


NATASHA, PIERRE, AND
THE GREAT COMET OF 1812

DRAMATURGY
PACKET



Everything you need to know before
you see Great Comet!

David Estabrooks & Seramay Schultz





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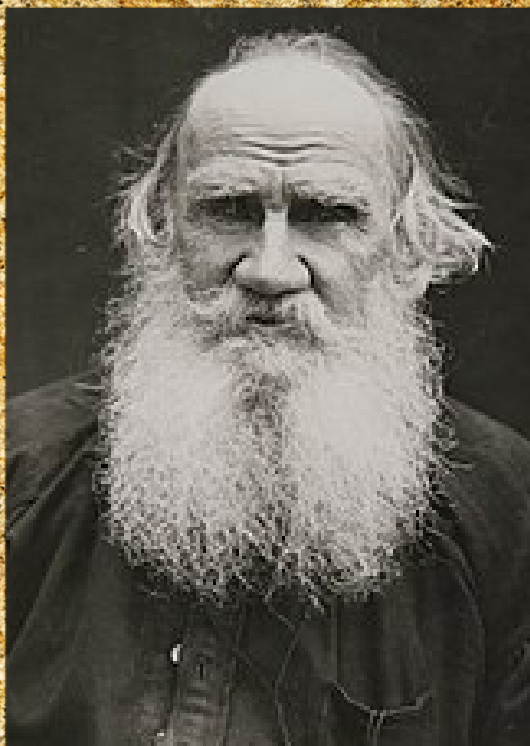
(IT'S A COMPLICATED RUSSIAN NOVEL, EVERYONE'S GOT NINE DIFFERENT NAMES, SO LOOK IT UP IN THIS DRAMATURGY PACKET)

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ABOUT LEO TOLSTOY

LEO TOLSTOY (1828–1910) IS ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT WRITERS IN HISTORY. BORN AT YASNAYA POLYANA, TOLSTOY DROPPED OUT OF UNIVERSITY BEFORE JOINING THE ARTILLERY IN THE CRIMEAN WAR. HE BEGAN TO WRITE *WAR AND PEACE* IN 1863, FINISHING IT IN 1869. ASIDE FROM HIS NOVELS, TOLSTOY WAS ALSO KNOWN FOR HIS MORAL AND RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS, AND HIS ANARCHIST AND PACIFICT

PRINCIPLES. TOLSTOY'S LIFE WAS OFTEN REFLECTED IN THE CHARACTER OF PIERRE, WHO SHARED THE SAME SEARCH FOR MEANING, WHICH TOLSTOY FOUND IN THE ORDINARY, EVERYDAY LIFE.



ABOUT DAVE MALLOY

DAVE MALLOY IS A COMPOSER, WRITER, AND PERFORMER BASED IN NEW YORK. HE HAS WON 3 OBIES, A DRAMA DESK AWARD, AND HAS BEEN NOMINATED FOR 4 TONYS. THE IDEA FOR *GREAT COMET* CAME FOR HIM IN THE SUMMER OF 2011, WHILE READING *WAR AND PEACE* ON A CRUISESHIP HE WAS PLAYING PIANO AT. WHEN ARS NOVA COMMISSIONED HIM FOR A MUSICAL, HE PITCHED HIS IDEA FOR *GREAT COMET*.



OTHER WORKS

- *HAARLEM BERLIN* (2009) – DIRECTED BY RACHEL CHAVKIN
- *GHOST QUARTET* (2014)
- *PRELUDES* (2015)
- *OCTET* (2019)
- *MOBY DICK* (2019)

[DAVE MALLOY ON THE ORIGINS OF GREAT COMET](#)



IMPORTANT DOCS



WAR AND PEACE SUMMARY

SHORT MEDIUM LONG

THE AUDIOBOOK IS 61 HOURS OR THE BOOK IS 1440 PAGES. OR YOU COULD READ THESE INSTEAD, PICK YOUR POISON.

