and instead try to find existing music that fit the play. The music director and I agreed with this idea, as it allowed her to focus on the live singing of the piece.

One of the first moments the sound designer and I tackled was the ball in the first act. I had in mind that the ball would include two pieces of music. First, the waltz proper where the ensemble, Kitty, and Vronsky dance. That waltz would slowly transition into the second piece, which would be Anna and Vronsky's musical theme as they danced together, and then transition back to the waltz. The designer and I put together a Spotify playlist of several waltz possibilities, and before long, the two of us landed on Sergei Prokofiev's "Midnight Waltz" from the ballet *Cinderella*. Next we needed to find the right music for Anna and Vronsky. The designer shared with me composer Philip Glass's work *Company*, a piece written for a string quartet. Glass's repetitive and flowing music juxtaposed the boisterous waltz of the more classical "Midnight Waltz" and created two distinct soundscapes that the designer was able to layer together. The sound designer soon found music to fit the Kitty and Levin moments as well. He sent me

clips from composer Dustin O'Halloran's work. O'Halloran's piece "An Ending, a Beginning" is one that we particularly liked. It is a trio for two strings and piano, and I felt it fit Kitty and Levin's bittersweet story.

Lastly the sound designer came up with a brilliant idea for the Muffled Figure's theme. As opposed to finding a particular song or composer for this character, the designer created a series of hammering and heavy iron sounds, which could be layered over an existing song. In the end, the designer was able to come up with a unique soundscape for *Anna Karenina*, without having to compose our own original score.

Music Direction

*The music of the opera can be heard, quietly at first but getting louder... The music is very loud now.*²⁴

- Helen Edmundson, *Anna Karenina*

While the music director and I had been discussing composing music for *Anna Karenina* early on in the process, we also planned to have two moments of live singing by the ensemble during the performance. I decided that the peasant chorus in the first act and the wedding sequence in the second should both be accompanied by live singing. The music director turned her attention from writing music to researching Russian folk and religious music to teach the ensemble.

In the case of the peasant dance the script all but requires live singing,

There is the sound of singing in the distance... The music grows louder. The PEASANTS enter, a sweeping wall of them, singing and mowing with scythes... No one is listening. The singing drowns out [Anna's] words... The PEASANTS sing more quietly. LEVIN is perfectly in step

²⁴ Edmundson, 70.

*with them now... VRONSKY becomes swept into the PEASANTS' mowing, which becomes a dance.*²⁵

The music director researched period folk songs and came to me with several options. We realized this song needed to be simple and repeatable as the sequence was long and we did not want to overwhelm our actors with learning too much Russian music. She found a folk song titled, “ВДОЛЬ да по речке” or “Along the River.” The song is exciting, celebratory, and simple. It was easy to teach to the ensemble and helped to create the energy needed as they went about mowing Levin’s fields.

The second moment of live singing occurs in the second act during Levin and Kitty’s wedding. However, after looking through the script, I realized that just before Levin and Kitty wed there is a short scene between Levin and a priest. I thought it would be interesting to start the singing during this moment, as if Levin was meeting with the priest in the church, and then continue it throughout Kitty and Levin’s wedding. From there I allowed the music director to take control. I felt that she understood the mood I wanted to create, but more importantly she knew the singers that she would be working with and how to best feature their voices.

She settled on nineteenth century composer Alexey Kastorsky’s “Cherubic Hymn,” however she suggested just using the female voices in the cast for this moment. This decision was made for two reasons: the first was that our male ensemble members did not have the range to fully support the lower notes required by the song. Second, she felt that the lighter tone given by female singers would create a more beautiful and angelic quality. As with the peasant dance, the hymn had several parts and could be repeated as needed. She likewise found a period-appropriate wedding song to have the

²⁵ Edmundson, 39-41

entire ensemble sing as Kitty and Levin kiss and to help with the transition into the next scene.

Conclusion

It is the director's job to have a strong vision in mind while working with designers. The research and analysis I engaged in prior to my work with the *Anna Karenina* design team helped create my vision and aesthetic. However, part of the director's job is also letting your ideas infuse with the designers, to allow for collaboration to take place. The work described above was part of that collaboration. I made sure that the design team knew they could put their own ideas, thoughts, and creativity into their work, guided by my vision and my concept. The design was meant to reflect the theatrical nature of Edmundson's *Anna Karenina*. Every decision made helped to amplify the metaphor-filled world Edmundson created.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Rehearsal Process

Introduction

Staging *Anna Karenina* was an exciting and invigorating process. Having equipped the production with a strong concept and dynamic designs, I was ready to begin casting and was eager to get the show up on its feet. The chapter that follows documents my process from the callback and casting phase of *Anna Karenina* through technical rehearsals. Attention is paid to issues that came up during the rehearsal and technical period and how those problems were solved. From my initial planning stages with *Anna Karenina* it was apparent to me that this production needed to be approached almost as if it were an opera, focusing on theatricality, movement, and strong visual composition. The play needed to feel fully choreographed, and therefore special attention was paid to aesthetics, rather than developing strong acting choices through close character work. This is not to say that the process ignored coaching the actors, but rather utilized rehearsal time to create the world of *Anna Karenina* knowing the actor's development of character would be developed along the way.

Callbacks and Casting

It is normal at Baylor to allow each show its own audition and callback process. Occasionally two shows may cast or hold callbacks together. However, this season's schedule would not allow for such a luxury and instead it was agreed upon by myself and the theatre faculty that the department would hold one large season audition in late

August and each show would have its own individual callback a few weeks prior to the start of rehearsals. This meant I had to narrow down the hundred or so student actors I saw audition in the summer to a much shorter list for callbacks in mid-November.

Anna Karenina brought with it two specific challenges in casting. First, I had to find young actors who could truthfully portray characters of the period. While it is not uncommon to do period pieces at Baylor, for young actors understanding the fine details and technicalities of a world so distant from our own can be difficult to demonstrate in a callback. Secondly the script has a unique convention where Anna, Levin, and several other characters step outside of the action to comment on the situation. This presentational skill is difficult for young actors to show in a callback. Knowing that this would be an issue from the start I was able to think about my expectations for callbacks. I knew that I could not look for perfection; rather I had to find actors who I felt I could best collaborate with in rehearsals.

I composed a list of students who I wanted to see read for various characters for the callbacks. I decided to call back people for the seven principal roles (Anna, Levin, Vronsky, Kitty, Dolly, Stiva, and Karenin) and then picked two scenes that featured an ensemble role (Princess Betsy and Nikolai). I had about a dozen scenes picked out and distributed to the various actors and actresses for callbacks. The students were given a week to prepare their sides, or short scenes from the script, during which several came to discuss the roles with me and what my expectations were for the characters.

The actual callback process went very smoothly, with my stage manager and myself keeping to the schedule we set and not going over time. We saw the actors in several different group scenes, and we only actually used about three quarters of the sides

I picked out. I was likewise fortunate to have some of the other graduate students and a group of professors in the audition room to act as a sounding board and help me cast the show.

Overall the casting decisions were made dependent on the actor's ability to not only understand the role, but to also make strong character choices while performing the scenes. For Anna, this meant finding an actress with a sense of grace, movement, and overall talent. The list of actresses called for Anna was cut down over the course of the night until about three were left to choose from. The actress who would eventually be cast in the role had the greatest sense of how to navigate through Anna and Levin's scenes in what I referred to in my analysis as the eternal time of the play, outside the normal rules of time and space. She grasped the narrative nature of the conversations between the two, and applied the notes I gave her successfully throughout the night. I was pleased with the choice of this actress for Anna, although I noticed that her vocal tension would be something I had to address during rehearsals.

The role of Levin presents certain challenges. Not only does he have to sustain the show, he really is the audience's eyes into both his and Anna's stories. The role required an actor who was both a talented storyteller and had a grasp of realistic acting styles. After reading a few of the men called back, it became apparent that this dualistic nature of Levin's character was difficult. The actor who I eventually chose for the role has been featured in many mainstage productions before *Anna*. He has a natural gift for storytelling, and has the strong ability to fully engage in a character. He was not what I had always pictured physically in terms of Levin but the actor's skill in creating character negated any physical issues.

