

Cambridge University Press
0521581176 - The Cambridge Companion to Chekhov
Edited by Vera Gottlieb and Paul Allain
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

This volume of specially commissioned essays explores the world of Anton Chekhov – one of the most influential and widely performed dramatists in the repertoire and the creation, performance and interpretation of his work. The Companion begins with an examination of Chekhov's life and his Russia and the original productions of his plays at the Moscow Art Theatre. Later film versions and adaptations of Chekhov's works are analysed, with valuable insights also offered in acting Chekhov by Ian McKellen, and directing Chekhov by Trevor Nunn and Leonid Heifetz. The volume also provides essays on 'special topics' such as Chekhov as narrative writer, Chekhov and women, and the Chekhov comedies and stories. Key plays, such as *The Seagull* and *The Cherry Orchard* receive dedicated chapters while lesser known works and genres are also brought to light. The volume concludes with appendices of primary sources, lists of works, illustrations, and a selected bibliography.

Cambridge University Press
 0521581176 - The Cambridge Companion to Chekhov
 Edited by Vera Gottlieb and Paul Allain
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE COMPANIONS TO LITERATURE

- The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*
 edited by Malcolm Godden and Michael Lapidge
- The Cambridge Companion to Dante*
 edited by Rachel Jacoff
- The Cambridge Chaucer Companion*
 edited by Piero Boitani and Jill Mann
- The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*
 edited by Richard Beadle
- The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare Studies*
 edited by Stanley Wells
- The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama*
 edited by A. R. Braunmuller and Michael Hattaway
- The Cambridge Companion to English Poetry, Donne to Marvell*
 edited by Thomas N. Corns
- The Cambridge Companion to Milton*
 edited by Dennis Danielson
- The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*
 edited by Stuart Curran
- The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*
 edited by Derek Attridge
- The Cambridge Companion to Ibsen*
 edited by James McFarlane
- The Cambridge Companion to Brecht*
 edited by Peter Thomason and Glendyr Sacks
- The Cambridge Companion to Beckett*
 edited by John Pilling
- The Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot*
 edited by A. David Moody
- The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*
 edited by Jill Kraye
- The Cambridge Companion to Joseph Conrad*
 edited by J. H. Stape
- The Cambridge Companion to William Faulkner*
 edited by Philip M. Weinstein
- The Cambridge Companion to Henry David Thoreau*
 edited by Joel Myerson
- The Cambridge Companion to Edith Wharton*
 edited by Millicent Bell
- The Cambridge Companion to American Realism and Naturalism*
 edited by Donald Pizer
- The Cambridge Companion to Mark Twain*
 edited by Forrest G. Robinson
- The Cambridge Companion to Walt Whitman*
 edited by Ezra Greenspan
- The Cambridge Companion to Ernest Hemingway*
 edited by Scott Donaldson
- The Cambridge Companion to the Eighteenth-Century Novel*
 edited by John Richetti
- The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*
 edited by Edward Copeland and Juliet McMaster
- The Cambridge Companion to Samuel Johnson*
 edited by Greg Clingham
- The Cambridge Companion to Oscar Wilde*
 edited by Peter Raby
- The Cambridge Companion to Tennessee Williams*
 edited by Matthew C. Roudané
- The Cambridge Companion to Arthur Miller*
 edited by Christopher Bigsby
- The Cambridge Companion to the French Novel: from 1800 to the Present*
 edited by Timothy Unwin
- The Cambridge Companion to the Classic Russian Novel*
 edited by Malcolm V. Jones and Robin Feuer Miller
- The Cambridge Companion to English Literature, 1650–1740*
 edited by Steven N. Zwicker
- The Cambridge Companion to Eugene O'Neill*
 edited by Michael Manheim
- The Cambridge Companion to George Bernard Shaw*
 edited by Christopher Innes
- The Cambridge Companion to Ezra Pound*
 edited by Ira B. Nadel
- The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*
 edited by Michael Levenson
- The Cambridge Companion to American Women Playwrights*
 edited by Brenda Murphy
- The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Hardy*
 edited by Dale Kramer
- The Cambridge Companion to Chekhov*
 edited by Vera Gottlieb and Paul Allain