HISTORY OF THE NAPOLEONIC WARS

SOME INFORMATION ON THE "WAR" PART, NOT JUST THE "PEACE" PART.

CONTEXT OF ROMANI PEOPLE IN GREAT COMET

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ON THE USE OF THE G-SLUR, INCLUDING DAVE MALLOY'S THOUGHTS.

IMPERIAL RUSSIA

A WESTERNIZED RUSSIA

PETER THE GREAT, WHO REIGNED TWO CENTURIES BEFORE THE NAPOLEONIC ERA, SPENT MUCH OF HIS REIGN ATTEMPTING TO WESTERNIZE RUSSIA, BOTH POLITICALLY AND SOCIALLY. HE WAS THE ONE WHO FIRST INTRODUCED WESTERN FASHION AND LANGUAGES TO THE RUSSIAN NOBLES, THEN MANDATED IT. MOST FAMOUSLY, THIS LED TO THE 'BEARD TAX,' WHERE NOBLES WHO DIDN'T WANT TO CUT THEIR LONG BEARDS TO CONFORM TO PETER THE GREAT'S NEW WESTERN STANDARDS PAID A TAX TO BE ALLOWED TO KEEP THEIR BEARDS. DURING CATHERINE THE GREAT'S RULE, (1762-1796,) FRENCH WAS FULLY ESTABLISHED AS THE DEFAULT AND EXPECTED LANGUAGE OF THE RUSSIAN ARISTOCRACY. BY THE NAPOLEONIC ERA, SOME RUSSIAN NOBLES KNEW FRENCH BETTER THAN RUSSIAN.

RELIGION

RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY WAS THE DOMINANT RELIGION. PIERRE'S BELIEF THAT NAPOLEON WAS THE ANTICHRIST WAS SHARED AMONG MANY RUSSIANS, WHO BELIEVED THAT THEY WERE LIVING IN THE LAST OF DAYS. (PIERRE TOOK IT A STEP FARTHER- CONVINCED THAT HE WAS THE ANTI-ANTICHRIST, AND THAT IT WAS HIS DESTINY TO KILL NAPOLEON.) BELIEF IN GOD WAVERS FOR BOTH PIERRE AND ANDREY. DURING THE 1812 CAMPAIGN, TSAR ALEXANDER APPEALED TO HIS PEOPLE'S RELIGIOUS BELIEFS TO FURTHER DEMONIZE THE "GODLESS" FRENCH AND RALLY PATRIOTIC RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTS.



IMPERIAL RUSSIA (CONT.)



✦ THE CLASS SYSTEM

IN GREAT COMET, THE CHARACTERS WE KNOW ARE PART OF THE ELITE AND INSULAR RUSSIAN SOCIETY, EITHER BY BIRTH OR ASSOCIATION. THOSE REFERRED TO AS PRINCES AND PRINCESSES ARE HIGH RANKING NOBILITY, (THOUGH SUCH A TITLE DOES NOT RELATE TO A PLACE IN THE ROYAL LINE OF SUCCESSION, AS IT DOES IN ENGLAND.) THE RANKS OF COUNT AND COUNTESS (PIERRE AND NATASHA,) ARE JUST BELOW THOSE OF A PRINCE OR PRINCESS (THE KURAGINS AND BOLKANSKYS.)

RUSSIAN SOCIETY WAS LARGELY AGRICULTURAL. THE UPPER CLASS OWNED AND CONTROLLED THE LAND, AS WELL AS THE PEASANTS LIVING ON THE LAND. THESE SERFS WORKED THE LAND UNDER A RIGID AND HARSH SYSTEM OF SLAVERY. THE HIGH RANKING AND LANDOWNING CHARACTERS IN GREAT COMET ALL OWN AND CONTROL SERFS, INCLUDING PIERRE AND ANDREY. BOTH BELIEVE THE SYSTEM TO BE UNJUST AND RESOLVE TO LIBERATE THEIR SERFS, PIERRE QUITE UNSUCCESSFULLY. THE SYSTEM WAS ABOLISHED IN 1861, A MERE 49 YEARS AFTER THE EVENTS OF GREAT COMET.