Finding a Kitty and Vronsky was really more about finding the right “type” of actor. Vronsky had to be dashing, alluring, sexual, and handsome. He needed to be so charming that Anna would be willing to leave her husband and son for him. Finding an actor who had both the looks and the acting skill was difficult; however the actor I chose for my Vronsky was someone I was confident I could shape for the role. He was well prepared for callbacks, and had taken the time to think about the role. Kitty is a character who needs to be able to be read as a young woman at the start of a show, then mature into the mother she becomes. Many of the actresses called back managed to bite into the younger part of Kitty’s character, but struggled to find the growth. The actress that was chosen has not had a mainstage credit yet and showed potential, like Vronsky, to grow and learn.

Dolly and Stiva required performers with a strong chemistry and good comedic timing. Students who were called back for these roles struggled with the comedic quality of the characters. I think because of the melodramatic nature of the story of *Anna Karenina*, the actors called back for these roles played into the drama rather than the humor and lightness of their moments. The actors chosen for these roles made me laugh at callbacks by making specific choices, finding moments of comedy in the scenes that were chosen for them.

Karenin carried with him his own set of unique challenges, both before and after casting. I realized early on that Karenin cannot be portrayed as the villain of the play. Rather he is a man that the audience could almost like, if he had not treated Anna the way he did. He is not a man who is out for complete vengeance; instead he does so much to protect Anna. I was looking for an actor who had an air of grace who could carry

Karenin above the other characters. I found a strong actor to play Karenin, but unfortunately the role had to be recast early in the rehearsal process. Rehearsals for Anna started at the end of Thanksgiving break in early December, and paused for about three weeks for winter break finally resuming with the start of the spring semester in January. During the break between rehearsals the actor initially cast as Karenin became unavailable for the role. I had to immediately recast and I submitted ideas of new actors to my advisors. I soon settled on a new actor who had been considered for Karenin in callbacks and I officially made the decision the day after I found out about the change. The new actor graciously accepted the role, and was smoothly incorporated into rehearsals.

The next piece of the puzzle to be cast was the Muffled Figure. For this role I actually decided to go with an underclassman who was not initially called back, but who I knew had a good attitude and good movement skills. The actor seemed surprised at first to be cast in the role because he did not get a callback, but was excited with the opportunity.

The process of casting the ensemble had some elements I had not anticipated. I decided before callbacks that I wanted an ensemble of nine actors: five women and four men. My plan was to select the ensemble from the pool of actors and actresses who had been called back but were not cast in a principal role. These actors needed to have the ability to play several characters and required physical flexibility to be a part of the dances, and mental flexibility in order to keep up with the rapid and intense rehearsal process I had planned.

Once the major casting decisions were made, my advisors suggested I send an email out to all the students called back allowing them to decline the offer of an ensemble role before the final cast list was posted. It was thought that normally when a show with an ensemble, such as a musical, is being cast the director should allow upper-level students who would rather take smaller roles to remove themselves from consideration. While I tried to make it clear to students that the ensemble functioned differently than that of a musical, this opportunity backfired on me. Within a few hours of finishing callbacks, I was flooded with emails from students asking to be pulled from consideration of the ensemble (with a few taking the occasion to ask not to be cast at all). It seems that some wanted the opportunity to be called back for the next show, *Romeo and Juliet*, instead of being cast in the ensemble of *Anna Karenina*. At the same time I received several emails from students who were excited at the prospect of being in the show in any capacity and wanted to work with me. When I was making my final casting considerations I used these students to fill the slot of those who dropped out. While overall this became a setback for me, both emotionally and in terms of my casting process, what I found was that the people who made it on the cast list were ones that wanted to be a part of this process; they wanted to work with me on this show.

Rehearsal Process

I approach each rehearsal process very differently. Every play, musical, or opera brings with it its own challenges, and it is important as a director to be aware of those challenges and plan rehearsals accordingly. For *Anna* this meant leaning into the theatrical nature of the piece. It required my own aesthetic to be fused with the creative design. I also knew I would have to pay close attention to the schedule, as we only had

five weeks to rehearse. *Anna* was turning into a larger and larger show and the cast and I had to move quickly.

About a week before rehearsals began I read Anne Bogart's work, *What's the Story: Essays about Art, Theater and Storytelling* which helped to shape my first week of rehearsals. She explains

After training, we proceed to rehearse the production. We do not improvise. We rehearse scenes in the order of the play, except for songs and dances, which require daily rehearsal. We pay attention to psychology, motivation, spatial and temporal choices, gesture, physical action and dramaturgy. We often stop to discuss the intricacies of dialogue, context and psychology.¹

Bogart says it here, she is saying, get up! Act! Do! Don't sit around discussing what the characters want, instead try it out. Use the rehearsal to rehearse, to try new things. This validated my inclination to avoid a long period of table work due to the limited amount of rehearsal time allotted for this slot in the season. The schedule that I had been given for *Anna Karenina* only allowed me five days of rehearsals in the fall semester of 2017 before we went on winter break. I knew time would be a major factor in my process, and I needed to hit the ground running.

After our initial read through of the play on the first day of rehearsals, I decided to start staging right away. I threw some set pieces together and began to sculpt the horse race scene. I only had a few ideas preplanned so I was flying by the seat of my pants and felt afraid. Bogart mentions, "Every time I begin work on a new production I feel as though I am out of my league; that I know nothing and have no notion how to begin and I am sure someone else should be doing my job, someone assured, who knows what to do,

¹ Bogart, 29.

someone who is really a professional.”² I leaned into that fear and allowed it to help me stage. I used this very initial rehearsal to experiment and to allow myself to just try some ideas and see what happened. Figure A.21 shows the horse race in the final performance. This moment actually changed very little in between my initial staging and opening night. Beginning staging like this not only helped to start blocking the show, but it also established what the working style of *Anna Karenina* would be. I knew that the approach I took on the first day of rehearsals would set the mood and energy for the entire process. It was important that I got the cast up and moving early so they knew that this would be a very physical show which required their co-creation of stage pictures.

From there, the cast and I worked very fast. I blocked the entire first act in the next two rehearsals, and used the following two rehearsals to review what I had staged and have the choreographer and her assistant begin to work on the two major dances of the piece (the ball and the peasant dance). This first week I did very little in the way of character development, opting instead to shape the show itself first. I needed to find out what the specific construction of this *Anna* would be. I began to realize shaping and choreographing the transitions between scenes was going to need a lot of time and attention. I noticed that the show was becoming so active that the cast, specifically the ensemble, was struggling to find their tracking throughout the show. In this context tracking refers the through line of stage action in the performance. It is a way to map the play’s action, the actor’s stage business, or technical elements for which they have responsibility. While I recognized this as an issue, I felt that there was little I could do to solve it that early on.

² Anne Bogart, *A Director Prepares: Seven Essays on Art and Theatre*, (London: Routledge, 2001), 84.

Once we came back from break, it was apparent that though my cast had successfully memorized their lines, much of the blocking of the transitions was forgotten. It also became apparent that the stage management team was struggling to document all the movement of set pieces and furniture. However, I did not want to let this hold us back. I learned early on in my time as an assistant director in opera that you cannot let issues like that delay the process. You face them head on, and say to yourself “ok, we are living in a world where these transitions are going to be messy and difficult, what do we do to solve it?” It became my goal to solve the issue of these transitions throughout the rehearsal process.

I staged the rest of the show during our first week back and was able to have a run through before the design team came to see a complete rough draft of the show. This “designer run”³ actually had to be rescheduled because with the New Year came a new strain of the flu, and the actors were catching it quickly. Over the course of the first two weeks back four actors caught the flu and several others got colds. Again I had to plow through these issues, and find a way to make the whole situation work. Mainly I needed to find time with my Anna and Levin to try and figure out how their characters function in the larger world of Edmundson’s *Anna Karenina*.

Narrating the Part

Among the largest hurdles the actors playing Anna and Levin had to overcome were the moments we leave the real time of *Anna Karenina* and enter Anna and Levin’s eternal time. In my conceptual mind, these moments were in a sort of purgatory, a space

³ The designer run is a specific rehearsal where the cast runs a show in its entirety for the design team. This is usually the first time the designers see the staging, and it gives them a chance to see how the show functions up on its feet. The design run for *Anna Karenina* took place at the completion of the first week of rehearsals in January 2018, after two weeks of total rehearsals.

separate from our world. While I had the space well formulated in my head, I could not tell an actor “act like you are in purgatory,” or “just pretend you have left the story.”

