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Kory Kelly – Director of Marketing at Pasadena Playhouse:

**Casting announced for**  
***UNCLE VANYA***  
**by Anton Chekhov**  
**Translated by**  
**Richard Nelson, Richard Pevear, and Larissa Volokhonsky**  
**Directed by Michael Michetti**  
**June 1 – June 26, 2022**

**Tickets at [www.pasadenaplayhouse.org](http://www.pasadenaplayhouse.org) or by calling 626-356-7529**

April 26, 2022, Pasadena, CA | Pasadena Playhouse Producing Artistic Director Danny Feldman announces casting and creative team for the Los Angeles premiere of the Richard Nelson, Richard Pevear, and Larissa Volokhonsky translation of ***Uncle Vanya*** by Anton Chekhov coming to the Playhouse June 1 through June 26; the press opening is Sunday, June 5 at 5 p.m.

The production stars Hugo Armstrong (*Power of Sail* at Geffen Playhouse) as “Vanya,” Anne Gee Byrd (*Doubt* at Interact Theatre Company) as “Marya,” Brian George (CBS’ *The Big Bang Theory*) as “Serebryakov,” Khetanya Henderson (Cirque du Soleil’s *Love*) as “Elena,” Brandon Mendez Homeras (*Wolf Play* at Soho Rep) as “Astrov,” Jane Taini (ABC’s *Station 19*) as “Marina,” and Sabina Zuniga-Varela (*Bordertown Now* at Pasadena Playhouse) as “Sonya.”

The creative team features direction by Michael Michetti; scenic design by Tesshi Nakagawa; costume design by Wendell C. Carmichael; lighting design by Jaymi Smith; sound design by John Nobori; and stage management by Meredith O’Gwynn.

"It is always thrilling when an old classic play is stunningly reborn. This new translation of *Uncle Vanya* breathes new life into a theatrical masterpiece, and I can’t wait for this insanely talented group of theater artists to bring it to life on our historic stage." said Danny Feldman, Pasadena Playhouse Producing Artistic Director.

This exhilarating revival pairs one of the greatest plays ever written with the world’s most celebrated translators of Russian literature. After years of caring for their family’s crumbling estate, Vanya and his niece receive an unexpected visit from his brother-in-law and his alluring wife. When hidden passions and tumultuous frustrations come to a boil in the heat of the summer, their lives threaten to come undone. Comic, cutting, and true to life, this translation of ***Uncle Vanya*** provides an up-close, conversational-style encounter with a classic drama that every theater-lover must see.

Director Michael Michetti says, “I have always been drawn to *Uncle Vanya*, but revisiting it now in this fresh, exciting new translation it feels more relevant than ever. In the play, the characters’ mundane lives are turned on end, and it forces them to reconsider the choices they have made and question whether it’s too late to make a change. Rereading it now, as we’re beginning to emerge from this global pandemic, something about that felt so familiar. Having our lives upended and our daily routines interrupted by COVID forced many of us to reflect on our lives and our choices and, like the characters in *Uncle Vanya*, some of us may never go back to the Before Times. For me, this gives the play a special poignancy and immediacy in this moment.”

Originally premiering at The Old Globe in 2018, Charles McNulty of the *Los Angeles Times* said, “This new “Vanya” has a conversational smoothness that removes the cobwebs sticking to those other translations that never let you forget that the play was written in 1897.”

Jennifer Vanasco of *WNYC News* said, “The exquisite translation, by Nelson along with Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, strips the language to its essence. It's clear and illuminating. When a gunshot goes off, it's not the bang that surprises, but the sudden explosion of feeling. “

Richard Nelson, in writing of his collaboration with Pevear, and Volokhonsky, told *The New York Times*, “As we worked together, I, as both a playwright and director, was always thinking toward production, imagining the questions that would be asked by actors and designers, and trying to make sure we were asking them as we translated. We decided to come together once a year and translate a play, and found a publisher, TCG books, for the series. We began to get commissioned by theaters and eventually turned to the Everest of our ambitions: the major plays of Anton Chekhov.”