NAMING CONVENTIONS



EVERYONE'S GOT NINE DIFFERENT NAMES... A FEW KEY THINGS TO NOTE REGARDING NAMES IN *GREAT COMET*

- NAMES STRUCTURED: [FIRST NAME] [MIDDLE PATRONYMIC NAME] [FAMILY NAME]
- MIDDLE NAMES USE THE CHILD'S FATHER NAME, FOLLOWED BY "VICH" OR "OVICH" FOR BOYS AND "AVNA" OR "OVNA" FOR GIRLS
- AN "A" IS ADDED TO MOST FEMALE SURNAMES
- SOMETIMES PEOPLE ARE REFERRED TO BY FIRST AND MIDDLE NAME RATHER THAN LAST NAME
- DIMINUTIVES FREQUENTLY USED FOR NICKNAMES. FOR INSTANCE, NATASHA IS A DIMINUTIVE OF NATALYA
- ALSO IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT THE NAMES CHANGE BASED ON THE TRANSLATION (WHICH DOESN'T HELP!). MARY BOLKONSKY IS MARIA IN SOME VERSIONS, BUT MARYA DMITRIEVNA IS ALSO MARIA. SORRY.

FOR INSTANCE: COUNTESS NATALYA
"NATASHA" ILYINICHNA ROSTOVA OR PRINCE
ANDREI NIKOLAYEVICH BOLKONSKY

THE GREAT COMET OF ~~1812~~ 1811

DISCOVERED MARCH 25, 1811, THE GREAT COMET WAS MOST VISIBLE FROM SEPTEMBER, 1811 TO JANUARY 1812. COMMON BELIEF AT THE TIME WAS THAT GOD WOULD SEND A MESSENGER IN SOME FORM TO PORTEND A GREAT EVENT. WITH NAPOLEON BECOMING EMPEROR AND CREATING A BIGGER THREAT TO EUROPE, THE COMET OF 1811 BECAME A SIGN OF THE COMING NAPOLEONIC WARS. TOLSTOY WRITES THAT THE COMET "BETOKENED ALL MANNER OF HORRORS AND THE END OF THE WORLD" (6.22). IN PART 9 OF *WAR AND PEACE* (POST-MUSICAL), PIERRE LEARNS NUMEROLOGY, AND USES THIS CODE TO DECRYPT THAT THE LETTERS OF *L'EMPEREUR NAPOLEON* EQUAL 666 (THE NUMBER OF THE ANTI-CHRIST IN THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS). HE THEN DISCOVERS THAT HIS OWN NAME, *L'RUSSE*

BESUHOF ALSO EQUALS 666, SO HE FEELS THAT HE IS CONNECTED TO THE COSMIC EVENTS, AND THAT HE IS SOMEHOW THE ONE TO DEFEAT NAPOLEON, THE ANTI-CHRIST.

