

# Excerpt terms and conditions

This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

---

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

---

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest you read the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

*HELEN EDMUNDSON'S*

# **ANNA KARENINA**

**A Drama**

**Adapted from the novel by**

**LEO TOLSTOY**



**Dramatic Publishing**

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

**\*\*\* NOTICE \*\*\***

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty fees are given in our current catalog and are subject to change without notice. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. All inquiries concerning amateur and stock rights should be addressed to:

DRAMATIC PUBLISHING  
P. O. Box 129, Woodstock, Illinois 60098

For inquiries concerning all other rights, contact:  
Nick Hern, Nick Hern Books, The Glasshouse, 49a Goldhawk Rd.,  
Shepherd's Bush, London W12 8QP, England

**COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES.** This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including but not limited to the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication and reading, are reserved.

©MM by  
HELEN EDMUNDSON

Printed in the United States of America  
*All Rights Reserved*  
(ANNA KARENINA)

First published in Great Britain by  
Nick Hern Books in 1994.

ISBN 1-58342-020-7

### **Author's Note**

The first time I read *Anna Karenina*, I became totally absorbed in Anna's story. The presence of the irascible Levin was an irritant. I found myself constantly turning the pages to see how long I would have to wait before Anna's next appearance.

I was therefore surprised when I began talking to Nancy, my director, about the novel, to discover that she had virtually the opposite response and was very caught up in Levin's story – his love for Kitty and his search for the meaning of life.

I read the book again. Levin began to appeal, but what really started to occupy my mind was why Tolstoy had chosen to put these two stories together? What is the relationship between Anna and Levin?

We searched for answers to this question and soon began to realise that the adaptation must involve both characters. Without Levin, *Anna Karenina* is a love story, extraordinary and dark, but essentially a love story. With Levin it becomes something great.

In choosing to tackle both strands, we were creating problems for ourselves. Levin's story is not, in itself, dramatic. 'What! You're going to dramatise Levin?' people would cry when we revealed our intention. Of course, this just encouraged us.

Two other things confirmed our thoughts: watching the films of the novel, all of which deal solely with Anna and none of which get beyond melodrama and cliché; then visiting Russia itself and finding that Russians talk about Levin and Anna with equal familiarity and affection. 'Levin must be part of Anna', one man told us, 'and Anna must be part of Levin.'

*Helen Edmundson,  
January 1992*



Helen Edmundson's adaptation of *Anna Karenina* was first performed by Shared Experience Theatre at the Theatre Royal, Winchester, on 30 January 1992, with the following cast:

ANNA	Annabelle Apsion
PRINCESS BETSY, AGATHA, GOVERNESS, RAILWAY WIDOW	Katharine Barker
DOLLY	Tilly Blackwood
KARENIN	Gregory Floy
VRONSKY, NIKOLAI	Max Gold
LEVIN	Richard Hope
STIVA, BAILIFF, PETRITSKY, PRIEST	Nigel Lindsay
KITTY, COUNTESS VRONSKY, SERIOZHA	Pooky Quesnel
PEASANTS, MUFFLED FIGURES	Members of the Company

*Directed by* Nancy Meckler  
*Design by* Lucy Weller  
*Music by* Peter Salem  
*Lighting by* Ace McCarron  
*Choreography by* Liz Ranken

This production then toured to Cardiff, Oxford, Leeds, Leicester, Taunton, Salisbury, and finally to the Tricycle Theatre, London, where it opened on 10 March 1992.

