

SNEAK PEEK

Anna Karenina

Keira Knightley reteams with director Joe Wright for an ambitious new take on the beloved Russian novel, due in theaters this fall.

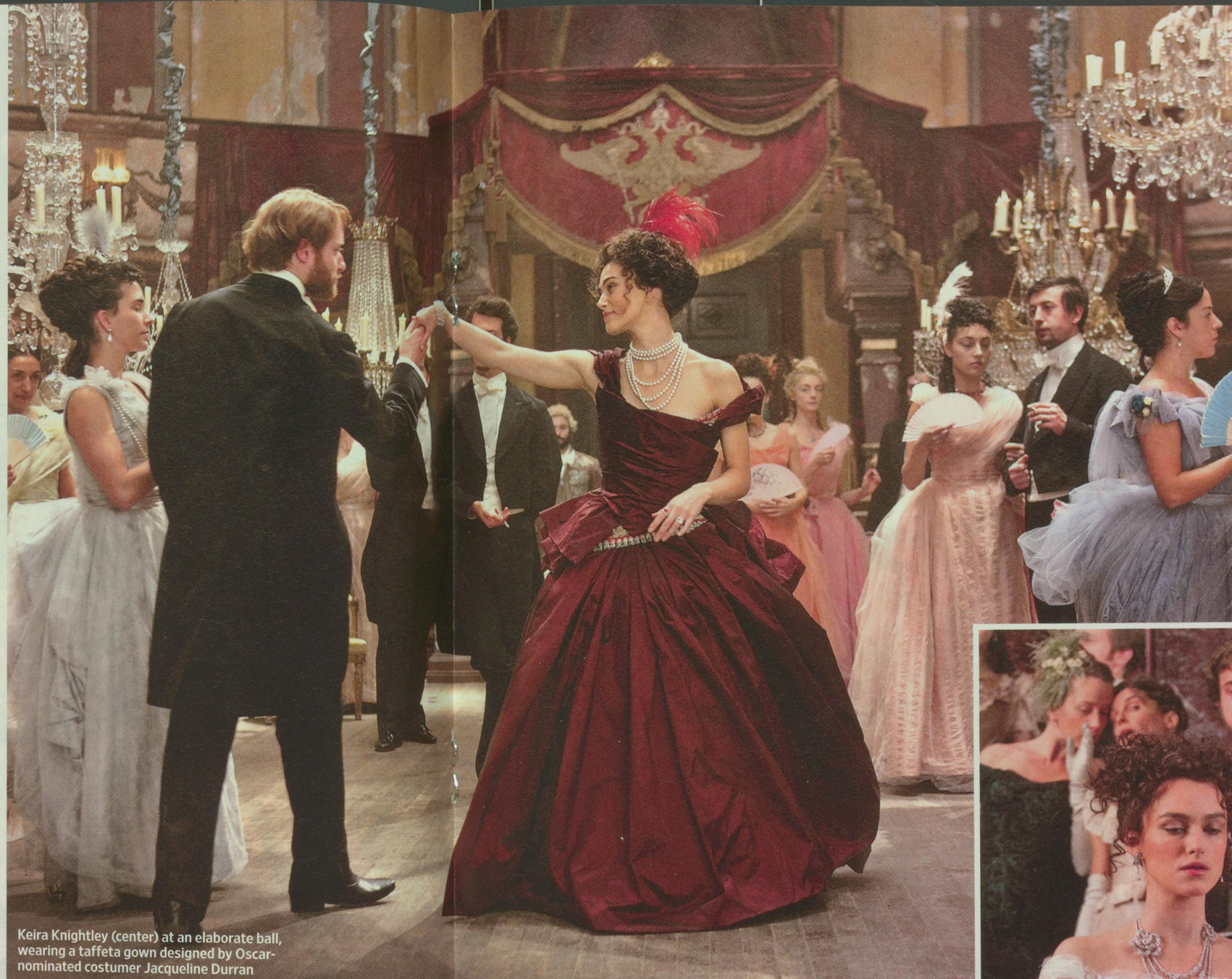
By SARA VILKOMERSON

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LEO TOLSTOY'S *Anna Karenina* has already been adapted for film and TV at least a dozen times, so Joe Wright knew he had to find a fresh approach to the classic 1877 novel. "I didn't want to make a standard period drama again," says the director, whose previous films include 2005's *Pride & Prejudice* and 2007's *Atonement*. "I liked the idea of setting it in one location. I was reading *Natasha's Dance* by Orlando Figes, and he talks about Russian society in the 19th century living their lives as if upon a stage. I found that fascinating." For his adaptation (out Nov. 9), Wright took the idea literally. The majority of the action—including horse races, snowstorms, and

dazzling ballroom dances—is set in a theater, allowing the film to venture into the fantastical without the hindrance of reality.

Keira Knightley stars as Anna, who's married to an aristocrat (Jude Law) but engages in a passionate affair with a cavalry officer (*Savages*' Aaron Taylor-Johnson). After working with Knightley on *P&P* and *Atonement*, Wright says that he can communicate with his star using only an exchange of glances. "It's not even shorthand—it's more like mind reading," he says with a laugh. "I'm incredibly proud of what she's done with this movie. I think it's her best performance." Certainly they had fine source material. Tom Stoppard (*Shakespeare in Love*) wrote the script, condensing Tolstoy's somewhat sprawling plot down to the most basic elements of its central romance. "If it was about love, it was in," says Wright. "If not, it was out." Fans of the novel's long passages about farming regulations will just have to hold out for a sequel. ■



Keira Knightley (center) at an elaborate ball, wearing a taffeta gown designed by Oscar-nominated costumer Jacqueline Durran



Aaron Taylor-Johnson and Knightley film a dancing scene at the U.K.'s famed Shepperton Studios



Knightley and director Joe Wright between takes of a ball sequence

Jude Law (below, top) stars as government official Alexei Karenin, Anna's husband; Taylor-Johnson (bottom) plays Count Vronsky, a cavalry officer and Anna's lover



When her dalliance with a younger man becomes an open secret, Knightley's Anna meets public disapproval. Chanel lent the actress \$2 million in diamonds to wear in character.