Both of those suggestions are examples of bad communication from a director. I knew I had to be specific in what I wanted, and I had to discuss these moments with my actors to guide them to active and interesting acting choices. We had to find other ways to try and figure out how these two characters function.

The two actors who played Anna and Levin have a natural stage presence and handled narrative passages well at first. But as the actors developed fuller understandings of their character, it became time to discuss how their characters function in these narrative passages. One particular moment that gave us trouble came in the second act, when Anna and Levin meet face to face in the real time. The script reads as follows,

Music. We are not in real time anymore. LEVIN walks towards ANNA and takes both of her hands

LEVIN. Oh Anna... you are beautiful and clever and kind and honest

ANNA. I am lonely and desperate and so, so frightened.

LEVIN. I can't bear this. I can't bear it for you. I don't think Vronsky understands you, I don't think he can. *He draws her closer to him. It seems they might even kiss. KITTY enters at the other side of the stage. ANNA sees her and pulls away. We return to normal time.*⁴

At first we followed the stage directions for this part but we could not figure out why Levin would almost want to kiss Anna. More so, we felt that doing so would damage Levin's character so we had to figure out how to stage this moment.

I realized that Levin and Anna needed to have a platonic moment of intimacy here not sexual. We began discussing why Anna and Levin are in each other's stories and why they narrate for one another. I decided to ask my actors about how much they know of one another's stories, i.e. does Levin know Anna will kill herself from the start? Does

⁴ Edmundson, 77

Anna know how Levin's story will end? We came to the conclusion that Levin probably knows more of Anna's story than she does of his. Even more, Levin seems to be invested in Anna's story more than she is in his. We continued to dig into this idea, and we discovered that Levin serves as a sort of savior figure for Anna; he may be in her story to try to absolve her of some of her wrongdoings. She may not listen to him, and he may not be able to stop her from doing wrong, but he seems to be there for her.

We realized that this scene could be a moment when Levin reaches out to Anna. Perhaps here he is aware that she is considering suicide, and this is a chance to lift her out of that. I staged Levin to physically reach to Anna, to offer her his hand instead of grabbing her to kiss her. Anna then looked at his hand and made the decision not to take it. He tried to help her, and with a simple gesture she replied, "No, thank you." This image seemed to work much better for the actors than the kiss the script suggested, and it helped them discover more about their characters.

However, this was not the only moment that gave us issues. Another moment that was difficult was Anna's final monologue as she was preparing to end her life. In this case it was not the staging that was the problem, but more how the actress was delivering the speech. Figure A.37 shows this moment as it was in performance, and the following is the text from the play,

ANNA moves about, unsure of where she is going.

ANNA. Look at all the people on the streets; all miserable and hating each other. We are born to suffer, that's why we're here. And we all try to deceive ourselves but then we see, we see the truth and what can we do? Look at all the ugly people, look at the people trying to smile, look at that man crossing himself, I'd like to ask him what he thinks he means by that.⁵

⁵ Edmundson, 83

Anna used this speech to walk among the crowd of people around her and commented on the ensemble, as they struck various poses. At first I instructed the actress to deliver the speech as if saying it to herself, as if Anna was having an out of body experience. This felt odd and the actress struggled to understand what that meant. We continued to tinker with the speech, trying to find different moments to play at varying levels but nothing seemed to help. My directing advisor came to a run, and asked Anna to narrate the speech to the audience and tell us what she is seeing and feeling. Suddenly the scene opened up, it made sense. Anna was narrating her own story, not to Levin but to those physically around her and we ,as the audience, became a part of her world

Allowing Anna, and Levin alike, to narrate their stories for us brought the audience into their world. We did not break the forth wall as it is typically understood by acknowledging the fact that we are in a theatre, but instead used the nature of the text to further invite the audience in. This also extended beyond Anna and Levin as Vronsky turned to the audience to describe Anna's ball gown in the first act, and Dolly and Stiva both addressed the audience in their speeches during Kitty and Levin's wedding. Finding the narration of the piece helped to solidify some of the messier acting moments, and provided the actors with a basis to use as they navigated their character's arc throughout the show. Understanding how to stage the narrative portions of the play also deepened our sense of the theatricality of Edmundson's script.

Finding the Lightness, Finding the Joy

Anna Karenina, whether in theatrical, film, or literary form is a heavy story. It deals with larger than life issues, and deep emotions that if not handled carefully can drive the piece to a very dark and somber place. A major goal that I had while

approaching rehearsals was to prevent the piece from becoming a soap opera. I needed to prevent the actors from playing the darker moments the entire show and at the same time avoid the trap of allowing actors to overplay their roles and become two dimensional. The major solution to this problem came in my direction and work with the actors playing Dolly and Stiva.

I discovered that for Dolly and Stiva, *Anna Karenina* is not so much a tragedy as it is a sex farce. Dolly and Stiva's story is terribly upsetting, however they seem to deal with it in a comedic sense: as much as Dolly cannot stand what Stiva is doing to her, she returns to him. While these two actors found the comedy of their roles in callbacks, once we began rehearsing they were playing the drama of the play. We began to discuss how Dolly and Stiva functioned as the comedic relief and they seemed to open up to the idea of bringing lightness to the piece.

For example, Dolly and Stiva's fight early in the first act is one that should have us laughing. We need to see the absurdity of Dolly believing that Stiva will change, not only to enjoy her character, but to juxtapose the relationship that Vronsky and Anna will soon form. Early on in rehearsals I coached the actress playing Dolly to exaggerate her part, to play it as a caricature. This became tough to reshape for the moments when Dolly was alone with Anna or Levin, however this helped immensely during her interactions with Stiva. Together, the two of them formed a relationship that was erratic, bombastic, and pleasantly over the top. Watching the two of them spar gave *Anna Karenina* a comedic side that I think we were missing early on in rehearsals.

The actor playing Stiva also had to find the comedy. This actor has an amazing sense of comedic timing, but like Dolly, I think he struggled at first to find the lightness

within his part. Stiva's scenes in the play tend to come in succession to more serious and subdued ones. Therefore, his entrances needed an extreme amount of energy to push the piece forward. For example, Stiva brings energy into the beginning of the second act with his conversation with Levin. Previous to this we witness a small tiff between Anna and Vronsky. Stiva's presence needs to refresh the audience. In the same scene, I had an actress from the ensemble serve as a maid to flirt with Stiva. The actress crossed the stage, offering him a glass of champagne, and once she moved away from him dropped her napkin and bent down to retrieve it. This gave Stiva the opportunity to ogle over her, and forget about the conversations he was having with Levin. While I would normally use small bits like this in a more overall comedic piece, this placement seemed natural and useful in helping him shape his character.

Finding lighter moments did not just depend on Stiva and Dolly. The cast and I focused throughout the rehearsal process on keeping the play from becoming too much of a tragedy. For example, we used the peasant sequences in the first act to pick up the lightness and to show Levin's joy. I was lucky enough to have a strong assistant choreographer who came up with a peasant dance that, along with the music, helped to create a moment of celebration in the middle of the first act. Figure A.25 illustrates this moment in action. The assistant choreographer and I pushed the ensemble as a whole to energize the dance. We wanted to see the bliss the peasants felt in completing a day's work.

Finding moments of joy for Levin and even Anna became more and more important as rehearsals went on. As Anna's mental state worsened in her story, we needed to see the happiness within Levin grow and grow. One moment in particular that

we looked to in order to create joy for Levin was towards the beginning of the play when he first talks about his farm. I instructed the actor playing Levin to revel in the description of his farm, to find the ecstasy in describing his land, his cows, and his potatoes. To the audience (and to a young actor) these may seem like foreign or trivial things, but for Levin they are the world.

The actress playing Anna and I found moments of lightness and joy following her first intimate moment with Vronsky. The specific part reads as follows,

ANNA. Please – I know what I have done and God knows what will happen to me now, I am in his hands, I am just a girl, I am Anna... I had to. I had to do it. I love him.

LEVIN. Love?

