

Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike

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Analysis

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Artistic Goal: "Real people. Real drama."

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From “Visit to a Small Planet”

1. What is space like on this “planet”?
 - The space is an interior. It’s comfortable, cozy, and well loved. The space has a window that overlooks a lovely farm and a beautiful landscape of hills. On the land, you can see a barn, a peacock shed, a pond, and several cherry trees (an orchard).
2. How does time behave?
 - Time moves linearly and is tracked by clocks. Time is well-paced, not slow or fast. Leisurely at times, and sometimes frantic. The timing of this space takes placing over a weekend in mid to late August.
3. What is the climate?
 - Climate or weather? The climate is temperate, not too warm, not too cold. The weather is quite nice. It’s late summer in New England.
4. What is the mood and tone on this planet?
 - The mood is quite ironic, and sometimes frantic and defiant. The tone is fun, but crazed at times.
5. What kinds of patterns do the figures on the planet arrange themselves?
 - The figures arrange themselves in families. Sometimes we see groups in action and individuals set a part. Sometimes one figures makes themselves the primary focus, sometimes other figures cast one another out.
6. How do figures appear on this planet?
 - Figures have depth and are real, though some may appear to be shallow and two dimensional, even they have bits to them that are just as tangible as the others. Most characters ARE like us, in the sense that they occupy space in the same way we do. They have thoughts, feelings, and emotions that they act on.

7. How do figures dress on this planet?
 - Nicely, though not formal (unless going out.) Comfortably, and not restricted. Younger figures tend to dress more casually. This is with one exception. One figure seems to have a hard time keeping clothes on.

8. What are the language habits on this planet?
 - Intellectual prose. Figures are well spoken and speak in English with very little slang (for the exception of one younger figure)

9. What changes in time?
 - A couple of days pass, presumably over a weekend.

10. What changes in action?
 - We go from a quiet morning, to a hectic and chaotic afternoon, to a surprising and oddly eventful evening. Then we move to a not-so-peaceful morning, a disastrous afternoon, and then somewhat of a tumultuous evening culminating in a peaceful night.

11. What doesn't change?
 - Location

Analytic Exercise 1

1. Were you able to submerge yourself in the script?
 - Yes, I lost myself in the story of these crazy grown-ups, old enough to be my grandparents, who are traipsing around like children at times. I was able to let go enough to laugh and actually be interested in what happens next.

2. How did your visceral responses change, and in response to what?
 - I went from obligated interest to side-splitting laughter at the introduction of just about every character. I felt pity when listening to Sonia's laments and I got a headache whenever Masha began to whine.

3. What do you feel is the heart of the script?
 - Family drama. This show is quintessential family drama, heightened just enough to be hysterical.

4. No disconnection

5. What questions do you still have?
 - Why did Masha drop Spike so quickly?
 - Does Nina visit more often?
 - Does Vanya feel better?
 - Why is Sonia so glum all the time? What's made her so sad?

6. 3 Major themes:
 - Family
 - Drama
 - Relationships

Analytic Exercise 4

1. What does the initial exposition tell us about the given circumstances?
 - Initial exposition tells us that Vanya, Sonia, and Masha are siblings in their 50s. (Sonia was adopted.) Vanya and Sonia live in their childhood home together after taking care of their late parents. Masha is a film and stage stars who supports the pair and pays for the house as they don't work. Sonia loves Vanya (as more than just a brother she believes), and Vanya is gay. The pair has a routine and when the routine is disrupted, Sonia becomes disturbed. The pair has a soothsaying housekeeper named Cassandra who warns of all sorts of calamity, including Masha's upcoming visit.

2. How and where is the exposition revealed? Is it throughout the play or mainly up front?
 - The exposition is revealed slowly after Masha's entrance. We learn that Masha is planning to take everyone to a costume party as her minions. Future events are revealed in the form of Cassandra's warnings. Finally, Masha reveals her master plan at the end of the first act.

3. Is there a state of balance or imbalance as the play begins?
 - As the play begins there is relative balance, even in the midst of Sonia's upset. This is apparently how it usually is, on a bad day at least.

4. What is the inciting incident which sets the plot in motion? Justify your choice.
 - The inciting incident is Masha's announcement to sell the house.

5. In which spot in the play would you put the climax?
 - I feel that this play doesn't have a singular climax, rather there is a climax in each act. The play is full of heightened emotion. However, if I had to pick a point to which all other roads end up, I'd put the climax at Vanya's grand explosion toward the end of Act 2.

6. Is there also recognition and reversal within the climax?
 - There is recognition in the climax, yes. Masha recognizes that Spike is a good-for-nothing child who has betrayed her. She recognizes that the people she thought meant the best for her were really backstabbers. She realizes that she's been pretty awful to her siblings and changes course. There isn't really reversal in fortunes, except for the fact that Masha decides against selling the house so that the other two can continue to live happily.

7. Name at least one other (smaller scale) climatic moment in the play.
 - Vanya and Sonia finding out that Masha is selling the house.

8. What is the falling action or "the unraveling"?
 - Masha sends Spike away, tells the real estate agent to get lost, and apologizes and makes up with her siblings.

9. How does the play conclude? Is there a resolution, catastrophe and/or harmony restored?
 - The play concludes with a whole lot of warm and fuzzies. The siblings work together to think of a plan to move forward, helping each other, while enjoying each other's company and listening to the Beatles.

10. At the conclusion, has the main character won or lost in pursuit of his/her goals?
 - Two of the main characters, Vanya and Sonia, have won, being able to stay in the only home they've ever really known. Masha on the other hand, though she's lost, has been restored balance, clarity, and understanding among the others.

11. At the conclusion, what are the major questions left dangling? Any call to action or moral?
 - No major questions. Moral is that family should always come first.

12. Name the following (there can be more than one for each or none):
 - Protagonist- Vanya, Sonia, Masha
 - Antagonist- Masha, Spike

- Foil- Masha Spike, Nina
- Confidante- Nina
- Raisonneur- Cassandra, Nina, Vanya
- Normative character- Nina

13. What's your favorite moment in the play and/or what moment stands out to you?

- a. My favorite moment is when the sisters engage in a cryfest, screaming match, battling it out over who took better care of their parents before they died.

Analytic Exercise 6

1. Predominant Element:

- Character: The character's actions and reactions drive the plot forward
- Plot: The plot keeps the characters going, but isn't inherently obvious

2. Metaphor

- Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike is a train that loses control part of the way down the track, but somehow manages to pull safely into the station.

3. Image



4.

Research

At this time, research has not been completed.

Research is being done using the book Chekhov: The 4 Major Plays In New American Translations by Curt Columbus