

# MCT takes on Christopher Durang's wild family comedy



The cast of MCT's 'Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike' includes (clockwise from left, Scott Whisler, Correll Barca-Hall, Daria Troxell and Robin Aronson. Photo by Ali Mac.

By **Wallace Baine**, *Santa Cruz Sentinel*

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One of you is a Chekhov completist who can quote lines from "The Cherry Orchard." The other of you thinks, "Wait, wasn't he on 'Star Trek'?"

No matter. Both of you are going to enjoy "Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike," the latest production from Mountain Community Theatre, this according to director Peter Gelblum of Christopher Durang's 2012 comedy opening Friday.

"There are lots of references to Chekhov," said Gelblum, "but you definitely do not need to understand any of them to thoroughly enjoy the play. If you do know your Chekhov, you'll just get a few additional laughs."

The play is not an adaptation of Chekhov or even a parody of Chekhov. It is instead a sharply contemporary comedy that borrows a few Chekhovian tropes, most noticeably the character's names.

"Vanya and Sonia" originally opened in New Jersey (aka off-off-off-Broadway) but made it to Broadway in the spring of 2013, with such high-octane names as David Hyde Pierce and

## 'Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike'

By: Christopher Durang

Produced by: Mountain Community Theatre

When: Opening Friday, through May 28. Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m. Sunday at 2 p.m.

Where: Park Hall, 9400 Mill St., Ben Lomond

Tickets: \$20 general; \$17 students and seniors.

Notes: May 6 is Community Night, with two tickets for \$20. May 14 features an aftershow Talk Back with the cast and director.

Details: [mctshows.org](http://mctshows.org).

Sigourney Weaver. It eventually won the Tony Award for Best Play.

The situation is centered on a family of adult siblings, each carrying Chekhovian names thanks to their theater-loving parents. Mopey and privileged Vanya and Sonia are also roommates in a rural Pennsylvania household rocked by the visit of a third sibling, the beautiful Masha who also happens to be a movie star. With Masha is her himbo boyfriend Spike. Rounding the cast is the house's alarmist soothsayer named Cassandra (really!) and a wide-eyed neighbor girl named Nina.

"(Playwright) Durang himself said in his notes that he just took these characters and put them all in a blender," said Gelblum. "It's funny all the way through. Most of Durang's other plays are very odd plays. This is probably the most normal play he's ever written. It's certainly more accessible than most of his plays."

The MCT production, which runs through May 28 at Park Hall in Ben Lomond, features a constellation of familiar local theater names including Robin Aronson, Daria Troxell, W. Scott Whisler, Correll Barca-Hall, Ashley Sue Perry and Sasha Voigt.

Director Gelblum said that there was no need to take some kind of interpretative spin with the material. It stands on its own as a comedy in which the humor comes all from the dialogue. If you're a Chekhov fan, your enjoyment of the siblings considering their cherry trees and arguing about what constitutes an orchard will take on an added dimension. If not, it's funny anyway, said Gelblum.

"The script is brilliant," he said. "We've been rehearsing this thing for seven weeks and just the other day, I heard a line and thought, I finally understand what line means. It's very complex and very satisfying."

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