Cambridge University Press
0521581176 - The Cambridge Companion to Chekhov
Edited by Vera Gottlieb and Paul Allain
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE COMPANIONS TO CULTURE

*The Cambridge Companion to Modern German
Culture*

edited by Eva Kolinsky and Wilfried van der Will

*The Cambridge Companion to Modern Russian
Culture*

edited by Nicholas Rzhevsky

*The Cambridge Companion to Modern Spanish
Culture*

edited by David T. Gies

Cambridge University Press
0521581176 - The Cambridge Companion to Chekhov
Edited by Vera Gottlieb and Paul Allain
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

THE CAMBRIDGE
COMPANION TO
CHEKHOV

Cambridge University Press
0521581176 - The Cambridge Companion to Chekhov
Edited by Vera Gottlieb and Paul Allain
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

THE CAMBRIDGE
COMPANION TO
CHEKHOV

EDITED BY

VERA GOTTLIEB

Research Professor in Drama, Goldsmiths College

AND

PAUL ALLAIN

Senior Lecturer in Drama, University of Kent



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
 0521581176 - The Cambridge Companion to Chekhov
 Edited by Vera Gottlieb and Paul Allain
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
 The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK
 40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain
 Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa
<http://www.cambridge.org>

© Cambridge University Press 2000

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
 and to provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
 no reproduction of any part may take place without
 the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2000

Reprinted 2002

Typeface Sabon 10/13 pt *System* 3B2 [CE]

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress cataloging in publication data

The Cambridge companion to Chekhov / edited by Vera Gottlieb and Paul Allain.

p. cm. – (Cambridge companions to literature)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 58117 6 (hardback) – ISBN 0 521 58917 7 (paperback)

I. Chekhov, Anton Pavlovich, 1860–1904 – Criticism and interpretation.

I. Gottlieb, Vera, 1946– . II. Allain, Paul. III. Series.

PG3458.Z8 C36 2000

891.72'3 – dc21 00–055578 CIP

ISBN 0 521 58117 6 hardback

ISBN 0 521 58917 7 paperback

Transferred to digital printing 2003

Cambridge University Press
0521581176 - The Cambridge Companion to Chekhov
Edited by Vera Gottlieb and Paul Allain
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

This book is dedicated to
Stephen Slatter
Paul Slatter
and Johnny

Cambridge University Press
0521581176 - The Cambridge Companion to Chekhov
Edited by Vera Gottlieb and Paul Allain
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Chekhov's way is the way of Russian freedom, the embodiment of that
Russian democracy, true and humane, which never materialised.

Vasily Grossman, *Life and Fate*, 1988

CONTENTS

<i>List of illustrations</i>	<i>page</i> xiii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xv
<i>Notes on contributors</i>	xvii
<i>Chronology</i>	xxi
<i>Editorial notes: transliteration, translation and titles, calendar dates</i>	xxvi
<i>Preface</i>	xxix
PART 1: Chekhov in context	I
1 Dr Chekhov: a biographical essay (29 January 1860–15 July 1904) ALEXANDER CHUDAKOV	3
2 Chekhov and his Russia EMMA POLOTSKAYA	17
3 Chekhov at the Moscow Art Theatre ANATOLY SMELIANSKY	29
PART 2: Chekhov in production	41
4 From <i>Platonov</i> to <i>Piano</i> EDWARD BRAUN	43
5 Chekhov's one-act plays and the full-length plays VERA GOTTLIEB	57
6 <i>Ivanov</i> : the invention of a negative dramaturgy PATRICE PAVIS	70
7 <i>The Seagull</i> : an adaptation THOMAS KILROY	80