ANNA. Yes. Love. It is not just an affair like other people have. It is not just throwing a body down on a bed and... It is love. The same love which you feel for Kitty and for the Spring and for your child who isn't born yet... I know I am bad, but there is good here too. He would give his life for one moment of that happiness and I would – I would give my life. I will have to face what comes to me but I know now what it means to live. *Pause.* It is shameful, it is rapturous, it is frightening.⁶

While this section does have dark undertones, there is also so much bliss and ecstasy. The actress playing Anna and I discussed how in this moment Anna is truly in love, and needed to describe how good love feels. We also realized that it was important to highlight this moment, as Anna would be chasing this feeling of delight for the rest of the play, much like a drug addict chases their first high. Finding these moments were important in the rehearsal process as they unlocked some of the deeper levels of the play, and aided in pacing and helping to drive the action forward.

⁶ Edmundson, 31.

Intimacy

I decided in the beginning of the rehearsal process that staging this show would require an intimacy director. Intimacy direction is a relatively new field in professional theatre, and one that the Baylor Theatre Department is beginning to embrace. Intimacy directors, much like fight choreographers, are called in by directors to aid in the creation of intimate moments in productions. They use their skills and various methodologies to help create safe environments in which actors and actresses are able to perform what may be vulnerable work (i.e. kissing, touching, etc.) in a manner that keeps everyone involved feeling supported.

The actors playing Vronsky and Anna already had a close working relationship and were not nervous at the idea of creating the intimate moments between the two characters. However, I felt that I did not have the experience to stage their passion scene appropriately so we used our local intimacy director. The intimacy director came in and, much like with a dance, choreographed the moment between Anna and Vronsky. She made sure that the moment told the best story it could, while having clear steps so the actors could repeat it every night. Much like a dance or a fight, she made sure that we rehearsed these moments with an understanding that nothing should randomly change. Figure A.19 shows the beginning of this sequence. The intimacy director also helped to stage the wedding kiss between Kitty and Levin (Figure A.31), and the bedroom sequence between Anna and Karenin (Figure A.16).

Ensemble Work

I decided the ensemble would need to play a major role in the production. In addition to taking on the secondary character roles, they would be crucial in helping with

the storytelling of *Anna Karenina*. I wanted to use the ensemble in an “operatic sense,” which to me meant utilizing them to fill out the scenes like an opera would with supernumeraries. They would become peasants in the country, or people at the train stations, or the dancers at the ball, while at the same time be responsible in moving around the scenery and props on the stage.

I turned back to my research on Meyerhold, and his ideas of *teatralnost*. I wanted to use the ensemble to create this sense of theatrical theatre. The ensemble would achieve this goal mainly through their use in creating the scenic transitions. For example, I decided early on that I did not want my principals to ever move furniture or be involved in transition. I used the ensemble to do so in as many creative ways as I could think possible. For example when Anna and Karenin were chatting in their bedroom, I had two ensemble members come up through the vomitorium in the theatre to retrieve the props they were using mid-conversation. This indicated that Anna and Karenin were of a certain class where they had others to do their chores for them while also allowing for the smooth and easy transitioning of props off the stage.

One major moment I worked on with the ensemble was the Act I ball during which Anna and Vronsky meet. Figures A.12, A.13, and A.14 show the ball in action. The ensemble actors became the additional aristocrats who attended the ball, but more importantly they helped created the movement that showed time slow down as Anna and Vronsky shared their first dance together. The ensemble were able to show the bending of time by slowing or stopping their dancing as Anna and Vronsky begin their relationship.

I also did my best to use the ensemble to highlight important moments. I would have the ensemble stop in their tracks to watch Anna or Levin during certain scenes to guide the audience's eye. For example, when Anna and Vronsky dance together at the train station the ensemble immediately turned their attention to watch, as seen in figure A.13. This, to me, highlighted important action and also helped to show the pressures from society put on Anna. Nothing about her affair was a secret in the gossip circles of St. Petersburg society, everybody knew her personal life. She was not only fighting against her husband, but against a class and social system that was constantly watching her every move.

The ensemble also helped to create the numerous locations required in the script. In particular they were charged with creating the various trains that Anna and Levin ride. Together, with some of the set pieces, the ensemble and I built the trains in three different ways. The first, at the top of the show, we utilized two large steamer trunks and a bench to create three separate rows of seats. We then used two umbrellas to create the wheels, and had an ensemble member hold the lantern up at the front to serve as the train's headlight.

I think the strongest image the ensemble and I created was the final train sequence in which Anna commits suicide. Anyone who knows the story of *Anna Karenina* and goes to see a production will be curious as to how this moment is tackled. Unlike film, which can actually create a train using special effects, I had to find ways to become creative using the resources I had available. Part of my initial hopes to build this moment was to use Anne Bogart and Tina Landau's "viewpoints," which are "an improvisational study and practice of the subtleties of spatial and temporal issues in performance. Using

the ingredients of time and space, the Viewpoints allow actors to practice generating fiction collaboratively on the blank canvas of the rehearsal hall floor.”⁷ The initial plan was to use viewpoint sessions as a means to create the train for the final sequence, but unfortunately my schedule did not allow for the time to have such sessions.

Instead I looked back to a previous project I directed at Baylor during my second year of studies here. The piece was a devised work based off of the painting “Seasickness at the Ball, onboard an English Corvette,” by French painter François-Auguste Biard. I had my actors in this project create a pirate ship using only pieces of luggage and sheets. I decided creating something similar would be the best option for this sequence. I asked my actors to physically create a train using only the props we had available. While this became a very makeshift train, the utilization of the ensemble created a sense that they were a part of the action of the play; they themselves were killing Anna not necessarily this giant metal object. The ensemble shouted the French phrase the Muffled Figure mumbled throughout the play and created a moment of visceral action where Anna actually was able to fight something larger than herself all the while maintaining a strong feeling of theatricality. Using the ensemble in this manner made the show less about the audience asking, “how did they do that?” and more about people thinking, “wow, look at how they did that!”

Transitions

The most difficult part of directing *Anna Karenina* was staging and choreographing the transitions between scenes. As mentioned previously, the play changes locations about fifty times, and it was up to me to figure out how to make these

⁷ Bogart, 28.

moments shift. I wanted the transitions to feel like a dance: like the scenery and props were waltzing in and out of the action of the play. From the first rehearsal, I began assigning ensemble members to various columns, benches, or props we needed moved in particular scenes and at particular moments to get the play pushing forward.

However two issues came about in this process. The first was the long break in between the first and second weeks of rehearsals that caused the cast to forget many of the details of the blocking we worked on. The second issue in this process was the inexperience of my stage management team to accurately track every small detail of the transitions. But as we moved forward with the staging process the stage management team became more adapt at tracking the transitions and the process became smoother.

The actual staging of the transitions can be broken down into two periods, the pre-designer run transitions and the post-designer run transitions. The pre-designer run transitions were messy. My hope was to quickly stage the show and figure out how to get the various pieces of the set moving in a fashion to best allow the story to unfold. These transitions were long, and often broke the action of the play. They had little aesthetic relation with what was happening in the text and rather mainly served to get the columns and set pieces from look A, to look B, etc. The transitions were not aiding in the storytelling of the play. The lack of connection to the text also made it difficult for the ensemble to remember what to move and when. They felt arbitrary and looked clunky.

Following the designer run, my advisor told me I needed to incorporate the transitions more into the action. He felt that I had done too much pre-planning and was not listening to the text and allowing the transitions to organically grow out of the action. I had set aside two full rehearsals following the designer run to focus on transitions while

the actress playing Anna was out of town; during these rehearsals the assistant choreographer and I took the time to specify the action of each transition.

One major change that occurred during these rehearsals was the incorporation of the Muffled Figure's lantern throughout the piece. I needed something to indicate to the audience that a transition was going to take place. I felt that the lantern, which was carried in by the Muffled Figure at the top of the show, could be an interesting object to use for the transitions. The audience would symbolically connect the lantern with the Muffled Figure. Using the lantern as a sign that a transition was going to take place gave those transitions a connection to the Muffled Figure. Figure A.4 shows Levin finding the lantern in a steam trunk just before the first transition happens. Anna and Levin became entranced by the lantern, and as they stare at it, the transition happened around them.

