

## **Anna Karenina - Introductory Notes**

Welcome to this introduction for the audio described performance of Leo Tolstoy's, Anna Karenina, a gripping new adaptation written by Lesley Hart and directed by Polina Kalinina (Pol-ee-na Kal-ee-nina) and featuring Lindsey Campbell in the title role.

The show is on Saturday June 24th at 2.30pm, with a touch tour of the stage and set at 12.30pm. Before the performance there will be a recap of these introductory notes beginning at 2.15 pm.

Anna Karenina lasts for approximately two hours and twenty five minutes, including a 20-minute interval. The performance will be described by Jake Hayes.

The following recording lasts 12 and a half minutes and includes information about the set, characters and costumes followed by access information, content warnings and contact details for the venue.

Anna Karenina takes place in a wide range of locations including Moscow, St Petersburg as well as rural locations in Russia and Italy.

This production has a minimal set and uses a variety of props to conjure up the different locations. Some scenes from Tolstoy's original text have been spliced together for dramatic effect. We are

sometimes in more than one location at the same time, or witnessing characters discussing the scene after it has happened. I will try to make this as clear as possible during the description.

## **SET**

Suspended above the stage is a striking sculptural decoration around six feet high. A bronze spiral of wraps around a knotted central pole with sharpened batons protruding along the length. The decoration occasionally revolves, catching the light and creating silhouettes. It also rises and falls at key points during the play.

A purple, panelled wall surrounds the stage, broken up in its lower half by two rectangular archways on either side. Characters also enter through two more ornate arches at the front.

The lower half of the rear wall is a screen which slides across to reveal different locations. When closed, this area appears to be a normal wall broken up by vertical batons.

At the front right, a table is set for dinner. A white table cloth hangs down to the floor, the lower part decorated with a red border and fruit pattern.

Six ornate spindle and mesh backed chairs are placed around the table, one at either end and two opposite each other on the longer sides. The two chairs closest to the audience are facing away from

the table.

A pair of candelabra are at either end of the table, each holding three lit candles. There is a large, colourful fruit bowl in the centre, surrounded by several crystal wine glasses and glass bottles coloured red and blue.

We first meet Anna Karenina on a platform at Moscow railway station which is revealed when the rear screen slides across. It is a wintry scene with snow drifts piled up behind.

More intimate interiors, including Princess Betsy's apartments, are suggested by an off white curtain which lowers from above and reaches from ceiling to floor. In the Karenins' bedroom there is a fold out double bed below the curtain, covered with rumpled cream coloured silk sheets.

In the country, on Levin's estate, hunting scenes take place largely in the area behind the screen. Here the sky has a pinkish hue and yellow corn grows in front of the characters, obscuring them from the waist down. Suspended from above is a crooked branch on which a number of pheasant perch.

Other scenes are represented by the choreographed use of chairs, or simply the positioning of the characters.

## CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES

Now a description of Anna Karenina's significant characters. There are many costume changes during the play, so descriptions are limited to key outfits.

**Anna Karenina** is a stylish white woman in her late 20s. She has shoulder length curly brown hair, worn up for the first half of the play and down in the latter stages. Anna is 5 foot 3 inches, with a slim build and carries herself with great poise. She has an open face which is often inquisitive or sympathetic.

Anna wears a variation of the same dress throughout much of the play: a high collared, long sleeved magenta wrap, tied up at the back over a bustle and cut low to reveal underskirts in a lighter purple hue. During the ball scene the upper part of the costume is swapped for a lower cut, sleeveless black dress. At other points she wears a fur trimmed jacket, traditional riding gear, a lilac silk dressing gown embroidered with flowers and a grey, puffy sleeved dress.

Count Aleksey **Vronsky** is an army cavalry officer in his mid 20s. 6 feet four inches tall, he has an upright posture and often stands with hands clasped behind his back. When moving he has a languid gait, which matches his frequent mischievous expression. He is dressed for the most part in a long white military jacket, decorated with red and gold cavalry twill around the sleeves and collar. This is

paired with matching trousers and high black riding boots. During the race scene, Vronsky wears a variation on this look, the jacket swapped for a silky white number with red sleeves and collars. When visiting the theatre he changes into a classic black tuxedo with tails, accessorised with a loose white scarf.

Prince Stepan Arkadyevich Oblonsky - mostly known as **Stiva**, is a white man in his early 30s. He has brown curly hair, short beard and moustache and an expressive, angular face. Stiva is Anna's brother and like her, the consummate social operator. He likes to work the room, sometimes prancing and dancing. His clothes are in the latest fashions and his many outfits range from a paisley print waistcoat paired with cravat, to a floor length purple bear coat and tall mink fez!

Princess Darya Alexandrovna (Alex-an-drov-nah), or **Dolly** is Stiva's wife, a frequently pregnant woman in her early 30s. Dolly has light brown skin, full lips and freckles across her cheeks and nose. She has a careworn appearance and often supports herself with a hand on her lower back. Dolly is feisty, and shows her emotions freely. Her hair is worn up throughout and she dresses in the same emerald green dress with short, puffy sleeves and a large bustle.