*Anna Karenina* was revived by Shared Experience Theatre in the revised version printed here and first performed at the Lyceum Theatre, Crewe, on 27 January 1993 with the following cast:

ANNA	Teresa Banham
PRINCESS BETSY, AGATHA, GOVERNESS, RAILWAY WIDOW	Katharine Barker
DOLLY, COUNTESS VRONSKY	Karen Ascoe
KARENIN, PRIEST	David Fielder
VRONSKY, NIKOLAI	Cal MacAninch
LEVIN	Richard Hope
STIVA, BAILIFF, PETRITSKY	Simeon Andrews
KITTY, SERIOZHA	Jessica Lloyd
PEASANTS, MUFFLED FIGURES	members of the company

*Directed by* Nancy Meckler

*Design by* Lucy Weller

*Music by* Peter Salem

*Lighting by* Stephen Watson

*Choreography by* Liz Ranken

This production also toured to Bath, Brighton, Manchester, Richmond, Ipswich, Helsinki, Palermo, Penang, Ipoh, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore and to the Tricycle Theatre, London, where it opened on 23 February 1993.

**Act One**

*Music.*

*A man, LEVIN, is standing in the shadows of the stage, watching.*

*A bent, muffled figure enters, dragging a sack. He mutters. There is the sound of a hammer on iron.*

*A woman, ANNA, follows the figure. She is scared, agitated, but she wants to see his face and hear his words. She tries to get in front of him, but he moves in different directions. She dares to try and grab the scarf away from his face but she cannot.*

ANNA. Let me see. Let me see your face. What? What? Speak louder. Louder. Louder

*She takes hold of the sack, clings to it, and is dragged across the stage. She is desperate. The figure goes.*

*ANNA lies still, breathing heavily.*

*LEVIN steps forward, cautiously.*

LEVIN. Anna Karenina.

ANNA (*not seeing him*). Anna Karenina. Anna Karenina. I was a shy girl with red hands. Now people nod and bow to me and call me Anna Karenina and kiss my hand, which is white. I am Anna. Anna.

LEVIN. Anna.

*At the sound of his voice, she rises and backs away.*

*I am a friend of your brother, Stiva . . .*

ANNA. You are Levin. You are Constantine Levin. Why are you here?

LEVIN. I don't know.

ANNA. This is my story.

LEVIN. It seems it is mine too.

ANNA. I don't understand.

LEVIN. Neither do I.

*Pause*

ANNA. You saw . . . just then?

LEVIN. Yes, I saw. What . . . ?

ANNA. It has always been like that.

LEVIN. But why?

ANNA. I don't know.

LEVIN. What does it mean?

ANNA. I don't know.

LEVIN. But you must know.

ANNA. Why should I know? I don't know.

LEVIN. But . . .

ANNA. Where are you now?

LEVIN. I am on a train, on the way to my estate.

ANNA. Where have you been?

LEVIN. Moscow. And I'm never going back.

ANNA. Why? What happened to you in Moscow?

LEVIN. Nothing.

ANNA. Something must have happened.

LEVIN. Nothing happened.

ANNA. Did you see Stiva?

LEVIN. Yes I saw Stiva. He's having an affair . . .

ANNA. I know. He wrote and asked me to help him. Dolly has found out.

*DOLLY enters. She is obviously pregnant. STIVA runs on after her.*

STIVA. Dolly, for God's sake, think of the children, it's not their fault, I'm the one to blame, punish me – I'll do anything.

DOLLY. I always think of the children. You only think of them when you want to play with them . . . well, I'm going to take them away . . . don't look at me like that. Do you think we can still live together after this? Do you think it's possible, when my husband, the father of my children, has an affair with his children's governess?

STIVA. But Dolly . . . what can I do?

DOLLY. You are disgusting. Your tears are water. You never loved me. I hate you.

DOLLY *runs off*.

STIVA (*running after her*). This is terrible, terrible . . . Dolly . . . Dolly, if you won't talk to me, talk to Anna, she'll be here soon, please tell me you'll talk to her . . . Dolly . . .

LEVIN. Stiva makes me so angry. Dolly is a dear, fine woman and yet he goes round chasing after – what? They're not even women, they're vermin, the thought of them makes me sick. Doesn't he know it's going to ruin his life – ruin her life if he goes on like this . . .

ANNA. He's your friend . . .

LEVIN. Yes, but he makes me angry. He's my friend but I can't stand the way he lives his life. It's Moscow. That's what it is. When I think of Moscow I think of hell, I think of sin and dirt and . . .