Not all of the transitions followed this pattern; some grew more naturally out of the dialogue. For example, the transition following Levin and Kitty's proposal came out of the small monologue Levin spoke celebrating the moment. Levin exclaims,

LEVIN. Anna, Anna, where are you? I am the happiest man alive. I want to write the words in the sky, I want to tell the stars. She looked at me with her clear truthful eyes and said yes. Yes. She is everything I have looked for. I walked to her house this morning and everything looked beautiful – the children on their way to school, the little loaves of bread in the baker's window, even the pigeons looked silver not gray. Death, do what you want. It is a new beginning.⁸

This transition became one of the most complex in the show. The ensemble, the assistant choreographer, and I did our best to create the street scene that Levin was describing while getting the set in place for the following scene. As the various pieces moved, different ensemble members walked across the stage as if walking down the street,

⁸ Edmundson, 56.

interacting with Levin. The transition, which took a considerable amount of time, was covered and complimented by Levin's speech.

I continued to tinker with the transitions through rehearsals and technical rehearsals up until the night before opening. They became a major part of the show and gave the entirety of the piece a strongly choreographed feeling. The ensemble's role in creating the transitions helped to give *Anna Karenina* a sense that this world is very far removed from our own, yet one we are invited to watch and listen in on.

Technical Rehearsals

The technical rehearsal process began with the crew-view, where the crew was invited in to watch a run of the show. Following that run, we began dry tech, or cue-to-cue rehearsals, where we incorporated the lights and sound into the show. I knew the technical rehearsal process would be complicated because of the size of *Anna Karenina*, but I was confident that the stage management and design teams would make it a positive process.

The team and I knew going in that two days of cue-to-cue rehearsals would not be enough time to get through the whole play. Our paper tech indicated the show had well over three hundred individual cues, many of which needed to be tested and discussed in the space, but the team was diligent in facing the challenges head on and trying to find solutions to all of the problems. A major hurdle thrown at us was that the actor playing Levin, along with one member of the ensemble, would be missing three of the techs to travel out of town for graduate school auditions. For some other directors this may cause undue stress, but because of my previous work on large operas, I knew I could handle

this. I had two of my graduate cohorts walk the parts of the missing actors, to help us best shape the technical elements around them.

One major technical issue that came up during these early cue-to-cues was figuring out how to transition, in terms of sound and lights, in and out of Anna and Levin's eternal time. The lighting designer created a beautiful deep green pallet for these scenes as seen in figure A.17, and the sound designer decided to highlight these moments with wind noises. However, we needed to decide how to shift to these looks and sounds and each specific cue needed its own discussion. Because we did not have time to discuss each shift, I took notes on how I felt the moments should pass and sent those on to my designers for consideration. Luckily the lighting designer and I had similar ideas, so several of those moments were changed without me even having to ask.

One moment in particular that we saw eye to eye on was during Kitty's first entrance:

LEVIN. I proposed to Kitty – Ekaterina Shcherbatskya

ANNA. Dolly's sister?

LEVIN. Yes.

ANNA. What did she say?

LEVIN. I don't want to talk about it. *Kitty enters and goes to Levin.*

KITTY. Oh, you're here.⁹

The lighting designer chose to wash the stage out with pink tones when we saw Kitty. Initially she had the pink slowly appear as she made her entrance and cross to Levin, but we felt we needed a quicker transition. Together we agreed to quickly wash the stage out with pink as Kitty interrupted Anna and Levin's conversation. The result allowed Levin to rapidly leave the eternal time with Anna, and enter the real time with Kitty.

⁹ Edmundson, 5.

Another element that was introduced during technical rehearsals that created a problem was the chandelier unit, which can be seen in figure A.3. In the design process my scenic designer imagined this as a large period chandelier, which could be raised and lowered from the dome to help create the various locations during transitions. The reality of the item was quite different. It had the presence he described, but took two crewmembers to raise and lower, and was extremely noisy. My initial intentions were to cut the unit, however, I knew that the crew put a lot of time and energy into building it and so it needed to be used.

The scenic designer and I decided the best solution was to have the chandelier move in as few locations as possible, and stay parked in a specific spot for long periods of time. We decided the chandelier would make its longest descent at the top of the ball to create a dramatic effect as the couples danced in, and would make a second and final climb up during Anna's drug trip in the second act as the world around her shifted. While the noise problem remained consistent, both of these moments had loud music cues, which helped mask the mechanics of the unit.

Another issue that came about during tech related to the two candelabras, or torchiers, the scenic and lighting designers had planned for. These two units were initially designed to be movable lamp units that mimicked the look of the chandelier, and could help to set mood and location. In theory, these would be interesting items to play with, but once introduced in tech they became, much like the chandelier, a bit of a hassle. The two torchier units were so large that they were immovable; one could not even stand up under its own weight. Much like the chandelier, cutting these was not a good option. However, the set designer and I came up with the idea to permanently install them on

either side of the stage's proscenium arch, and plug them into the lighting board, as seen in figures A.1 and A.3. This allowed the lighting designer to control the units and set the "candles" on them at various levels. While we lost the ability to move them, this freed up some of the actors during their transitions and helped to frame the stage.

Costumes became another complex element added during technical rehearsals. The decision to design the show with period costumes was aesthetically pleasing but was a bit of a strategic nightmare. Happily, both my costume designer and I were well prepared for rehearsals and ready for that task. The most complicated part of the costume process was tracking how, when, and where the ensemble changed into their various looks to become the different characters. The costume designer managed to find a crew large enough to give each actor in the show their own dresser to aid in the tracking of the costumes. This made the process smooth because each actor's track was recorded and documented by their individual dresser rather than two or three people trying to do it all. I was able to give my designer notes in the theatre about costume and tracking issues which she could easily pass onto her crew to fix for the next run. The addition of the crew, along with the designer's professionalism, prevented undue stress for the technical rehearsals.

As we continued throughout the technical process, I did my best to give the cast acting notes to help them form their characters. The largest performance issue that came up during this process was volume. Unfortunately, the Mabee Theatre, where *Anna* was performed, has acoustic issues. During one of our early dress rehearsals, a theatre department alumnus who was seated three rows away from the stage told me he loved how the show looked, but could not hear most of what the actors were saying. I took that

as a very serious concern and spoke to my cast about projection. I gave them the goal during one of the technical rehearsals to focus primarily on projection. By time the first preview had rolled around the cast had successfully self-corrected the volume issue and were ready to move forward with the show.

Conclusions

This production was more about aesthetics than “acting.” I wanted to experiment with movement, with picturization, and with the sculpting of lights and sound, rather than taking time in rehearsals to sit and chew through table work. This was not a play that depended on the brilliant acting of its Levin and Anna but rather on how each member of the company fit like a gear to the over machine that was *Anna Karenina*. Because of all the moving pieces, each performance of *Anna* was stressful to me. However, it became clear that the more the cast performed the show the more comfortable they became with their individual tracks. Anna started to lean into her part more and create a strong arc in her character throughout the show and Levin likewise continued to grow. The ensemble members were no longer forgetting to move a chair or a bench, but rather started to find interesting moments when they could make a small character choice. When all was said and done we had eighteen rehearsals (not counting the five we had before winter break) to get our piece ready for technical rehearsals. This became a major challenge for all involved, the outcome of which will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

Production Assessment

Introduction

With any theatre project directors will be constantly asking, “is this good? Will people enjoy this?” as the audience’s reception is nearly impossible to gauge before they arrive. However, for purposes of this project my evaluation of success or failure relied less on audience reception and more on my personal growth as a director. The chapter that follows explores my own self-reflection on the project that was *Anna Karenina*, along with critiques from the Baylor faculty, and my thoughts on how to best prepare myself for directing in the future.

Self-Reflection

As a director, I seek to stage moments that I find visually interesting or beautiful that help best tell the story at hand. Its not helpful to me to step back and judge whether or not what I have done is “good.” Rather I need to ask myself, am I telling the story, am I doing justice to the script, or score? Through much of my staging of *Anna Karenina* I found I cared less about if the audience would “get it,” and more about if I felt I was reaching towards my aesthetic sensibility. The greatest advice I had received in my training program was to never worry if the audience would “get” what I was staging. Rather it is my job as a director to throw ideas at audience members (through images, staging, or movement) and allow them to place their own meaning on my work. I love creating moments on the stage where I use objects or bodies in interesting and new ways

I decided not to listen in on conversations between audience members during intermissions or after the performances. In fact, most intermissions I was running backstage to give notes, and after was again running back to congratulate the cast. That being said, when I was watching *Anna Karenina*, I found myself paying attention to the audience just as much as I was the stage. I was curious to see how people were reacting to the show in the moment, who was paying attention and who seemed to be zoning out. Of course, there were audience members who fell into both groups; it was exciting to me to watch people observing and consuming my work. I had the strong sense that I had created something interesting that people were engaging in. I wanted people to leave *Anna Karenina* discussing what they saw, asking each other about the choices I had made, and debating those meanings.

