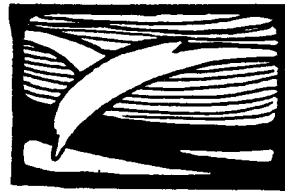


Frederic Wood Theatre

**THE
SEAGULL**

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University of British Columbia

Frederic Wood Theatre
presents

The Seagull

By
Anton Chekhov

Directed By
Charles Siegel

September 13-23

1989



Chekhov's plays

- 1880-1 *Platonov*
- 1887-9 *Ivanov*
- 1889-90 *The Wood-Demon*
- 1896 *The Seagull*
- 1897 *Uncle Vanya*
- 1900-1 *Three Sisters*
- 1903-4 *The Cherry Orchard*

Chekhov also wrote ten short plays, of which *The Bear* (1888), *The Proposal* (1888-9) and *The Wedding* (1889-90) are the best known.

Chekhov's life

- 17 January 1860** Anton Chekhov is born in Taganrog in southern Russia, the son of a grocer and the grandson of a former serf.

- 1869-79** Attends Taganrog High School.

- 1879-92** Lives in Moscow, obtaining his medical degree at the University in 1884. After publishing many humorous short stories to support his family, he gradually turns to more serious writing while practising occasionally as a doctor. By 1888 he is contributing stories to the literary monthlies: a sign that he is now accepted as a major author.

- 1890** Visits the penal settlement on the island of Sakhalin, beyond eastern Siberia. Returns by sea via Hong Kong and Ceylon.

- 1892** Buys an estate near the village of Melikhovo, south of Moscow, and lives there until 1898: his greatest period of creativity as a short story writer.

- 1898** Chekhov moves to the Crimean resort of Yalta for health reasons, having suffered from tuberculosis for some years.

- 1901** Chekhov marries the actress Olga Knipper.

- 1904** Chekhov dies (aged 44) on a visit to the German spa Badenweiler.

A Note
on
THE SEAGULL

Anton Chekhov was jovial as he announced his new play, promising an unusual opening and a subdued ending which would enclose “tons of love”: a curious description for a subtle, lyrical play involved with such issues as talent and mediocrity, an obsession with art, and exhibiting an abiding concern with the intimate relations of its characters.

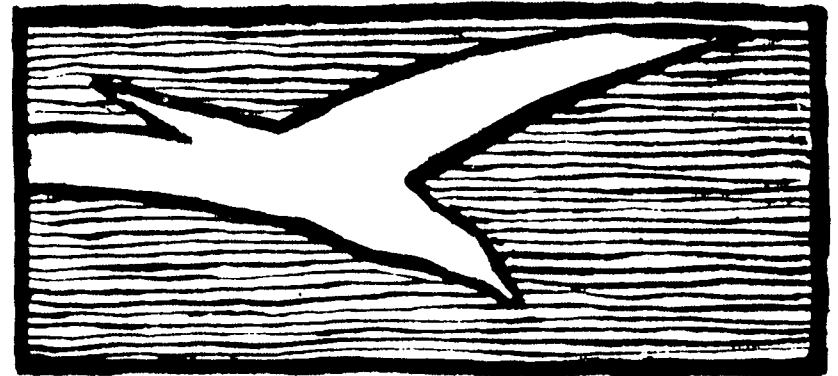
The incongruity that gives birth to comedy can be used as a foundation to explain Chekhov’s puzzling concept of comedy. In *The Seagull: A Comedy in Four Acts* such incongruity is caused by change that has condemned the old forms of life but failed to introduce the new ones. The resulting lack of harmony has comical as well as tragic potential. Chekhov’s own view tended towards the comical interpretation, even though we may view his works best as tragicomic. Consequently, it is the hapless Treplev who calls for “new forms”: “We’ve got to have new forms. And if there aren’t any, then we’d be better off to have nothing at all.” With this statement Treplev unwittingly condemns himself as well, becoming swallowed by nothingness, after failing to produce the new forms in his own writings.

Much of the puzzling quality of Chekhov’s approach to theatre is due to his conscious subversion of those conventions of Russian drama that he found so intolerable: the predictable plotting and moralizing, the condescending attitude. That some hundred years later so many find his plays of great interest and expressing timeless insights may not only be a testimonial to his greatness, but also an alarming sign of the mediocrity of our own culture.