Kostya **Levin** (Lay-vin) is a 31 year old man, 5 foot 8 inches tall with a stocky build. He has an intense presence, often sitting close to people and sometimes moves awkwardly. Levin has short, black

afro hair and dark brown skin. He dresses for the occasion, with pinstripe suits in the city, suit and tails at social events and loose fitting shirts and trousers in the country.

Princess Ekaterina Alexandrovna Shcherbatskaya, or **Kitty** is Dolly's younger sister. She is a bright, innocent looking girl in her late teens with bow lips and shoulder length blonde hair. When we meet Kitty, she wears a blue dress with a white, long sleeved blouse and blue headband. During the ice skating scene, she adds a matching bonnet and fur trimmed jacket to the ensemble. At the ball Kitty wears a blue gown with wide netted skirts and elbow length gloves. In the second half we see Kitty in traditional Russian costume including a kokoshnik (cow-kosh-neek) - a white, crown-like headpiece.

Alexie **Karenin**, sometimes called Andre, is Anna's husband. A fifty year old white man with olive skin, he is 5 feet 11 inches tall with a large build. His mid-length grey hair is slicked back in a side parting and he wears a well groomed grey beard. Karenin has a permanently stiff posture. Always dressed in formal tails and a bow tie, his clothes match his businesslike manner. Karenin mostly wears a long, side fastening, military style green jacket. It has buttons on either side and is decorated with gold trim around the collar and cuffs.

**Seryozha** (Serry-o-sha) is the 8 year old son of Anna and Karenin, a child who looks frequently worried. He first appears dressed in a

bear costume worn over striped pyjamas. Later he changes into red plus fours with braces over a white shirt and black boots, then into formal suits in a more adult style.

Princess **Betsy** is Anna's society friend and Vronsky's cousin. She is a solid, domineering presence. Her skin is light brown and she wears a full length mauve coloured dress, sometimes with a matching jacket. At events the dress has short, puffy sleeves and she accessories with matching gloves.

*Betsy is often flanked by two gossipy sidekicks:*

**The Ambassador's Wife**, is a society woman who moves in an exaggeratedly masculine fashion, and wears clothing to match - a black tail suit with a gold laurel leaf pattern on the lapels.

**Myagkaya** is a black man with a camp manner. He often stands with a hand on his hip and sashays when walking. Myagkaya wears a long green jacket with military medals and a wide blue sash.

**Veslovsky** is a friend of Stiva's, a society gentleman with an arrogant manner. Over six feet tall, he always attempts to dominate a situation, putting a foot up on the furniture, perching on tables and leaning back in his chair. He dresses in a modern brown suit with a bright yellow tie.

**Frou Frou** is Vronsky's beloved horse. Here she appears in human

form, as a petite young blonde woman dressed in riding gear with a short cane and a top hat. Frou Frou doesn't mimic horse movement, but instead mirrors the actions of her rider.

## **CREDITS**

Lindsey Campbell plays Anna Karenina

Robert Akodoto is Vronsky and Veslovsky

Angus Miller plays Stiva

Ray Sesay is Levin, Myagkaya, Station Master and the race Commentator

Jamie Marie Leary plays Dolly and Betsy

Tallulah Greive is Kitty, the Ambassador's Wife and Frou Frou (the horse)

Stephen McCole plays Karenin and Andrei (the Maitre'D)

Henry Orchard plays Seryozha (Serry-o-sha)

## **The creative team for Anna Karenina is**

Director - Polina Kalinina

Writer - Lesley Hart (after Leo Tolstoy)

Designer - Emma Bailey

The casting directors are Simone Pereira Hind & Anna Dawson

Lighting Designer - Mark Henderson

Composer and sound Design by Xana

Movement Director is Vicki Manderson



Intimacy Director - Adelaide Waldrop

Assistant Director - Debi Pirie

And the costume supervisor is Sophie Ferguson

## **ACCESS INFORMATION**

The Bristol Old Vic is accessible through the theatre's main entrance on King Street - please note that the street is cobbled and there is an open air bar area outside the theatre.

Full access information for the Bristol Old Vic can be found at <https://bristololdvic.org.uk/your-visit/access/general-access-information>

If you need any further assistance, for example if a visit to the Theatre in advance of the show would help, then either contact the Box Office on 0117 987 7877 (1pm to 6pm Monday to Saturday) or email [access@bristololdvic.org.uk](mailto:access@bristololdvic.org.uk)

## **CONTENT WARNINGS**

Anna Karenina contains abstract simulation of sex, graphic description of sexual acts, explicit swearing, themes of suicide, gunshots, childbirth and blood. There are live gunshots and harsh sounds of heavy machinery.

That is the end of this audio introduction.