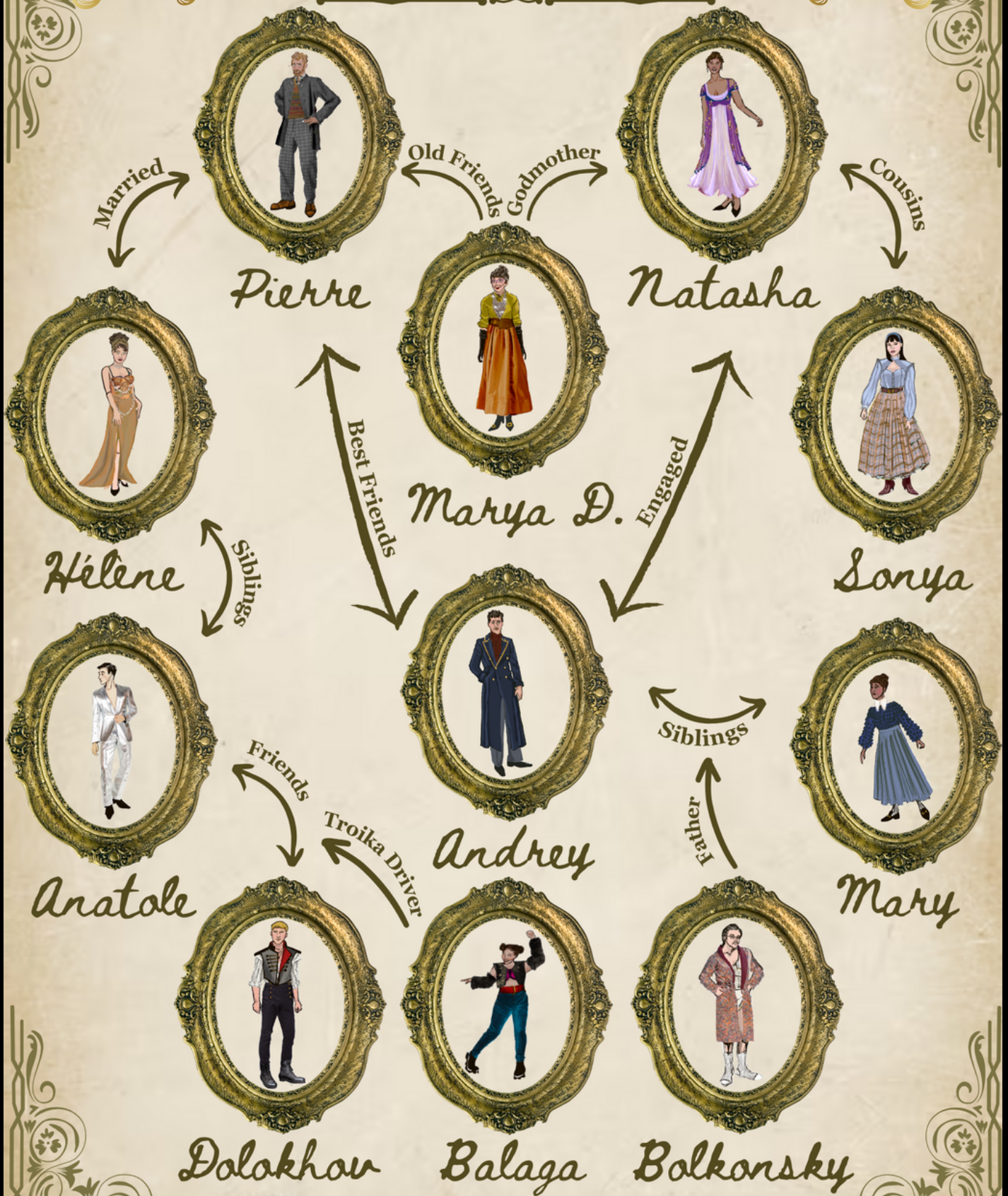


THE COMET OF 1811,

As seen at Day break the 15th Oct. from Otterbourne Hill, near Winchester.

London, Published by G. Egmont St. 1811, No. 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100.

FAMILY TREE



GREAT COMET SYNOPSIS

PROLOGUE

MOSCOW, 1812, JUST BEFORE NAPOLEON'S INVASION OF RUSSIA AND THE BURNING OF THE CITY. AS THE STORY BEGINS ("PROLOGUE") WE MEET "PIERRE," A WEALTHY ARISTOCRAT HAVING AN EXISTENTIAL CRISIS, LIVING A SLOTHFUL LIFE OF WINE, PHILOSOPHY, AND INACTION.