ANNA. What happened to you in Moscow?

LEVIN. Nothing.

ANNA. Tell me.

LEVIN. Nothing happened. I went there and I left.

ANNA. Why?

LEVIN. Because the whole place disgusts me. That's all. It disgusts me to see men with finger nails so long, they can't use their hands, and people sitting and gossiping and flirting and spending hours and hours over meals, stuffing themselves with oysters and caviar. In the country we eat our food quickly, then we get back out and work. You work so you eat so you live. Moscow makes me ashamed – of my

friends, of my whole class. Sometimes I wish I'd been born a peasant.

ANNA. You live in the country?

LEVIN. Yes.

ANNA. You own an estate?

LEVIN. Yes. I own six thousand acres of land. But I work on my estate. I work hard.

ANNA. Tell me about your work.

LEVIN. It wouldn't interest you,

ANNA. You don't know what would interest me. Tell me.

LEVIN. I get up very early . . .

ANNA. Yes . . .

LEVIN. In the winter the moon is still out. In the summer it's like the beginning of the world. I check that the cows are being fed and milked, that the fences are being mended, that the machines are in order. I grow clover, for feed, and wheat and potatoes. I have four hundred acres of potatoes. Every stretch of my land is being used. I have forests. I walk in the forests among the aspens and the birches, and sometimes, when it grows dark, I watch the stars come out. They are so clear and so close. No-one in Moscow looks at the stars.

ANNA. You would despise the way I live my life

LEVIN. It's different for you.

ANNA. Why?

LEVIN. Because you're a woman. How do you live your life?

ANNA. Oh, I am very busy; I dress, I take tea, I play croquet, I converse, I undress, I smile. I move from room to room and house to house and do these things. I do them very well. And now and again I lie down underneath my husband. Does that embarrass you?

LEVIN (*clearly embarrassed*). No.

ANNA. He is good to me. He is an extremely important man, a member of the senate. He gives us . . . my child and I, we have everything we need.

LEVIN. You have a child?

ANNA. Yes, a little boy. Seriozha. He is everything to me.

LEVIN. If I had a child, I would know why I'm alive.

ANNA. You don't know?

LEVIN. No.

ANNA. I was taught that I'm alive because God created me.

LEVIN. So was I. But I find it hard to believe. Do you believe?

ANNA. Yes. I think I do. So, you have no family?

LEVIN. I'm not married. My parents died when I was young.

ANNA. Do you live on your own?

LEVIN. I live with my housekeeper, Agatha Mihailovna, and  
Laska – my dog.

ANNA. What happened to you in Moscow?

LEVIN. I proposed to Kitty – Ekaterina Shcherbatskya.

ANNA. Dolly's sister?

LEVIN. Yes.

ANNA. What did she say?

LEVIN. I don't want to talk about it.

*KITTY enters and goes to LEVIN.*

KITTY. Oh, you're here.

LEVIN. I don't think I've come at the right time. I'm too early.

KITTY. Oh no.

LEVIN. But this is what I wanted, to find you alone.

KITTY. It's such a long time since you've been in Moscow,  
I . . .

LEVIN. I told you at the skating rink this afternoon that I didn't  
know whether I would be staying in Moscow for long . . .  
that it depended on you . . . that it depended on you . . . .  
I meant . . . I meant . . . I came to say this . . . be my wife.

KITTY. No, that cannot be. Forgive me.

LEVIN. It was bound not to be.

ANNA. Bound not to be.

KITTY *goes*. LEVIN *is sad*.

*Pause.*

I'm sorry.

LEVIN. I . . . Where are you now?

ANNA. I am on the train from St Petersburg on my way to see Stiva. We're slowing down. We've stopped. I have arrived in Moscow.

*There is the sound of a whistle.*

*Music. VRONSKY enters. He looks about and sees ANNA. She turns her head slowly and looks at him. Their eyes lock.*

*After a moment, the music fades. The stage is filled with a throng of people and the noise of a busy station. Vronsky's mother, the COUNTESS, enters, and he goes to greet her.*

STIVA *enters*.

