

For immediate release
Oct. 28, 1992

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**GUEST DIRECTOR STEERS DUKE DRAMA
PRODUCTION OF CHEKOV'S 'THREE SISTERS'**

DURHAM, N.C. -- Manfred F. Kuhnert, a visiting assistant professor in the Duke University Drama Program, will be guest director for the upcoming student production of Anton Chekhov's "Three Sisters."

"Three Sisters" will be staged in Sheaffer Theater, Bryan Center, West Campus on Nov. 13-14 and 19-21 at 8 p.m. and Nov. 15 and 22 at 2 p.m.

Tickets are available -- \$6 for adults and \$4 for students and senior adults -- through Page Box Office, (919) 684-4444, or at the door on performance nights. (Recommended audience for this production is middle school and older.)

Kuhnert recently completed the directing program at Harvard University's Institute for Advanced Theatre Training, where he worked with Duke drama program director Richard Riddell, former IATT director. Having earned his M.F.A. in directing from Northwestern University and his B.A. in drama from the University of California at Irvine, Kuhnert has extensive directing credits.

Kuhnert, who is teaching a Chekhov seminar and an undergraduate course in beginning acting this semester, describes Chekhov's plays as presenting the more challenging problems of life in "manageable bite-size morsels."

"Chekhov is a wonderfully generous dramatist," he said. "He is generous towards humanity, while at the same time he looks unflinchingly into the realities of life. Chekhov asks the big questions. He deals with the big issues and helps us to deal with them too. His work provides a starting point for discussion."

Kuhnert said he is working to create a production of "Three Sisters" (1901) that will speak to Duke audiences. "In two hours of drama you can deal with your lover's crises, your roommate's problems and your parents' anxieties," he said.

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He and scene designer Wenhai Ma have created a setting for the drama they describe

as outside the "standard confines of space and time -- one that is more symbolic than strictly representational." According to Kuhnert, their collaboration has produced a design that "manages simultaneously to place the production in its historical context, while at the same time creating a look that resonates for a contemporary audience."

Other members of the design staff for the production are guest costume designer Christine Turbitt of the N.C. School of the Arts; lighting designer Tina Gallegos; guest sound designer Pam Emerson from Playmakers Repertory Theater; and composer Penke Kouneva, a graduate student in music at Duke.

Cast principals are (alphabetically) Glen Arluk, Barnaby Carpenter, Emily Culver, Paris Goodyear, Joshua LaBare, David Lender, Chris Lewin, Toby Matthews, Fletcher Penney, Tom Story, Matthew Taylor, Audrey Todd, Anna Wilson and Anne Louise Zachry.

For more information on "Three Sisters" or other Duke drama activities, call Heather Nathans at (919) 684-2306.

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