Widely considered one of the world's greatest writers, **Anton Chekhov** was born on January 29, 1860, in Taganrog, Russia. In 1879 he entered the University of Moscow to study medicine and graduated in 1884. He kept a strict writing schedule and continued to practice medicine for the rest of his life. In addition to his numerous short stories, many considered masterpieces of the form, Chekhov wrote over a dozen plays, among them the classics of Western dramatic literature *Uncle Vanya*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *The Three Sisters*, and *The Seagull*.

Tickets are on sale now, starting at \$30 and are available at [pasadenaplayhouse.org](https://pasadenaplayhouse.org) by phone at 626-356-7529, and at the box office at 39 South El Molino Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91101.

## BIOGRAPHIES

**Hugo Armstrong** (Vanya) Hugo Armstrong was seen most recently at the Geffen Playhouse in *Power of Sail* and has been a part of productions at CTG, Sacred Fools, Theatre of Note, Kennedy Center, LATW, The Echo, RedCat, Walt Disney Concert Hall, Boston Court, and South Coast Rep. Television includes the upcoming *Bosch: Legacy*, *Cinema Toast*, *Blacklist*, *Room 104*, *For the People*, *Into the Dark*, *Fear The Walking Dead*, and *NCIS*. Movies include *Lucky*, *Coherence*, *Roman J. Israel, Esq.*, *Daniel Martinico's OK*, *Good and Excursions*, *Love in the Time of Monsters*,

*Drib, No Man of God, The Only One*, as well as the upcoming features *Dark Cloud, Mr. Limbo*, and *Rachel* by Victor Nunez.

**Anne Gee Byrd** (Marya) Anne Gee Byrd has performed locally at The Mark Taper Forum, Kirk Douglas, Geffen, Pasadena Playhouse, La Mirada, and the Ensemble in Santa Barbara as well as across the country including ACT in San Francisco, The American Shakespeare Festival in Connecticut, The Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, The Great Lakes Theater Festival, Indiana Repertory, The La Jolla Playhouse, The McCarter Theatre, The Old Globe in San Diego, Seattle Repertory, and South Coast Repertory. She is a staunch member of the Antaeus Theatre Company. She has received four Drama Critics Circle Awards and numerous Ovation nominations. Her recent television credits include *911, CSI Los Angeles, How to Get Away with Murder, The Colony, Shameless, Murder in the First*, and *Rake*.

**Brian George** (Serebryakov) Brian George began his professional acting in Canada, where he co-founded the Bear Theater Company with friends from the University of Toronto. Not long after, he joined the cast of *Second City*. He has performed in countless television sitcoms and dramas, among them *Seinfeld*, various of the *Star Trek* films, *Grey's Anatomy, Secret Life of the American Teen, The Big Bang Theory, The Resident*, and the series, *I Feel Bad*. On stage he has appeared in Charles Mee's *A Perfect Wedding* (Kirk Douglas Theater); David Hare's *Stuff Happens* (Mark Taper Forum); *Vicuña* (Kirk Douglas and Mosaic Theater, Washington DC); *Yes, Prime Minister* and *Witch* (Geffen Theater) - the latter winning the LA Drama Critics Circle Award in multiple categories, including Best Ensemble.

**Khetanya Henderson** (Elena) Khetanya Henderson's work and world are informed by her experiences as an actor, dancer, and choreographer. Khetanya is a graduate of the University of Connecticut's Masters in Acting Performance program and the London Academy of Music & Dramatic Art's Shakespeare program. She has performed nationally and internationally on stage and screen. Her credits include *Intimate Apparel, A Chorus Line, Legally Blonde, Gypsy* (with award-winning actress Leslie Uggams), the World Premiere of *Marley* (Diane Jobson), and *Woolf And The Wondershow's* groundbreaking theater experience, *Cages*. As a trained dancer and choreographer, Khetanya's work can be seen on screen in *Hairspray, Enchanted*, and *Cirque du Soleil: Worlds Away*. Khetanya is thrilled to be appearing in her first production at the Pasadena Playhouse as Elena Andreevna in *Uncle Vanya*.