STIVA. Anna.

ANNA. Stiva.

*He picks her up and spins her round.*

STIVA. Anna. You look beautiful.

ANNA. And you – you look . . .

STIVA. Fat. Is that the word you're looking for?

ANNA. Well . . .

STIVA. Oh yes. Too much good beef . . .

ANNA. And wine and oysters . . .

STIVA. And champagne. And that was breakfast. Good journey?

ANNA. Yes. I travelled with the Countess Vronsky.

*She draws him towards where the COUNTESS is standing with her son.*

STIVA. Vronsky is one of my partners in crime.

ANNA. Countess, this is my brother, Stiva.

COUNTESS. Delighted.

STIVA. Anna, have you met Count Vronsky?

VRONSKY. We did meet once, very briefly. I am sure you don't remember me.

ANNA. Oh yes, I do.

COUNTESS. Madame Karenina has been telling me all about her son, and I have told her all about mine.

VRONSKY. That must have been very boring for you.

ANNA (*turning away*). Well Countess, our journey is over and just in time. You've heard all my stories. I have nothing interesting left to tell you.

COUNTESS. Nonsense. You are one of those sweet women I would be happy just to sit with. We could travel the world together my dear.

STIVA. You see Anna, you've made another conquest.

ANNA. I hope I may call on you?

COUNTESS. I am counting on it. And don't worry about your son; it is difficult to leave them, especially for the first time, but you cannot expect never to be parted.

ANNA. Thank you. Goodbye.

COUNTESS. Goodbye my dear. Let me kiss your pretty little face . . .

*There is a piercing scream. A WOMAN enters, distraught. She throws herself at ANNA*

WOMAN Have you seen my husband? Have you seen my husband? He's lying there on the tracks, cut in half and they're scraping him up, he wouldn't have heard, he was muffled up, muffled up against the cold and working down on the tracks and the train came up behind him and crushed him, they're scraping him up, have you seen my husband? Have you seen my husband?

*She falls to her knees, repeating the words.*

ANNA. We must do something.

*VRONSKY takes two hundred roubles from his wallet. He steps towards the woman and takes her hand. He puts the money into it and folds her fingers around it.*

VRONSKY. For you and your family.

*The woman looks at him, then gets up slowly and leaves.*

COUNTESS. What a terrible way to die.

STIVA. At least it would have been quick, I think.

COUNTESS. Alexei, take me to the carriage. I would like to go now.

VRONSKY. Madame Karenina.

*He holds out his hand to her – the hand which pressed the widow's hand. ANNA looks at the hand and then takes it in her own.*

ANNA. Goodbye.

VRONSKY. Stiva, I will see you at the club.

STIVA. No doubt. Countess.

COUNTESS. Goodbye.

*VRONSKY escorts his mother off.*

*ANNA is trembling. She stares at her hand.*

STIVA. Two hundred roubles. Did you see? Fantastic. Anna, what is it?

ANNA. It is a bad omen.

STIVA. No, no, no. I'm so sorry you had to see that but it's over now. Oh Anna, I am so glad you've come. Dolly won't let me near her. You must talk to her. She won't forgive me. I could not bear to lose her Anna, she is such a wonderful woman.

*STIVA leaves. ANNA watches him go.*

LEVIN. A bad omen?

ANNA. Yes.

LEVIN. For who?

ANNA. For me. For me.

LEVIN. I don't believe in omens. Bad or good.

ANNA. I do.

*Pause*

LEVIN. That officer?

ANNA. Count Vronsky?

LEVIN. What did you think of him?

ANNA. I thought he was . . . very handsome . . .

LEVIN. What makes him so irresistible?

ANNA. I didn't say I thought him irresistible.

LEVIN. Just because he wears a uniform women think he's brave and strong. Most of our great Russian officers are drunken fools.