The Seagull does introduce the newness, the very “new forms” that Treplev hankered after into world drama. Some critics speak of his “democratic theatre”, others about his “indirect action”, and there is a general agreement on the peculiar Chekhovian “mood”, a quality responsible for the abiding interest and love for his plays, irrespective of time and country. Nowhere are these characteristics in as much evidence as in *The Seagull*, the first of his four great plays, giving us the essence of Chekhov the playwright.

Peter Petro

Peter Petro is an Associate Professor in the Department of Slavonic Studies at UBC.



THE SEAGULL

by
Anton Chekhov



Directed by Charles Siegel
Set Design by Catherine King
Costume Design by Pearl Bellesen
Lighting Design by Robert Gardiner
Sound Design by Darryll Patterson

CAST

IRINA Nikoleyevna Arkadina,
an actress Lois Anderson
KONSTANTIN Treplev (Kostya),
her son David Mackay
Peter Nikolayevitch SORIN,
her brother John Wright*
NINA Zaryechnaia, a young girl,
daughter of a wealthy land-owner Kathleen Duborg
Ilya SHAMRAYEV, a retired army
lieutenant, manager of Sorin's estate Michael O'Donnell
POLINA, his wife Eliza Green-Moncur
MASHA, his daughter Lisa Beley
Boris Alekseyevich TRIGORIN,
a writer Rod Menzies
Yevgeny DORN, a doctor Roger Haskett
Semyon MEDVEDENKO Bill Melathopolous

PRODUCTION

Technical Director Ian Pratt
Stage Manager Lisa Roy
Properties Sherry Milne
Lighting Assistant Corin Gutteridge
Head Scenic Artist Catherine King
Lighting Operator Lorraine West
Stage Crew Students of Th 150
Costume Supervisor Rosemary Moore
Set Construction Don Griffiths
John Henrickson
Robert Moser
Costume Cutter J. Driscoll-Bell
Sewer Heather Smith
Production Manager Robert Eberle

Acknowledgements

Heather Kent
Robert Gardiner
Cissors
Tabikoff

The action takes place on Sorin's country estate. Between Act III and Act IV two years pass.

There will be one 15 minute intermission.

* Appearing by permission of the Canadian Actors' Equity Association

CHEKHOV

on
The Art of Writing

In real life people do not spend every minute shooting each other, hanging themselves or declaring their love for each other. They don't devote all their time trying to say witty things. Rather they are engaged in eating, drinking, flirting and talking about trivialities-and this is what should be happening on stage. One ought to write a play in which people come and go, eat, talk about the weather and play cards. Life should be exactly as it is, and people exactly as they are. On stage everything should be just as complicated and just as simple as in real life.

Too many playwrights fill their plays with angels, villains, and buffoons. I wanted to be original; I have not introduced a single villain, nor a single angel, although I could not refuse myself buffoons. I accuse nobody, justify nobody.

You are right to demand that an author take a conscious stock of what he is doing, but you are confusing two concepts: answering the questions and formulating them correctly. Only the latter is required of an author. It is the duty of the court to formulate the questions correctly, but it is up to each member of the jury to answer them according to his own preference.

