Uncle Vanya, a character in Chekhov's play, is a brooding drama. The family's pride is their son-in-law, a renowned professor, who has left the country to become a famous professor. The play's action is brought on by his retirement, remarriage, and return to his family's country estate. His relatives do not live luxuriously on the estate, as they would imagine. Everyone works hard to maintain the estate except the professor, his wife, and his elderly mother. The feelings of resentment, pride, or simple duty that the characters have about work are central to the play. Chekhov also explores what Nabokov called 'the incredible Russian capacity for suffering, and religion's role in that capacity.'

Fortunately, the play is not all serious philosophical brooding. Uncle Vanya, played by Albert Ruesga '81 counters effusive speeches on desperation and unhappiness with visual and verbal antics, such as becoming entranced by his shoes. The interplay of comedy and tragedy works best at the conclusion of Act Three, where Vanya makes one last, futile effort to free himself from the boredom and hopelessness of his life. We laugh at his failure, even as we realize with a twinge how terrible it is.

David Waggett '81 is excellent as the country doctor who eventually becomes entangled in the Serebyakov's affairs. Marc Chelner '81 acts sufficiently self-centered and tiresome to make you hate him as much as everyone else seems to. Yelena Andreevna, played by Edythe Frampton '80 is every inch the stunning, unhappy wife of the old professor. Mary Finn '81, Barbara Maiu '81, and Bill Bryant '83 all have supporting roles, and do a lot with limited material. Somehow, by saying the least they remain the most likable characters in the play.

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