**Brandon Mendez Homer** (Astrov) This is Brandon Mendez Homer's Pasadena Playhouse debut. He was last seen in *Wolf Play* at Soho Rep in New York City. TV Credits include Jesus Christ in *The Good Fight* (Paramount+), *Blue Bloods* (CBS). Other Off-Broadway and regional theater work includes *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Shakespeare on the Sound), *The Bacchae* (A.R.T.), *The Cherry Orchard* (Panther Creek Arts), *Lime-A-Rita Racist* (The Public Theater's EWG Workshop), and *The Bandaged Place* (Roundabout's Underground Reading Series). He received his training from The Juilliard School and Michael Chekhov Actors Studio Boston.

**Jayne Taini** (Marina) Ms. Taini is honored to be back at Pasadena Playhouse where she previously starred in *Enchanted April*. She moved with Seattle Rep's *The Cider House Rules* (Garland Award) to L.A.'s Mark Taper Forum and never left. Representative Regional: *The Normal Heart* (Pioneer Square), *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (Third Rail) *Outside Mullingar* (B Street), *A Doll's House, When We Were Married* (Seattle Rep), *Broadway, Oktoberfest* (Empty Space), *Snow Falling on Cedars, Doubt* (Portland Center Stage), *A Life with Father* (Denver

Center), *A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur* (Hartford Stage), *Enchanted April* (Cleveland Playhouse). LA: *Parfumerie* (Wallis Annenberg), *The Brothers Karamazov* (Circle X - LADCC Award), *Lost in Yonkers* (La Mirada), Some favorite roles: Mother Courage (Canadian Fringe); Mrs. Alving, *Ghosts*, Bottom & Demetruis, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; Ruth, *Collected Stories*. Film: *The Way Back* with Ben Affleck, *The Amateurs* with Jeff Bridges. Recent TV: Recurring on *Station 19*, *Ray Donovan*, *Shameless*, Netflix's *Unbelievable* with Toni Collette and Dustin Black's miniseries *When We Rise*.

**Sabina Zuniga Varela** (Sonya) Sabina Zuniga Varela, originally from New Mexico, holds an MFA in Acting from *The University of Southern California* where she currently teaches at MFA and Undergrad for the USC School for Dramatic Arts. Regional Theatre credits include: *Mojada* The Public Theatre; *Mojada: A Medea in Los Angeles*; Portland Center Stage, OSF & The Getty Villa; *Bruja* Magic Theatre; *Oedipus El Rey* The Dallas Theater Center; *Electricidad* The National Hispanic Cultural Center; *Culture Clash's Bordertown Now* Pasadena Playhouse *You Never Can Tell* CalShakes; *Native Gardens* Cincinnati Playhouse; *Culture Clash's Chavez Ravine* Kirk Douglas Theatre; *A Christmas Carol* Dallas Theater Center; *Water By The Spoonful* TheatreWorks; *The Tenth Muse & The Heart of Robin Hood*, OSF; *El Nogalar* The Fountain Theatre, *Sill Life* NHCC. TV: *Madame Secretary*, *Snowfall* and *American Crime*

**Michael Michetti** (Director) Michael Michetti is happy to return to the Pasadena Playhouse, having previously directed *King Charles III* and *A Life in the Theatre* starring Hal Holbrook. He was formerly a founding Co-Artistic Director of Boston Court Pasadena where his directing credits include: *The Judas Kiss*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Stupid F\*\*king Bird*, *Paradise Lost: Shadows & amp; Wings*, and *The Twentieth Century Way*, which was also produced off-Broadway at Rattlestick Playwright's Theatre. Elsewhere he has directed the world premiere of Robert Schenkkan's *Building the Wall* at the Fountain Theatre; *District Merchants* at South Coast Rep; *Frankenstein*, his own adaptation of *A Picture of Dorian Gray*, *Figaro*, and *The Grapes of Wrath* at *A Noise Within*; *Kiss Me, Kate*, *Carousel*, and *Man of La Mancha* at Reprise. He is the recipient of two Ovation Awards, and five L.A. Drama Critics Circle Awards for his direction as well as a special LADCC Award for Distinguished Achievement in Direction.