CONTENTS

8	Notes from a director: <i>Uncle Vanya</i> LEONID HEIFETZ	91
9	Notes from a director: <i>Three Sisters</i> TREVOR NUNN	101
10	<i>The Cherry Orchard</i> EDWARD BRAUN	111
11	Acting Chekhov: 'A friend to the actor' IAN MCKELLEN	121
12	The scenography of Chekhov ARNOLD ARONSON	134
13	Chekhov on screen PHILIP FRENCH	149
14	Chekhov on the Russian stage TATIANA SHAKH-AZIZOVA	162
15	Directors' Chekhov LAURENCE SENELICK	176
	Selected glossary	191
	PART 3: Chekhov the writer	201
16	Chekhov's stories and the plays DONALD RAYFIELD	203
17	The stage representation of Chekhov's women CYNTHIA MARSH	216
18	Chekhov's comedy VERA GOTTLIEB	228
	<i>Appendix 1: Chekhov's works: primary sources from the Russian – variations of English titles from the Russian</i>	239
	<i>Appendix 2: Selected stage productions</i>	245
	<i>Appendix 3: Selected screen versions</i>	260
	<i>Appendix 4: Illustrations</i>	263
	<i>Selected bibliography</i>	266
	<i>Index of works by Chekhov</i>	280
	<i>General index</i>	283

ILLUSTRATIONS

- | | | |
|---|---|---------|
| 1 | Moscow Art Theatre production of <i>The Three Sisters</i> at Brooklyn Academy of Music, January 1998. Sets and Costume by Valery Levental, directed by Oleg Yefremov. Photo by Dan Rest. | page 38 |
| 2 | Ian McKellen (Dr Dorn) and Claudie Blakley (Nina) in <i>The Seagull</i> at the West Yorkshire Playhouse, presented by the West Yorkshire Playhouse Courtyard Company, Leeds, October 1998, directed by Jude Kelly, designed by Robert Innes-Hopkins. Photo by Keith Pattison. | 132 |
| 3 | <i>The Cherry Orchard</i> , Act One, Romanian National Theatre (1993), directed by Andrei Serban, designed by Santa Loquasto, originally produced by the New York Shakespeare Festival at the Vivian Beaumont Theatre in New York City. Photo by Alexandra Serban. | 143 |
| 4 | <i>The Cherry Orchard</i> , Act One, Romanian National Theatre (1993), directed by Andrei Serban, designed by Santa Loquasto, originally produced by the New York Shakespeare Festival at the Vivian Beaumont Theatre in New York City. Photo by Alexandra Serban. | 143 |
| 5 | Model for <i>Ivanov</i> , designer David Borovsky, director Oleg Yefremov, Moscow Art Theatre, 1976. Photo: Arnold Aronson | 263 |
| 6 | Model for <i>The Seagull</i> , designer Valery Levental, director Oleg Yefremov, Moscow Art Theatre, 1980. Photo: Arnold Aronson | 264 |
| 7 | <i>The Seagull</i> , designer Josef Svoboda, director Otomar Krejča, Tyl Theatre, Prague, 1984. From the Czech Theatre Institute: catalogue <i>In Search of Light</i> , 1995. Reproduced courtesy of Arnold Aronson. | 264 |
| 8 | <i>The Seagull</i> , Act 1, designer Yannis Kokkos, Théâtre de Chaillot, Paris, 1984. Credit, courtesy of Yannis Kokkos.
‘Impressionism was the aesthetic starting point for <i>The Seagull</i> . I did not want | |

Cambridge University Press
0521581176 - The Cambridge Companion to Chekhov
Edited by Vera Gottlieb and Paul Allain
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

ILLUSTRATIONS

to work in the outdated, stereotypical cameo style which is associated with Chekhov and which would have drowned the design in nostalgia . . . The design for *The Seagull* comes from two sources: first, French Impressionism – though more realistic, like the Russian painter Levitan, a friend of Chekhov; and on the other hand, the colored light compositions made of grains of primary colors as in the first color photographs.’ – Yannis Kokkos.

