

## Blau

a play in three acts

by Karen Schiff

*Inspired by the art, letters and lives of  
Alexej Jawlensky  
Wassily Kandinsky  
Gabriele Münter  
Marianne Werefkin*

Copyright © 2010 by Karen Schiff  
karen@bykarenschiff.com  
www.bykarenschiff.com

## CHARACTERS

GABRIELE MÜNTER, 25. A German artist.

WASSILY KANDINSKY, 35. A Russian artist.

MARIANNE WEREFKIN, 42. A Russian artist.

ALEXEJ JAWLENSKY, 38. A Russian artist.

HELENE NESNAKOMOFF\*, 21. Marianne's personal maid.

NINA ANDREEVSKAYA\*, 17. Kandinsky's second wife.

HUNCHBACK, teen (non-speaking). The subject of a Jawlensky painting.

\* these characters should be played by the same actress

## TIME

Act I	Discovery (1902 – 1908)
Act II	Synthesis (1909)
Act III	Dissolution (1910 – 1914)

## PLACE

Act I	Various locations in France and Germany
Act II	The living room of Gabriele Münter's house in Murnau, Germany
Act III	The drawing room of the Jawlensky/Werfkin apartment in Munich, Germany

Settings can be minimal—just enough to suggest the location and the action.

ACT II: SYNTHESIS

SCENE 1

(The living room of GABRIELE's new villa in Murnau, September 1908. Lights up. On one side of the room is a dark wood corner bench unit with dining room table. On the table rests a teapot, teacups and saucers, and a plate of cookies. On the other side is a dark red Victorian sofa. A lovely bouquet of flowers sits on the end table. A window by the sofa offers a view of the town's church)

GABRIELE

Do be careful. The stairs are a little narrow. Here we are.

(She enters, followed by ALEXEJ, HELENE and MARIANNE who wears one of her trademark enormous hats)

GABRIELE (Cont'd)

This is the living room.

MARIANNE

Oh, look at this. So quaint. So full of country charm.

GABRIELE

I can imagine it's nothing compared to your family's estate. I hear that was quite grand.

MARIANNE

Oh, my dear, please. All those rooms, all that land, all that help. So much trouble. No, no, this is perfect for you.

ALEXEJ

What a splendid view of the church.

GABRIELE

Yes, isn't it?

MARIANNE

And of the garden, too.

ALEXEJ

Oh, look at Andreas down there. He's waving at us. Everyone wave.

(they wave)

HELENE  
What is he eating?

ALEXEJ  
Looks like a berry of some sort.

HELENE  
Is it poisonous?

MARIANNE  
Poisonous! Don't be ridiculous.

ALEXEJ  
Now, now. She's just being a good mother.

MARIANNE  
I'm sure the boy is fine.

GABRIELE  
Yes, Was has been taking care of the garden. He wouldn't leave any dangerous plants out there.

MARIANNE  
Kandinsky is in charge of the garden?

GABRIELE  
Yes.

MARIANNE  
(to HELENE)  
Go.

(HELENE runs out)

ALEXEJ  
Where is our Moscow don? I thought he'd be here to greet us.

MARIANNE  
Yes. Where is he? I expected he would have met us at the train.

GABRIELE  
He said he had a very important errand to attend to. It must be taking longer than he anticipated. I'm sure he'll be here shortly. Please, do sit. Would you like some tea? I made a fresh pot.

MARIANNE

Yes, I'd like that very much.

(she sits on the couch and removes her hat)

GABRIELE

Lulu?

ALEXEJ

Yes, but allow me, my dear. Have a seat, why don't you? I can imagine you've been working day and night to get the house in order for our visit. You've only just acquired it.

GABRIELE

But you're my guest.

ALEXEJ

Yes. But I am also your friend.

(he escorts GABRIELE to the sofa. She sits. ALEXEJ goes to pour the tea)

GABRIELE

What a charming man. Wherever did you find him?

ALEXEJ

No, no, dear Ella. I found her. In a fortress.

GABRIELE

What were you doing in a fortress?

MARIANNE

My father was ... stationed there.

ALEXEJ

He was the commander.

GABRIELE

Oh, goodness.

ALEXEJ

He was a very high-ranking general, you know. A friend of the Tsar.

GABRIELE

Really?

ALEXEJ

Sugar, Gabriele?

GABRIELE

No, thank you.

ALEXEJ

Repin, our art teacher, said you must come meet my favorite pupil, Marianne Werefkin. She's an extraordinary talent. A woman of superior intellect. A force to be reckoned with.

(He brings the ladies their tea and then looks out the window.  
He waves)

MARIANNE

Is everything alright?

ALEXEJ

Well, they're both indulging now, so I assume all is well.

MARIANNE

As I suspected.

GABRIELE

You never told me your father was a friend of the Tsar.

MARIANNE

One's connection to the Russian emperor is not something to proclaim to all of Munich these days.

(she looks sharply at ALEXEJ who munches on a cookie)

ALEXEJ

Oh, it was all a long time ago. You've so little to do with all that now. Aside from your brother, that is.

GABRIELE

Your brother? What does he do?

MARIANNE

Nothing. Nothing at all.

ALEXEJ

He's the governor of Vilna.

GABRIELE

Oh my.

MARIANNE

He does this just to annoy me. As if he comes from a family of serfs. His father was a colonel in the army.

ALEXEJ

He was no general.

MARIANNE

One rank below. Immaterial. His family was Russian nobility. Through and through.

ALEXEJ

Not anymore. I am now a full-fledged member of bohemia.

MARIANNE

Oh no, you're not. Bohemians don't live in grand double apartments on Giselastrasse, filling their bellies with sweets all day. Let's face it. You'd be downright bourgeoisie if you weren't so ...