Because of the nature of educational theatre, we do not get “reviews,” like one would see in the professional world. There is nothing I can quote from saying what a particular person who was uninvolved in the process thought of the piece. Instead, as I reflect on my work, I can only gauge the reception from my own point of view as well as my faculty advisors’. With the majority of the directing projects I have done at Baylor, I ask myself after if I could have worked on more or changed anything given a few more weeks of rehearsal. In my own opinion I think there was a decent amount I would have liked to reshape in *Anna Karenina*, including transitions, the use of the ensemble in a few moments, and some staging issues. I will discuss these issues in more detail in the critique section below, however first I will elaborate on the successes of *Anna Karenina*.

Successes

Probably the greatest success of *Anna Karenina* was its visual elements. In meetings with the Baylor theatre faculty after the run of the show it was near universal that the visual aesthetics of the piece were of note. I believe that is due in a large part to the design team, but also due to my clear vision of the piece. From the moment I first read *Anna Karenina* I was able to see it in my head; researching the play and formulating my concept only helped to strengthen those ideas.

I think what made the visual aspects of *Anna* so successful was my work as a collaborator with the designers. I have had the opportunity to work professionally in the opera world, and I have seen what it is like to butt heads with designers, or to give them a hard time. I have likewise worked with directors who are incredible collaborators and know exactly how to get what they want while at the same time pleasing their team. That is not to say that they are manipulative people, nor that I modeled myself to be a manipulative person, but I learned that the easier the director makes the designer's lives the more they want to work on the project they have been tasked with.

For *Anna Karenina* I devoted time to sitting and working one on one with the design team. Early on in the process I met on a near weekly basis with the costume and scenic designers to discuss their progress, share ideas, and just chat. We were able to build relationships with one another that was centered on trust and a desire to see this piece be the most successful it could be. The designers became excited to show me their work and share with me their progress. I spent time walking through the costume shop with the costume designer as she showed me her mock-ups and clothing she pulled. She knew that showing me half-finished items, or things that she was not sure about would

not bother me. Instead it only made me more excited about the work that was going into *Anna*.

On that same note, I think I was successful in building a sense of trust with the cast. As mentioned in the previous chapter, I experienced an odd situation in the casting process after a large group of students backed out of consideration for casting. I was able to cast actors who genuinely wanted to work on *Anna Karenina*. I made it a point to tell the actors early on that while we were staging, that if they were confused by a moment or unhappy with blocking to let me know so it could be fixed. I wanted the actors to own their roles; I wanted them to feel like the piece they are working on belonged to them.

Therefore, I think one of my greatest strengths was being the leader of this production. I often like to think of the director as the captain of a ship. When it came to the H.M.S. *Anna Karenina* I have to pat myself on the back for really taking charge of the production. This came from the trust I built with the designers, with the cast, and with the stage management. I made sure to be clear in my communication with the cast, the design and tech team, and any others who were involved with the show. From what I have learned directing, it is not only having the eye to stage interesting works, but also the communication necessary to work with large groups of people.

In particular, I was a strong leader during the technical rehearsal process of *Anna Karenina*. When we started technical rehearsals it became apparent that the stage manager was struggling to keep her voice heard in the room. I took the opportunity to support the stage manager and keep the rehearsal flowing. I also made sure to work closely with the designers, and watch and re-watch almost each cue in the show. Because of the strong trust I had formed with the design team beforehand, it seemed that we were

all communicating on the same levels. There came moments when a light cue felt odd, and by time I moved over to the lighting designer to discuss it, she had already made a note and knew how to fix it. Likewise, the costume designer and I had very similar observations during the first few dress rehearsals and our notes lined up as well.

A large part of my goals in technical rehearsals was keeping the rehearsal room as stress free as I could. I knew going in that as the leader I had to do my best to make sure that any issues that came up were solved in a timely and efficient manner. While we did not finish the cue to cue on time, I believe that my overall positive outlook and faith in the cast and designers allowed the entirety of the tech process to be successful.

The work of the director however needs to extend beyond their ability to communicate with their team, and onto the stage. Part of being a director is having the eye to create interesting staging that helps to tell the story at hand. It was apparent from the feedback from the theatre department faculty that I succeeded in not only telling the story of *Anna Karenina* but creating staging that was visually interesting to watch. As engaging as the design was for *Anna Karenina*, I believe that I complimented it with strong staging images. This was due in part to the research I had done on directors whose work I was inspired by as well as the wisdom I gleaned from Anne Bogart's writings. Watching and researching the work of Wilson, Meyerhold, and Mnouchkine helped me to develop what I wanted *Anna* to look and feel like.

I also find it necessary to keep the research and analysis I do out of the rehearsal room at times. I think much of the success of the *Anna* staging was due to my desire to allow moments to form organically. There is nothing more thrilling to me than being caught in the middle of a rehearsal unsure of how to move forward and coming up with a

decision or solution on the spot. I believe that once one has done the research and analysis necessary they are able to make decisions using their gut. One cannot bring large binders of information to rehearsals to share, instead the director needs to be confident that they have the knowledge inside of them and allow the subconscious to take over and make those decisions.

I did my best to combine my preplanning and subconscious decisions to allow *Anna* to take shape. I discovered many ideas, like making the train out of a series of chairs (figure A.8) and Anna and Levin holding portraits in Italy (figure A.32) during my own pre-rehearsal preparation time. But at the same time many things like the idea to track the lantern throughout the production, have actresses spread snow like it is seeds out of buckets, and to have the ensemble build a train with their bodies, came to me in the moment in the rehearsal room. The strong research in directing styles and script analysis before rehearsals allowed me to be creative and grounded in the play in the rehearsal room.

It was clear from faculty comments that a majority of the successes of *Anna Karenina* came from my ability to lead a team and to stage an engaging piece of theatre. My desire to create a piece that was aesthetically pleasing, while at the same time building a sense of trust between myself and the rest of the *Anna Karenina* team, helped to engage the audience once the show opened and create a unified production.

Critiques

Pacing of the Production

One of the areas I struggled with the most during the rehearsal period of *Anna* was keeping the play moving at a reasonable pace. My advisor had come in several times

to watch runs of the production, and one of his major concerns was the timing of the piece. The script is eighty-six pages long, and during some of the earlier rehearsals the show was running over two and a half hours. While it is expected that a play will cut down on time once it moves into technical rehearsals, it was clear from early on that I would need to keep my eye on the clock.

One of the areas that was holding the show back the most during rehearsals was the transitions between scenes. As previously discussed, while I was staging the show I either pre-planned these transitions, or had them staged quickly on the spot. Because of this many of the transitions at first had little connection to the text or action of the play; the show was chugging along with a scene happening, then a transition, a scene, then a transition, etc. This caused the transitions to feel arbitrary and were confusing to the cast. I put together a “look book,” for the cast that showed the location of the columns and furniture for each scene, I failed to explain it fully to the ensemble, and it became a hindrance. As we continued to stage, the locations of objects changed and many of the looks in the “look book,” were no longer correct. I began to get frustrated during rehearsals when the cast and stage management were unsure of where set pieces were supposed to be or who was supposed to move them.

I met with my advisor about two weeks before technical rehearsals to discuss the issues with the transitions. He suggested I think back to some of my previous projects I had done at Baylor and to review how in the past I was able to tie action and movement together to figure out how to solve issues. I took the opportunity to really focus on solving those problems during the transition rehearsals. Luckily these rehearsals helped

to alleviate some of the issues with the transitions, but it was not until my advisor reminded me to slow down and think that I was able to figure out the staging.

The restaged transitions helped with the pacing, but the overall production wound up being a bit long at two and a half hours. It seems that the attempt to get through the play was likewise a little detrimental for some faculty members. One professor noted that while she enjoyed the piece she never felt emotionally connected to the characters. She mentioned that she wished there were a few moments of stillness; that I allowed the production to breath so that the audience could connect. Because of my goal to keep the production moving, I never really varied the pace as much as I should have. I need to think more in the future about varying the energy and pacing to give audiences (and actor alike) a chance to breath and take in the piece.