265

Illustrations courtesy of Arnold Aronson, Laurence Senelick, Yannis Kokkos, the West Yorkshire Playhouse and the Czech Theatre Institute Catalogue: *In Search of Light*, 1995.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The editors would like to express particular appreciation to the following: Sergei Volnyets for work done on the translation of the Russian chapters; to Tatiana Shakh-Azizova, friend and colleague, for her work as ‘unofficial’ Moscow coordinator and advisor; Dr Valentina Ryapolova, whose help included concrete advice on the nuances of translation; to Alexander Akhtyrsky for his help in many different yet essential ways; Professor Edward Braun for acting as a crucial advisor, critic and significantly, translator; to Arnold Aronson and Laurence Senelick for their help over and above their contributions as writers, in obtaining some of the illustrations; to Morag Derby of the Royal National Theatre; the British Film Institute (BFI); the West Yorkshire Playhouse; the Theatre Museum, London; to Hilary Wilson, Administrator of the Drama Department, Goldsmiths College; Elizabeth Goldsmith; and most of all to Joanna Labon, and to Irene Slatter of the Russian Department, University of Durham for support and help.

The Commissioning Editor, Dr Victoria Cooper of Cambridge University Press, deserves special gratitude for her characteristic flexibility, and unflinching sense of humour combined with invaluable critical judgement, *and* for making a potentially complex editorial job not only as painless as possible, but positively enjoyable. We are also indebted to Audrey Cotterell for her copy-editing advice, for her patience and for her help with this book, and to Michelle Williams, of the Production Department of Cambridge University Press, for her tolerance, patience, and positive assistance.

The British Council gave financial and practical support in funding a British–‘Soviet’ Theatre Conference, held at Goldsmiths College in May 1992, at which some of the contributors first made a commitment to this volume, in particular Anatoly Smeliansky and Tatiana Shakh-Azizova.

Professor Vera Gottlieb is glad to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of the British Academy for the award of a Research Fellowship, which enabled her to work in Moscow on the preparation of this volume.

Cambridge University Press
0521581176 - The Cambridge Companion to Chekhov
Edited by Vera Gottlieb and Paul Allain
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Vera Gottlieb would also like to express deep appreciation to George Hamilton, Adrian Tookman, David Lipkin, Andrew Platt, and their respective teams at the Royal Free Hospital, London, including Phyl Morris-Vincent, Kate Jones, Leslie Mattin, Mila Constant and the Community team of BP4. Without them, and many others, it may not have been possible to personally fulfil this commitment, but Professor Ted Braun, as friend and colleague, my friend and sister Irene Slatter (a Russian specialist), and Dr Victoria Cooper, with Dr Paul Allain, would have ensured its completion.

Cambridge University Press
0521581176 - The Cambridge Companion to Chekhov
Edited by Vera Gottlieb and Paul Allain
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

PAUL ALLAIN is Senior Lecturer in Drama at the University of Kent, Canterbury. He collaborated with the Gardzienice Theatre Association extensively from 1989 to 1993, touring in Britain, Japan and the Ukraine, and is author of *Gardzienice: Polish Theatre in Transition*, 1997. He has worked as Movement Director at the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal National Theatre in London. He is writing a monograph on Tadashi Suzuki for Methuen.

ARNOLD ARONSON is Chair of the Theatre Division at Columbia University in New York. He is author of *The History and Theory of Environmental Scenography and American Set Design*, 1981, and served as editor of *Theatre Design and Technology* magazine from 1978 to 1988. He has written extensively on scenography as well as avant-garde theatre and his articles have been published in a wide variety of journals, reference books, and anthologies. He is currently preparing *American Avant-Garde Theatre* for publication by Routledge.

EDWARD BRAUN is Emeritus Professor of Drama and a Senior Research Fellow at the University of Bristol. His compilation of Meyerhold's writings, *Meyerhold on Theatre*, was published in 1969, and his critical study, *The Theatre of Meyerhold*, in 1979. This was followed in 1982 by his analysis of modern theatre practice, *The Director and the Stage*. Since then he has published widely on Russian theatre, including in 1995 a reappraisal of Meyerhold's work entitled *Meyerhold: A Revolution in Theatre*. He has also published a number of articles on television drama, and his current research is concerned with representations of history in drama.