PART I

MEANWHILE, THE YOUNG, NEWLY ENGAGED NATASHA ROSTOVA AND HER COUSIN SONYA ARRIVE IN "MOSCOW" TO STAY THE WINTER WITH MARYA D., NATASHA'S GODMOTHER, WHILE NATASHA WAITS FOR HER FIANCÉ, ANDREY, TO RETURN FROM THE WAR. MARYA D. TELLS NATASHA THAT SHE MUST VISIT HER FUTURE IN-LAWS, THE DEMENTED, MISERLY OLD PRINCE BOLKONSKY AND HIS SPINSTER DAUGHTER, MARY ("THE PRIVATE AND INTIMATE LIFE OF THE HOUSE"), TO WIN THEIR AFFECTION AND SECURE THE MARRIAGE, WHICH IS CRITICAL TO THE ROSTOV'S STATUS AND FORTUNE. HOWEVER, NATASHA'S VISIT ENDS IN DISASTER ("NATASHA & BOLKONSKYS"), AND SHE LEAVES MISSING ANDREY MORE THAN EVER ("NO ONE ELSE").

PART II

THE NEXT NIGHT, NATASHA IS INTRODUCED TO DECADENT MOSCOW SOCIETY AT "THE OPERA"; THERE SHE MEETS ANATOLE, A YOUNG OFFICER AND NOTORIOUS ROGUE ("NATASHA & ANATOLE"); THEIR INTERACTION LEAVES NATASHA FEELING CONFUSED.

PART III

ANATOLE, HIS FRIEND DOLOKHOV, AND PIERRE GO OUT DRINKING; THEY ARE MET BY HÉLÈNE, (PIERRE'S WIFE AND ANATOLE'S SISTER), WHO TAUNTS PIERRE. ANATOLE DECLARES HIS INTENTION TO HAVE NATASHA, ALTHOUGH HE IS ALREADY MARRIED. PIERRE FINDS HIS WIFE'S FAMILIARITY WITH DOLOKHOV OFFENSIVE AND CHALLENGES HIM TO A DUEL, ALMOST GETTING HIMSELF KILLED ("THE DUEL"). AFTERWARD, PIERRE REFLECTS ON HIS LIFE ("DUST AND ASHES"). NATASHA AND HER FAMILY GO TO CHURCH ("SUNDAY MORNING"); LATER, HÉLÈNE ARRIVES AND INVITES NATASHA TO THE BALL THAT NIGHT ("CHARMING"), WHERE ANATOLE SEDUCES NATASHA ("THE BALL").

SYNOPSIS (CONT.)

INTERMISSION

PART IV

NATASHA AND ANATOLE MAKE PLANS TO ELOPE, AND NATASHA BREAKS OFF HER ENGAGEMENT WITH ANDREY ("LETTERS"). SONYA FINDS OUT ABOUT THE PLAN AND REALIZES IT WILL MEAN NATASHA'S RUIN ("SONYA & NATASHA"); SHE DETERMINES TO STOP HER AT ANY COST ("SONYA ALONE"). THAT EVENING ANATOLE AND DOLOKHOV PLAN FOR THE ELOPEMENT ("PREPARATIONS") AND CALL ON THEIR TRUSTED TROIKA DRIVER, "BALAGA," TO TAKE THEM TO NATASHA'S HOUSE. HOWEVER, "THE ABDUCTION" IS THWARTED AT THE LAST MOMENT BY MARYA D.

PART V

AFTER SCOLDING A GRIEF-STRICKEN NATASHA ("IN MY HOUSE"), MARYA D. SENDS OUT "A CALL TO PIERRE," ASKING HIM TO HELP HANDLE THE CRISIS. PIERRE KICKS ANATOLE OUT OF MOSCOW ("FIND ANATOLE" / "PIERRE & ANATOLE"); NATASHA POISONS HERSELF ("NATASHA VERY ILL"); ANDREY RETURNS. PIERRE EXPLAINS THE SCANDAL TO HIM AND ASKS HIM TO BE COMPASSIONATE, BUT ANDREY IS UNABLE TO FORGIVE ("PIERRE & ANDREY"). FINALLY, PIERRE VISITS NATASHA ("PIERRE & NATASHA"). AFTER THEIR MEETING, PIERRE EXPERIENCES A MOMENT OF ENLIGHTENMENT WHILE SEEING "THE GREAT COMET OF 1812" IN THE NIGHT SKY.