ALEXEJ

Bohemian.

MARIANNE

Talented. That's what you want to hear, isn't it? (*aside to GABRIELE*) Les egos fragiles d'hommes.

ALEXEJ

What's that?

MARIANNE

I said you can play the pauper all you want, Alexej. But don't try to pretend you're a man of the people. It'll never work.

(WASSILY enters dressed in traditional Bavarian garb)

WASSILY

Did someone say man of the people?

(there is stunned silence)

WASSILY (Cont'd)

Yes, yes, I know what you're thinking. Perhaps a bit tight in the waistband. Though I can see I'm not the only one who's succumbed to a bit of middle-aged spread, eh my friend?

(he greets ALEXEJ Russian style with three quick kisses on alternating cheeks)

ALEXEJ

When life is so sweet, who can resist?

WASSILY

So true, so true. I saw Andreas out front. He's looking fine, fine indeed. As, of course, is Helene. Madame ...

(he dramatically kisses MARIANNE's hand)

WASSILY (Cont'd)

What an honor to have your presence grace our humble home.

MARIANNE

Oh, dear sir. What nonsense. You know the pleasure is entirely mine.

WASSILY

And how is the lady of the house?

(he kisses GABRIELE on the hand)

WASSILY (Cont'd)

Oh, now Ella, don't look so glum. I haven't forgotten about you. You're to have your very own outfit as well.

GABRIELE

What?

WASSILY

The seamstress said she'll have it ready by morning.

GABRIELE

Was, you shouldn't have. Really. Such an indulgence.

WASSILY

Nonsense. How else are we to achieve harmony and accord with our new surroundings but to shed our city skins and inhabit the local habits?

MARIANNE

Marvelous, marvelous.

ALEXEJ

He hasn't lost his touch.

GABRIELE

Yes, I agree, of course, dear, but since neither of us are actually from here, especially you, aren't you the least bit concerned that it might appear somewhat ... condescending.

WASSILY

Condescending? No, not at all, Ella. You're entirely too concerned with the opinions of others. *(to ALEXEJ and MARIANNE)* What do you two think?

MARIANNE

Of what?

WASSILY

Of this?

*(he points to his clothes. Pause)*

ALEXEJ

Well ...

MARIANNE

It's a revelation. That's what we think. It's a clear signal of just how far our Kandinsky has progressed since we first met him.

ALEXEJ

Yes, yes, precisely.

MARIANNE

*(to GABRIELE)*

My dear, when this fine gentleman first walked into Azbe's art school, you'd have thought he'd never left the university in Moscow. Such a studious air. Such an imperious bearing. All enfolded, of course, in exquisite tailoring. My God, you'd have thought he'd come to teach the class, not take it. But now, here we are, just ten years later, and look at him, just look at him. This outward conversion can only mean one thing and one thing alone. The inner transformation has begun. Yes. Soon, a magnificent maelstrom of change will sweep in over those blue mountains. And today it is plain for all to see that none among us is better suited than Kandinsky to delve right into the eye of that storm and from it, mine the tools to carve out the dawn of a new era in art.

ALEXEJ

(to GABRIELE)

All this she can divine from a pair of lederhosen.

MARIANNE

Where you see lederhosen, I see leadership.

WASSILY

Stupendous, Marianne, stupendous! I knew you, of all people, would understand.

MARIANNE

Of course, say nothing of it. However, you wouldn't object, my good man, would you, if the rest of us kept to our customary fashions. As commanding officer in this cause, you alone should wear the uniform, so we can keep to our proper rank, of course.

WASSILY

But what about Gabriele? Her outfit is practically finished.

MARIANNE

Yes, well. I'll let the two of you sort that out.

(She joins ALEXEJ at the window)

ALEXEJ

My goodness, what do you think they're planning to do with all those berries?

WASSILY

Helene said she would make us a linzer tart.

ALEXEJ

Oh, capital.

GABRIELE

That's very sweet of her.

ALEXEJ

She's a very sweet girl.

WASSILY

I told her we would take some on our picnic, as well.

GABRIELE

Picnic?

WASSILY

Yes, and then perhaps a pleasant row about the lake. Doesn't that sound delightful?

GABRIELE

But, dear, our guests have only just arrived. I'm sure they're tired from their travels. Wouldn't you prefer to rest first?

MARIANNE

Oh, no. The journey was a trifle. I think a boat ride sounds delightful. But how will we all fit?

WASSILY

Helene said she plans to stay behind, to make the tart.

(ALEXEJ yawns)

ALEXEJ

Come to think of it, I do feel a bit weary. Perhaps a short rest would do me good. I expect we have a long evening ahead of us, with many tall tales to be told.

MARIANNE

What of Andreas? Someone needs to look after him.

ALEXEJ

Take him with you. You know how he loves to splash about in the water. His Uncle Was will keep an eye on him, I'm sure.

WASSILY

Yes, of course. I'll watch him like he were my own son (*quickly correcting himself*) nephew.

ALEXEJ

You see? You needn't worry. Andreas will be fine.

WASSILY

Good. It's all settled, then.

GABRIELE

Wouldn't you like to change first? You don't want to ruin your fine new outfit with berry stains.

WASSILY

Oh, a little juice won't hurt it. It's merely a spot of blood, shed for our noble cause. Right, Baroness?

(MARIANNE is looking at out the window at HELENE)

MARIANNE

What's that? ... Oh yes, yes, Wassily, naturally. It's all for the cause.

WASSILY

Ladies?

(MARIANNE takes her hat, and she and GABRIELE exit, followed by WASSILY. ALEXEJ blows a kiss out the window to HELENE)

ALEXEJ

(sighing deeply)

Who can resist?

(blackout)