Acting Issues

While *Anna Karenina* was a visually engaging production, it was clear in some of the faculty reviews that I did not pay as much attention to the acting choices as I should have. It is my belief that I cast the show well, however, because of my desire to spend my time focusing and sculpting the blocking, I neglected some of the character work that a few of the actors needed. I am reminded here that while working in an education setting I need to support the actors differently than if I were working in professional theatre. In most professional situations, it is the actor's job to shape their characters and implement the notes they are given from the director. In the case of *Anna*, while I was very happy in the end with how my actors grew, it was clear that they did not all achieve the same degree of success in the final performance.

I think it is important that I reflect on my decision to use rehearsal time to refine movement and picturization. My desire in the future is to stage large scale operas, and as a director in that field, much of my job will be to pay attention to the larger aspects of the stage. While it will always be my job to shape and sculpt the movement, it is always important to keep an eye on the acting and the character's intentions. I recognize that this is an area that I faltered in and will need to think about more in the future.

Staging

While the theatre faculty all enjoyed the overall staging of *Anna Karenina*, one pointed out that I neglected to think enough about the theatre in which the show was staged. *Anna Karenina* was performed in Baylor's Mabree Theatre, which is a modified thrust space. A faculty member commented that much of the staging felt like it was done in a slightly more proscenium fashion, which unfortunately ignored the sight lines of the furthest most left and right sides of the audience.

While I did spend a large amount of time during rehearsals walking around the space and checking for sight lines, I allowed too much to slip and that may have affected some audience member's experiences. For instance figure A.32 shows the moment when Anna and Levin enter for their scene in Italy. Soon after this the two cross downstage and sit in the chairs seen at the edge of the figure. Once seated much of the actors' faces were blocked too much of the audience due to their position so far down stage. Moments like these can cause audience members to check out and struggle to stay connected with the performers.

Another issue related to staging that was brought up by multiple professors was my use of the ensemble. While overall the faculty were satisfied with how I incorporated

the ensemble into the piece, their presence left a few wanting more of them. My advisor spoke to me about his wish that I integrated them into the action of the play more. He felt that while they were aesthetically pleasing, at times they seemed like no more than well-dressed furniture movers. In the end, this faculty member felt the ensemble's role in the play was unfinished. I believe I should have used the ensemble more to highlight their purpose in aiding the storytelling of *Anna Karenina*. I should have included the ensemble more in the action of the play to finish the gesture I was creating with them.

Another faculty member commented that their costumes felt unfinished and wished they had been more realized. This faculty member was confused by the distressed corsets the women were wearing at the ball, and wished they had a more elegant look. This was the initial intention but was cut, however I see why more attention to the ensemble member's looks could have aided with the overall aesthetic. A third faculty member wished that they were more present throughout the piece, wondering if I should have had them on stage for the entirety of the play. It is hard to say if this would have worked, but it seems that both professors were discussing a similar concern: my choices not to assimilate the ensemble's work more into action of the play.

Concluding Thoughts

While I am not one to fixate on what I believed the audience felt about the pieces I direct, I received an email that helped me to understand the impact *Anna Karenina* had on some audience members. The following email was sent to me from a student in Baylor's Theatre Appreciation class expressing his happiness in seeing the production.

Hey Josh. You came and spoke in [my] theatre appreciation class last week. To tell you the truth I wasn't very excited about having to go to [a] play during the middle of the week but, I was very wrong. Last nights [sic] play was absolutely

beautiful. I was truly captured and pulled in by the play. I just wanted to say congrats on last night and good luck moving forward. Thank you for really changing my outlook¹

My intention with *Anna* was never to try to change the world. I wanted to put on a show that made audience members think, think about the story, think about Tolstoy, and think about the theatre. After receiving this email, I can say I achieved that goal.

Regardless of what patrons, or faculty, or students said about *Anna Karenina* I believe that I led and directed the best show I was able to. I was excited to formulate my concept and my ideas were enhanced by the talents of the design team and the willingness of the actors to try new things. The actors and designers were energized by the project, and put in an immense amount of time and effort due largely to my strong leadership skills and clear vision to stage *Anna Karenina*.

Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* opens up with the memorable line, "All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way."² According to anthropologist Jared Diamond this sentence encapsulates the "Anna Karenina Principle," which states any error in a list of factors for a project will lead to its ultimate failure. Conversely the only way perfection can be reached is if each individual factor in the overall project is perfect. Baylor Theatre's production of *Anna Karenina* was not perfect, yet it was not unhappy. The errors within *Anna Karenina*, whether in staging, in acting, in concept, in design, or any other area, made the production what it was. I led a team of ten designers, nineteen actors, two stage managers, and twenty-two crew members to create the best production possible. While I am reminded that it is important to take the time I need to stop and think during the process, I was able to sit back after the final performance of

¹ Baylor student, email to the author, February 7, 2018.

² Tolstoy, 1

Anna Karenina and say to myself “I did that.” I looked at the empty stage and said all of this, all these costumes, sets, lights, everything came from ideas in my head and people trusted me enough to hand me this project.

Every new show I take on will be a challenge in its own right. Every script brings with it a world that is needs to be explored and it is the director’s job to uncover that world and tell that story. *Anna Karenina* has taught me to trust my instincts, to dream and ask for the world, and only after that worry about limitations. If this script had fallen into my lap at the beginning of my M.F.A. studies at Baylor University, I would have no idea where to start, but through the process of being a student, through the process of exploring my directing style and discovering my aesthetic I was able to turn this script into a production. I succeeded in creating the best *Anna Karenina* I was able to, and that, for me, makes this production a happy one.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Production Photos



Figure A.1 Stage left and torchier detail



Figure A.2 Dome Detail



Figure A.3 Full stage with dome and chandelier lit



Figure A.4 Levin finds the Lantern.



Figure A.5 First Train sequence.



Figure A.6 Levin and Kitty dance before he proposes



Figure A.7 Two Peasant Women plant seeds (snow) as Levin and Agatha discuss problems on the estate.



Figure A.8 Anna leaves the Moscow train transition



Figure A.9 Anna tells Kitty of seeing Vronsky at the train station



Figure A.10 Stiva asks Dolly for forgiveness



Figure A.11 Anna Prepares for the Ball



Figure A.12 The Ball Comes to Life



Figure A.13 Anna and Vrosnky Dance at the ball



Figure A.14 Kitty stands alone at the ball



Figure A.15 Anna and Vronsky dance at the train station



Figure A.16 Karenin and Anna are intimate at home



Figure A.17 Anna is concerned by her attraction to Vronsky.



Figure A.18 Anna and Vronsky Flirt as Betsy and her Guests eavesdrop.



Figure A.19 Anna and Vronsky share an intimate moment.



Figure A.20 Anna reveals she is pregnant



Figure A.21 The Horse Race



Figure A.22 Levin and Dolly talk in the Country



Figure A.23 Anna Talks to her son



Figure A.24 The peasants mow on Levin's estate



Figure A.25 The peasants circle during their dance



Figure A.26 Levin talks to the peasants in his barn



Figure A.27 Anna and Vronsky fight at the top of the second act



Figure A.28 Kitty and Levin dance as Karenina chastises Anna



Figure A.29 Levin Exclaims his happiness as the ensemble transition the set.



Figure A.30 Anna lays sick with fever as Karenin tells Vronsky to leave



Figure A.31 Kitty and Levin's wedding



Figure A.32 Anna and Levin pose for their portraits in Italy



Figure A.33 Karenin reaches out to Anna during the morphine sequence



Figure A.34 Anna joins Vronsky at the opera



Figure A.35 Anna poses as her portrait in her home



Figure A.36 Anna and Levin watch Stiva ask Karenin for forgiveness



Figure A37 Anna's Final Monologue



Figure A.38 Anna turns to face the train and her fate.



