

# Review – Anna Karenina at the Lyceum

**Raunchy, raw and a bit swearsy, this new production is a Scottish-Russian hybrid which brings a fresh and dynamic take to a classic tale.**

It must have been a daunting task to adapt such a well-loved and beautifully written Tolstoy masterpiece into an earthy, fast-paced play for a contemporary Scottish audience, but this new Lyceum/Bristol Old Vic co-production has managed to pull it off marvellously.

Making the most of its inspired open staging, the intertwined and swiftly moving scenes keep the story flowing at a breathtaking pace, while never faltering on the intensity of emotion.

Lindsey Campbell is outstanding as the eponymous hero Anna Karenina, trapped in a loveless marriage before being swept up by her desire for Count Vronsky, with tragic consequences. We hapless audience members can't help but be swept along with her, in a ferociously felt journey of longing, pain and despair.

At its heart this is a moving story of the connections between human beings, the boxes into which we put ourselves, or are put by others. It reflects on the damaging nature of a patriarchal society which shames women into doing as they're told. It may be a costume drama (and the costumes are smashing!), but the themes are as fresh and as current as they come. Anna's relationship with her son was a particularly

touching element of the story, with a wonderful performance from young actor Robbie Scott (one of three youngsters playing the role).

Along with dealing with the consequences of Anna's infidelity, the play weaves in the stories of three inter-connected marriages, and the cast of characters are all convincingly played. While the modern swearsy Scots can at times catch you off guard, slightly incongruous with the setting of the story, it also brought immediacy, empathy and a sense of realism that is very much in keeping with the original.

Impressively adapted from a hefty 900 page tome, the play moves along at a cracking pace. It will make you squirm, it will break your heart, but it will also make you laugh. Angus Miller's Stiva, the brother of Anna Karenina, is excellent in his role as a likeable cad, although the contrast in attitudes for his infidelity with the fate faced by his sister is stark.

The other star of this production is the set. Designed by Emma Bailey, it's a powerful, industrial, minimalist structure, allowing space for the free flowing of time and tales, moments of intense drama and freeze-frame reflections. The centrepiece is a foreboding spiky, screw-like chandelier dangling ominously over the scene of the crime – the bed.

Writer Lesley Hart says the production began as a dare, as the British-Russian Director Polina Kalinina bemoaned how translations of Russian texts often lost their "vigour and immediacy" in translation. She says they settled on Anna Karenina because "we felt it gave the most enthralling and vivid exploration of the human experience. And it was the one we were most in love with". Four and a half years later, their labour of love has been well worth it. This new version of an iconic classic provides the audience with a big, intense, gripping and moving night at the theatre.

*Anna Karenina is playing at the Royal Lyceum Theatre until*

June 3rd. Tickets available here:  
<https://lyceum.org.uk/whats-on/production/anna-karenina>



Anna-Karenina\_-Robert-Akodoto-as-Vronsky-and-Lindsey-Campbell-as-Anna-Karenina\_Photo-Credit-Robbie-McFadzean



Anna Karenina\_ (L-R) Lindsey Campbell as Anna Karenina and Ray Sesay as Levin\_Photo Credit Robbie McFadzean



Anna Karenina\_ (L-R) Jamie Marie Leary, Stephen McCole, Robert Akodoto , Tallulah Greive, Ray Sesay, Angus Miller and Lindsey

Campbell\_ Photo Credit Robbie McFadzean