**Richard Nelson** (Co-Translator) Mr. Nelson's plays include *The Gabriels* (*Hungry*, *What Did You Expect?*, and *Women of a Certain Age*) and *The Apple Family* plays (*That Hopye Changey Thing*, *Sweet and Sad*, *Sorry*, and *Regular Singing*), which were produced at The Public Theater in New York, toured internationally, and filmed for public television. His other plays include *Illyria*, *Oblivion*, *Nikolai and the Others*, *Farewell to the Theatre*, *Conversations in Tusculum*, *Frank's Home*, *How Shakespeare Won the West*, *Rodney's Wife*, *Franny's Way*, *Madame Melville*, *Goodnight Children Everywhere* (Olivier Award for Play of the Year), *The General from America*, *New England*, *Two Shakespearean Actors* (Tony Award nomination for Best Play), *Some Americans Abroad* (Olivier nomination for Comedy of the Year), and others. His musicals include *James Joyce's The Dead* with Shaun Davey (Tony Award for Best Book of a Musical) and *My Life with Albertine* and *Private Confessions*, both with Ricky Ian Gordon. His films include *Hyde Park on Hudson* (Focus Features), *Ethan Frome* (Miramax), and *Sensibility and Sense* ("American Playhouse"). With Larissa Volokhonsky and Richard Pevear, he has co-translated Ivan Turgenev's *A Month in the Country*, Nikolai Gogol's *The Inspector*, Mikhail Bulgakov's *Molière* and *Don Quixote*, and Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull* and *The Cherry*

*Orchard* (all published by Theatre Communications Group). He is an honorary associate artist of the Royal Shakespeare Company and a recipient of the Arts and Letters Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the PEN/Laura Pels “Master Playwright” Award.

**Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky** (Co-Translators) Mr. Pevear was born in Boston, grew up on Long Island, and attended Allegheny College (B.A., 1964) and University of Virginia (M.A., 1965). After a stint as a college teacher, he moved to the Maine coast and eventually to New York City, where he worked as a freelance writer, editor, and translator, as well as a cabinetmaker. He has published two collections of poetry, many essays and reviews, and 38 books translated from French, Italian, and Russian. Ms. Volokhonsky was born in Leningrad, attended Leningrad State University, and upon graduating joined a scientific team whose work took her to the east of Russia, to Kamchatka and Sakhalin Island. She immigrated to Israel in 1973 and to the United States in 1975, where she attended Yale Divinity School and St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary. Soon after settling in New York City, she was married to Mr. Pevear, and a few years later they moved to France with their two children. Together they have translated 30 books from Russian, including works by Leo Tolstoy, Mikhail Bulgakov, Nikolai Gogol, Anton Chekhov, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Boris Pasternak. Their translation of Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov* received the 1991 PEN/Laura Pels Translation Award, and their translation of Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* was awarded the same prize in 2002. In 2006 they were awarded the first Efim Etkind International Translation Prize by the European Graduate School of St. Petersburg.

#### **ABOUT THE PASADENA PLAYHOUSE**

The Pasadena Playhouse is a place where people have gathered for 100 years to experience bold and important theater. It is one of the most prolific theaters in American history with a legacy of profound theatrical impact and courageous new work. In 1937, the Playhouse was officially recognized as the State Theater of California for its contribution and commitment to the dramatic arts. Today it continues that tradition of excellence under the helm of producing artistic director Danny Feldman. Dedicated to enriching lives through theater, community programs and learning initiatives, Pasadena Playhouse is a living force in the community.

#### **Calendar Listing for *Uncle Vanya***

##### ***Uncle Vanya***

by Anton Chekhov

Translated by Richard Nelson, Richard Pevear, and Larissa Volokhonsky

Venue: Pasadena Playhouse, 39 South El Molino Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91101

Dates: Wednesday, June 1 to Sunday, June 26  
Press opening Sunday, June 5 at 5:00 p.m.

Tickets: Prices start at \$30  
Online -- PasadenaPlayhouse.org  
By phone at 626-356-7529

In person -- Pasadena Playhouse Box Office, located at 39 South El Molino Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91101

Performance Schedule: Wednesday-Friday evenings at 8:00 p.m.  
Saturday at 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m; Sunday at 2:00 p.m.