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# Cherry Orchard a Comedy and Tragedy that is Worthy of a Young Audience

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Anya (Kelsey Ritter) with Trofimov, a student (Kyle Johnston) in Chekhov's "The Cherry Orchard" at the Pacific Resident Theatre in Venice, California

*Vitor Martins*

Presented at the [Pacific Resident Theatre](#) in Venice, California through September, Julius West's translation of [Anton Chekhov's](#) "The Cherry Orchard" maintains the true intent of the playwright as a [Comedy](#) mixed with Tragedy. The play is performed in traditional set and costume, but the language is one relatable today to the modern man with themes of Money, Love and Freedom.

The play centers on the Russian aristocrat Ranevskaya (Artistic Director Marilyn Fox), Gaev (Bruce French) her brother and their family inability to let go of their "Cherry Orchard" estate. Fox's emotional [performance](#) showing Ranevskaya's pain at past loss and French's portrayal of Gaev as the dotting brother reveals the true effect of an inability to let go and take action to prevent loss in the face of financial changes. A solution is presented passionately by the character of Lopakhim (Scott Conte)

and yet it lands on deaf ears. Lopakhim represents the poor man who has risen to wealth and the middle class. Conte's portrayal stays true to the actual text, making Lopakhim a man with the right intent who gets swept up in progress. In the end one is reminded of a much nicer "Wolf of wall street" ruled by work and less by nostalgia.

Perhaps the most important element in any Comedy is love and the [Pacific Resident theatre](#) players do a beautiful job of showing its many colors. There is of course the love of family. There is the young love of Ranevskaya's daughter Anya (Kelsey Ritter) and eternal student Trofimov (Kyle Johnston). There is Varya (Tania Getty) and Lopakhim (Conte) who represent perhaps the love of nostalgia that inevitably gives way to change. And there is blind physical and unrequited love shown in the triangle of clerk Yepikhov (Seth Margolies), maid Dunyasha (Mariah Shirley), and servant Yasha (Scott Jackson). There are many layers of love and each of these portrays bring points of sadness and laughter throughout the play.

Finally this play looks at the Concept of Freedom, one many American's can relate to. Though this play has often been portrayed as Marxist, others have interpreted it as just a reflection of the playwright's life. Johnston's portrayal of student Trofimov demonstrates the freedom that results from self control and the advantage of being studied, while Fox's Ranevskaya is clearly not free due to her own lack of ability to control her urges of love and generosity. It is also made clear that surface appearances are not necessarily an indication one is free. Conte's expressions clearly show that his interpretation of Lopakin is one who is financially free and generous yet internally still tied to the memory of where he came from making his actions laced with tragedy. JackWinnick's portrayal of Firs as the dotting worrying servant shows that his character is enslaved to a dying way of life, but also to the love of a family whose blind view misses the freedom that a financial change could bring. Actor Mary Jane's portrayal of governess Charlotta Ivanovna demonstrates the freedom of practicality while her magic tricks bring light amusement. While, landowner Simeonov Pishchick (Aramazd Stepanian) is another performance demonstrating the effect on freedom of financial change as his character goes from clinging to dependence to one freed by foreign investment.

Overall the Pacific Resident [Theater's](#) performers and Director Dana Jackson have truly stayed true to the text of Chekhov and created characters that are believable and likeable to an audience today. "The Cherry Orchard's" mix of genres broke ground for modern literature. The play is complex as are its characters, realistic and compelling for an audience of today. One dangerous disappointment was the audience who were primarily over the age of 45. The play is portrayed as classical, but the performances and language is not. Young students of theater, art, and film would be wise to attend as often ideas of the future are born from the past.

Other actors in the performance include Passerby played by John Andrew Vaas, Stationmaster played by Barrie wild, and Charlotte's dog played by Jack. For more information on tickets please visit the [Pacific Resident Theater's website](#).

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**Laura Tull**

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