ANNA. I thought he was very kind.

LEVIN. Kind? Because he gave that woman two hundred roubles? Do you think he would have done that if you hadn't been there?

ANNA. What do you mean? I don't know what you mean.

LEVIN. Don't you? What better way to impress you? How generous, how noble. Well, believe me, your Count Vronsky is no aristocrat; his father schemed and clawed his way up from the gutter and his mother has slept with God knows whom. No; myself and my kind are the true aristocrats, people who can go back three or four generations, all highly bred, people who have never crawled to anyone but have lived decent, honest lives. And he thinks he's got the right to look down on me.

ANNA. Why do you hate him so much? Do you know him?

LEVIN. No.

ANNA. You're being very hard.

LEVIN. I'm not being hard.

ANNA. What is it?

LEVIN. Kitty is in love with him.

ANNA. Kitty?

LEVIN. She loves him and she is going to marry him.

ANNA. Are you sure?

*KITTY enters. LEVIN turns away, but she plays the proposal herself.*

KITTY. I don't think I've come at the right time. I'm too early  
But this was what I wanted, to find you alone. It's such a  
long time since you've been in Moscow . . . I . . . I told you  
at the skating rink this afternoon, that I did not know  
whether I would be staying in Moscow for long . . . that it  
depended on you . . . that it depended on you . . . I meant, I  
meant, I came to say . . . be my wife. No, that cannot be.  
Forgive me. (*With LEVIN.*). It was bound not to be.

*VRONSKY enters. He bows to LEVIN, then goes to KITTY  
and kisses her hand -*

LEVIN. Vronsky arrived. Her eyes lit up. He only glanced at  
her and her whole face lit up – open like a child. She loves  
him.

*VRONSKY and KITTY leave together.*

One moment she was everything to me, the next, she was  
nothing. A stranger I pass in the street.

*AGATHA MIHAILOVNA enters. She is smoking and  
muttering to herself. She carries a bucket of water, which  
she sets down. She sits and peels potatoes.*

*LEVIN has begun to do his daily exercises. He wants to  
punish himself.*

LEVIN There must be something repulsive about me. No-one  
likes me. They think I'm proud, but if I had one shred of  
pride I wouldn't have put myself in such a humiliating  
position. Pathetic. Of course she was going to choose him.  
It's my own fault for thinking she might want to spend her  
life with me. Who am I? What am I? I'm more useless,  
worthless, insignificant than a . . . than a . . .

*He plunges his head into the bucket of cold water. The  
shock makes him gasp. He breathes heavily.*

ANNA. Where are you now?

LEVIN. Back on my estate. I will forget about her. I will forget about marriage and all that kind of happiness. There are plenty of other things in my life, plenty of things. I have my work – I'm going to work harder than ever now. I'm going to stop thinking about myself. I'm going to give more time to the peasants, I'm going to find a way to make their lives better. I'm going to be better.

*He sits down with AGATHA and begins to read a book – 'Treatise on Heat'.*

AGATHA You know I told you about Prokhor and his drinking?

LEVIN (*not looking up*). Mm.

AGATHA Well he's got worse. You know that money you gave him to buy a horse? Well he didn't buy a horse. He went out and he spent the lot on drink. Every last copek. And he went home and he went up to his wife and he put his fist right in her face . . . right in her face . . .

AGATHA *continues muttering her story*. LEVIN *reads aloud*.

LEVIN. 'Treatise on Heat. Let us admit that electricity and heat are the same thing, an unknown force . . .'

*He pauses and looks up.*

This house is so empty. We used to fill it with life, my brothers and sisters and I. I want a family so much . . .

KITTY *enters and repeats some of the gestures used in the proposal*.

My wife and I will stand at the gate with our visitors and watch the herd come home. My wife will say, 'Kostya and I reared that calf like a baby. What interests him interests me.'

*She goes*

'Treatise on Heat.' Electricity and heat, heat and electricity . . .

KITTY *enters again. He stands beside her*.

Look, there's Venus.