MAXIM GORKY

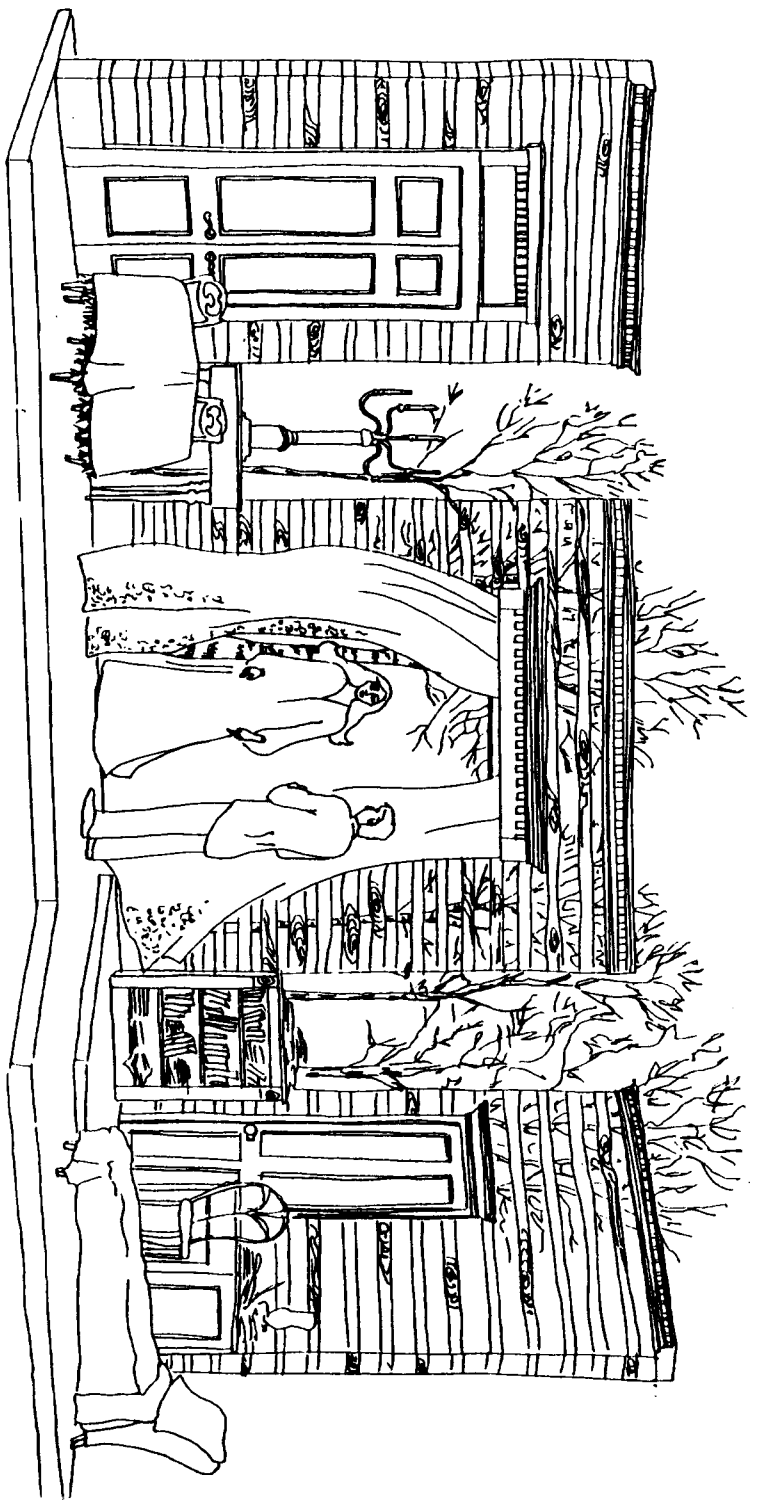
on
Remembering Chekhov

He had the art of revealing and driving away banality, an art which is possible only to a man who demands much from life. Banality always found in him a discerning and merciless judge.

Reading Chekhov, one feels oneself in a melancholy day of late autumn, when the air is transparent and the outline of naked trees, narrow houses, grayish people, is sharp. Everything is strange, lonely, motionless, helpless. The horizon, blue and empty, melts into the pale sky and its breath is terribly cold upon the earth which is covered with frozen mud. The author's mind, like the autumn sun, shows up in hard outline the monotonous roads, the crooked streets, the large estates in which these miserable people are stifled by boredom and laziness, filling the rooms with an unintelligible, drowsy bustle.

No one understood as clearly and finely as Anton Chekhov the tragedy of life's trivialities, no one before him showed men with such merciless truth the terrible and shameful picture of their life in the dim chaos of everyday existence.

Maxim Gorky (1868-1936), friend and colleague of Chekhov, was to become the Soviet Union's leading writer after 1917.



*Set Design for Act IV
by
Catherine King*



*Costume Design for Arkadina (Act III)
by
Pearl Bellesen*

Frederic Wood Theatre
Coming Attractions

**BLOODY
POETRY**

by HOWARD BRENTON

October 18 - 28

Directed by Gerald Vanderwoude

**SHE STOOPS
TO CONQUER**

by OLIVER GOLDSMITH

November 15 - 25

Directed by Kevin Orr

**SWEENEY
TODD**

Music and Lyrics by

STEPHEN SONDHEIM

Book by HUGH WHEELER

January 17 - February 3

Directed by French Tickner

**HERR PUNTILA
AND HIS
SERVANT MATTI**

by BERTOLT BRECHT

March 7 - 17

Directed by Arne Zaslove

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