Sure, life is hard, life is tricky. And it can be really unfair and frustrating and, you know... deeply problematic sometimes. Right? Right? But life does not suck.

DIRECTED BY ALISON FROST
A Note from the Director

Before there was LIFE SUCKS, there was Chekhov’s UNCLE VANYA—my personal favorite of his major works. I adore his characters and I find them rich and hilarious and conflicted and flawed and oh, so human. When I got to the second page of Posner’s contemporary adaptation and Aster looks at the audience and tells us, “Don’t Google it, I made it up”, I was hooked…and here we are.

As a director, I’m often asked, “What’s your favorite play that you’ve ever directed?” My answer is usually, “The one I’m working on” and this play is no exception. Everything has just come together so beautifully. The acting company is comprised of 4 graduating seniors, 1 junior, 1 sophomore, and a first-year student—and they are fantastic. They will deliver a master class tonight in acting, reacting, and listening—every acting teachers’ dream. They have created character lives that speak to me at every rehearsal and will now speak to you. (Please speak back—as that is how this play is supposed to work.) Collaborations with a few of our tech majors have existed beyond the acting company and all the design work has been created by student designers: scenic, lighting, sound, props, hair, make-up, and costumes—all student-produced.

It's been a fairly frenetic semester as my sister (my bestie) was diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer in March. Juggling trips to M.D. Anderson for diagnoses and surgeries while keeping up with a rehearsal schedule, the production company of LIFE SUCKS always kept things in perspective for me: life may have its ups and downs, but life does not suck. Cancer may suck, but the scientists, physicians, my sister, the playwright, and of course, my students—don’t suck. (And the day her surgical oncologist said, “the cancer is out” is a day that really didn’t suck!)

This is the last mainstage production of our theatre season, so on behalf of our entire department, let me say that we appreciate you being here and we hope this play speaks to you in some way about the value of life and love and longing and loss.

Alison Frost
LIFE SUCKS.

THE CAST

VANYA  Nate Staggs
SONYA  Emily Villarreal
ELLA  Hannah Anderson
BABS  Paige Woelke
THE PROFESSOR  Kevin Hammond
DR. ASTER  David Wheelis
PICKLES  Niairia Brager
PRODUCTION STAFF

Director          Alison Frost
Dramaturg         Thomas A. Oldham
Stage Manager     Madisen Piontkowski
Asst. Stage Manager Ray Villarreal
Scenic Designer   Cora Daniel
Costume Designer  Gracie Johnson
Lighting Designer Brandon Bankston
Sound Designer    Jaydn Johanson
Hair & Makeup Designer Sarah Garcia
Properties Designer Jasmine Satterwhite
Intimacy Director Meredith Melville
Technical Director/Scene Shop Supervisor Jordan Bohl
Costume Shop Supervisor Alexandra Shaw
Electrics Shop Manager Gabriel Almager
Shopper/Buyer     Gracie Johnson, Alexandra Shaw, Rosa M. Lazaro
Lead Alterations  Alexandra Shaw, Sarah Garcia, Ernest Green
Scenic Run Crew   Naomi Medina
Properties Run Crew Head Ray Villarreal
Wardrobe Run Crew Head Nic Sears
Wardrobe Run Crew  Jedidiah Barker, Shameka Cobb, Stephanie Garate
Hair & Makeup Run Crew Head Kate Hawkins
Hair & Makeup Crew Erin Jones, Sabrina Levenson
Light Board Operator Izzy Guillot
Sound Board Operator Korey Sayre
Scenic Construction Crew

Aniya Mosley, Aurora Usai, Bella Gonzalez, Cassidy Nall, David Wheelis, Eel Moncada, Elijah Galvin, Ernest Green, Frank Villalvazo, Holly Wilke, Isaac Empson, Jalen Wheaton, Jaxon Mabry, Kinlee Ramon, Lucia Yanez, Michael Mondejar, Naomi Medina, Nex Richard, Roland Hernandez, Sarah Roller, Tara Young, Xavier Pon

Stitchers


Marketing / Graphics Designer

Alison Frost

Box Office

Meredith Melville, Christina Maher, Mac McLendon, Megan Bain

Front of House

Kevin Garcia, James Williams, Megan Ellis, Hunter Pittman, Lanie Gullett, Paulina Orellana
A NOTE FROM THE DRAMATURG:

If you’ve been keeping track, we here at TAMUCC’s Department of Theatre & Dance have done three shows in a row that are adaptations of some sort: *Priscilla Queen of the Desert* was based on a movie; *The Pliant Girls* was based on an ancient Greek tragedy; and now *Life Sucks.*, as the script says, is “sort of adapted from *Uncle Vanya* by Anton Chekhov.” For more information about what it means to be “sort of adapted from *Uncle Vanya*,” please see the lobby display. Here, though, I want to address something you may be thinking: what’s with all these adaptations?

I can hear the cries already: “Is there nothing new under the sun?!” And, sure, as Broadway prepares for the imminent arrival of *Back to the Future: The Musical*, the doomsayers will probably get louder, bemoaning, “the theatre is dying!” Well, let me just say right now how doubly misguided that is. First, people have been saying that the theatre is dying for nearly 2500 years. (Seriously: read Aristophanes’ *The Frogs.*) Second, theatre has *always* been about adaptation: the ancient Greeks adapted Homer; the ancient Romans adapted the ancient Greeks; William Shakespeare stole adapted just about everything he ever wrote. One of the hardest-to-fathom lessons I teach my students is that “originality” has only recently become an artistic virtue.

So, instead of rolling your eyes at another adaptation, ask yourself: What is the artist trying to do? What new virtuosity are they adding to an old tale? Audiences of ancient Greek tragedies weren’t coming for an original story; they already knew the story. (Spoiler alerts would have been a moot point for *Oedipus!*) They came, instead, for the grandiosity of Aeschylus and the well-crafted structure of Sophocles. The Elizabethans came for Shakespeare’s understanding of humanity and his poetry. For our play *Life Sucks.*, look for what Aaron Posner is doing. I truly believe he has taken a 125-year-old play and makes it speak to us, a modern audience...at times, speaking to us quite literally.
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Sarah Gonzalez, Assistant Professor of Dance
Alex Mason, Assistant Professor of Theatre
Meredith Melville, Assistant Professor of Theatre
Marco Muñoz, Assistant Professor of Theatre
Thomas A. Oldham, Assistant Professor of Theatre
Jason Tate, Adjunct Professor of Fight Direction
J. Don Luna, Professor Emeritus of Theatre
Jordan Bohl, Technical Director
Alexandra Shaw, Costume Shop Supervisor
Christina Maher, Administrative Assistant
Megan Bain, Student Office Assistant
Mac McLendon, Student Office Assistant
Gabriel Almager, Student Shop Assistant
Brandon Bankston, Student Shop Assistant
Shameka Cobb, Student Shop Assistant
Sarah Garcia, Student Shop Assistant
Ernest Green, Student Shop Assistant
Samantha Ortega, Student Shop Assistant

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