Figure A.39 Kitty and Levin watch the stars

APPENDIX B: Scenic Locations and Looks

Pages	#	Location(s)	What's Required	Notes
1-6	1	N.S.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Door Unit Window Unit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dolly/Stiva in door Kitty in window
6-10	2	Moscow Train Station	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 Chairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible movement of wall units
11-12	3	Levin's country estate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Stool Door or window unit on "Country Side?" Comfortable and used chair Something to evoke grass/wheat (possible unit or other furniture that is rolled on?) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If units have two sides, this scene would show the wooden side
12-13	4	Dolly's Room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chaise lounge Chair Door Unit End table Bell Pull? (Prop? Held by an actor) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If we have a raised unit, this would be a good moment to set the bedroom on the unit and turn when Stiva and Dolly go into their room.
13-16	5	Outside Dolly's room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Door Unit Window Unit (With curtains) Bell Pull? (Prop? Held by an actor) 1 Chair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
16	6	N.S.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prep for Ball 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convo between Anna and Levin
16-17	7	The Ball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear Playing Space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
17-18	8	Train	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 Chairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible movement of wall units
18-19	9	Petersburg Train Station	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 Chairs (?) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible movement of wall units
19-21	10	Karenin's Bedroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Window Unit Door Unit (?) Bed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bed can be made up of smaller furniture pieces
21-25	11	Levin's estate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wooden side of 2 or 3 units Something to evoke grass/wheat (possible unit or other furniture that is rolled on?) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Levin needs to dig, but this can be mimed in the moat possibly
25-28	12	Betsy's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Column Units 9 chairs Bell Pull? (Prop? Held by an 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">

Pages	#	Location(s)	What's Required	Notes
			actor)	
28	13	Kitty's room	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staged US of Betsy's (?) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
29-30	14	Karenin's Bedroom OR Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Window Unit Door Unit (?) Bed OR Desk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bed can be made up of smaller furniture pieces
30-31	15	N.S.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up for Racetrack
31-34	16	Racetrack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Window and Door units Spectator stand or guard rail 5 Chairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
34-37	17	Country Estate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Probably done with lighting as Racetrack is moved
37-38	18	Karenin Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Door Unit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
38-40	19	N.S.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Window Unit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Karenin reads letter behind window?
40-41	20	Levin's Estate/Fields	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Units turned perpendicular to house(?) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
41-42	21	Vronsky's Rooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Door Unit Window Unit Desk Chair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
42-43	22	Karenin's Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Door Unit Window Unit Desk Chair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Items rearranged by ensemble
43-45	23	Levin's Barn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wooden side of units (?) 4 Chairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
45-47	24	Nikolai's Apartment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cot or Bed End Table Lamp (?) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
Act II				
48-50	25	Karenin's Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Door Unit Window Unit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These scenes are on top of each other, and the action will be the same. Staging and lighting will help to define the exact locations.
50-54	26	Kitty's Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as above (?) Possible Column unit? 	
51-56	27	Karenin's Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Door Unit Window Unit Desk 2 Chairs 	
56-58	28	Anna's Bedroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Door Unit? 2 Chairs End table Bed or Cot 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
59-60	29	N.S.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up for Church
60-61	30	Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Column Units Window Units 4 chairs (?) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">

Pages	#	Location(s)	What's Required	Notes
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Candelabras 	
61-62	31	Kitty's Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No Change, Lighting will take care of this
62-63	32	Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Column Units Window Units 4 chairs (?) Candelabras 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
63-64	33	Italy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 Picture Frames 2 Chairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
65-66	34	Levin's Estate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Door and window unit on "Country Side?" Comfortable and used chair End table 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
66-67	35	Nikolai's Apartment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cot or Bed End Table Lamp (?) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
68	36	The Opera	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9 Chairs Column Units 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
69	37	Karenin's Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change out of Opera
69-73	38	Veronksy's Apartments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk(?) Chair Chaise Lounge Window unit Door Unit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This space should feel messy (Possibly clothing or other objects strewn around) Set up on one side of platform unit?
73	39	Karenin's Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk Chair Window Unit Wall Unit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Switched around
74-75	40	The Club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Door Unit Small Table 2 Chairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This would be a good Platform unit set, to turn and reveal below
75-77	41	Veronksy's Apartments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk(?) Chair Chaise Lounge Window unit Door Unit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This space should feel messy (Possibly clothing or other objects strewn around)
77-78	42	Levin's Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wooden side of Units? Chair End Table 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
78-80	43	Veronksy's Apartments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk(?) Chair Chaise Lounge Window unit Door Unit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk may not be needed
80-81	44	Karenin's Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk Chair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">

Pages	#	Location(s)	What's Required	Notes
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Door Unit 	
81	45	N.S.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short convo between Anna and Levin
82-83	46	Veronsky's Apartments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chaise Lounge Door Unit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
83-85	47	Train and train Station	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 Chairs Column Units 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
85-85	48	Levin's Estate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wooden side of Units? Chair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depending on lighting and the final set, this look could change to as bare a stage as possible with stars. If the moveable units could have stars in them (?) somehow that would be interesting as well.

APPENDIX C: Initial Props List

Page(s)	Prop	Type	Number	Character	Notes
1	Sack	Hand	1	Figure	
8	Wallet w/money	Hand	1	Vronsky	
10	Cigarette	Hand	1	Agatha	Working
	Bucket	Hand	1	Agatha	With potatoes, peeled
11	Book	Hand	1	Levin	“Treatise on Heat”
14	Wallet	Hand	1	Vronksy	Same as before
19	Peach	Hand	1	Anna	Consumable
23	Shovel	Hand	1	Levin	
	Hunt/Fish gear	Hand	Multiple	Stiva	
25	Chairs + Benches	Set	Multiple	Various	
34	Horse?	?	1		
38	Peach	Hand	1		Consumable
39	Letter	Hand	1	Karenin	
40	Scythes	Hand	Multiple	Peasants	
48	Sack	Hand	1	Figure	Big enough for Anna to fit in
52	Chair	Set	1		
60	Crucifix	Set	1		
61	Diary	Hand	1	Kitty	
62	Candles	Hand	Multiple	Guests	
63	Paper Stars	Hand	Multiple	Guests	
66	Bed	Set	1		
	Cigarette	Hand	1	Woman	Working
67	Water	Set	1		By bed
	Bible	Set	1		By bed
	Pillow	Set	1		On bed
68	Bottle	Hand	1	Anna	With consumable Morphine
69	Peach	Hand	1	Anna	Consumable
72	Morphine	Hand	1	Anna	In bottle
78	Candle	Hand	1	Anna	
	Suitcase	Hand	1	Anna	
80	Candle	Hand	1		Same as before
84	Sack	Hand	1	Figure	

APPENDIX D: Music Tracking List

Page	Description	Music choice/idea	Notes
Pre-Show	Period pieces		Sound far away. Sounds of decay as well?
1	Music	Violin sound? Something longing	
6	Music as Vronsky enters and sees Anna		Vronsky and Anna should have a theme
11	Kitty repeating gestures of the proposals		Not called for in stage directions, but could be a good spot for some music
14	Vronsky has entered Kitty's room		Anna/Vronsky theme
16	The Ball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The first part of the ball should be a waltz Then should shift to Anna/Vronsky theme Then shift back to ball music. 	
18	The Muffled figure stooping in the shadows- Vronsky's entrance	Another shift perhaps from longing music to Vronsky/Anna Theme?	
25	Betsy and Guests sit at the recital	Popular music of the time. Chamber ensemble?	2 Pieces. One ends, guests clap, another starts. Maybe second one is Vronsky/Anna theme?
39	Sound of Peasants	Live sung Russian folk song? Something with a strong rhythm.	
41	Peasant dance music	Live sung, Russian folk dance song. Maybe we include an instrument here?	
Intermission	Music	Similar to preshow?	
48	Music	Top of second act. Similar to	

		top of show. Maybe just a single instrument.	
51	Stiva draws Levin to Kitty		Perhaps some music behind the proposal? I am not sure about this one yet.
60-63	The sound of singing can be heard	Live sung Russian Church Hymn. Should start simple and grow.	
63	Anna and Vronsky in Italy	Italian music	This should sound very odd. Not Russian at all.
68-72	Anna and Betsy at the Opera	Recorded Opera track.	Perhaps Anton?
72	Anna with Morphine	Distorted Anna/Vronsky theme	
74	At the club	Popular music of the time	
77	Anna Pulls Levin in	Distorted Anna/Vronsky theme	
78	Anna watches the flame	Music from top of show	
82-85	Anna suicide	Muffled theme and Anna/Vronsky theme together (if possible?)	
86	Stars in the sky	Final Music (Final theme)	

List of themes to be composed:

Muffled Figure Theme

Anna/Vronsky Theme (Waltz)

Levin/Kitty Stars theme

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