ALEXANDER P. CHUDAKOV, DS (Philology) is Senior Research Associate at the Institute of World Literature and Professor at the Gorky Institute of Literature, Moscow, and author of several works including *The World of Words and Things: from Pushkin to Tolstoy*, 1982; *Chekhov's World: Emergence and Affirmance*, 1986, and *Chekhov's Poetics*, Moscow, 1987.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

PHILIP FRENCH was for thirty years a BBC radio producer and has been drama critic of *The New Statesman*, principal book critic of *The Financial Times* and a regular contributor to numerous journals, most notably *The Observer*, where he has written a weekly film column since 1978. His books include *The Movie Moguls*, 1971; *Westerns*, 1977; *Three Honest Men: Edmund Wilson, Lionel Trilling, F.R. Leavis*, 1980; *Malle on Malle*, 1993 and *The Faber Book of Movie Verse*, 1994.

VERA GOTTLIEB is Research Professor in the Drama Department, Goldsmiths College, University of London. Publications include *Chekhov and the Vaudeville*, 1982; *Chekhov in Performance in Russia and Soviet Russia*, 1984; 'Thatcher's Theatre – or After *Equus*', 1989. She has worked as scripts advisor and consultant for the RSC, for Channel 4 and in New York. For Magna Carta Productions, she co-directed and wrote with Robert Gordon *Red Earth*, Hampstead, London, 1984; *Waterloo Road*, Young Vic Studio, London, 1986; she adapted/translated *A Chekhov Quartet*, New End Theatre, London and Chekhov Festival, Yalta and Moscow, 1990, subsequently published 1996. She co-edited *Theatre in a Cool Climate*, 1999.

LEONID Y. HEIFETZ, People's Artist of Russia, is a theatre director and teacher. He is a Professor at the Russian Academy of Theatre Arts, and Chair of the Department of Directing at the Shchukin Drama School. He was Resident Director at the Central Soviet Army Theatre (CSTA), now the Russian Army Theatre (RAT), from 1963 to 1970 (returning there as Chief Director, 1986–94). He was also Resident Director at the Maly Theatre, Moscow (1970–86) and at the MAT from 1986 to 1988. His best-known productions include *The Death of Ivan the Terrible* by Alexei K. Tolstoy, 1966; *Before Sunrise* by Gerhart Hauptmann, 1972; *Fiesco's Plot* by Schiller, 1977, and Shakespeare's *King Lear*, 1979, all at the Maly Theatre. He is also renowned for his production of Dmitry Merezhovsky's *Pavel I*, 1989, as well as Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*, *The Cherry Orchard* and *Three Sisters*, directed both in Russia and abroad.

THOMAS KILROY is a playwright and novelist. His version of *The Seagull* was produced at the Royal Court in 1981 in a notable production by Max Stafford-Clark. He has been awarded the Guardian Fiction Prize and Heinemann Award. His most recent play, *The Secret Fall of Constance Wilde*, was presented at the Abbey Theatre as part of the 1997 Dublin Theatre Festival, and is opening at the Barbican Centre, London, in September 2000. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

CYNTHIA MARSH is Senior Lecturer in Russian in the Department of Slavonic Studies, University of Nottingham. She has published several books on Russian literature and theatre, including *M.A. Voloshin: Artist-Poet*, 1983, and *File on*

Cambridge University Press
 0521581176 - The Cambridge Companion to Chekhov
 Edited by Vera Gottlieb and Paul Allain
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Gorky, 1993, and many articles. She is currently writing a study of Gorky's plays, and working on a project to investigate the impact of Russian theatre on the British repertoire. She has directed most of Chekhov's plays, in both English and Russian.

IAN MCKELLEN is one of Britain's leading film, television and stage actors, and highly experienced in playing Chekhov. His notable film parts include the title role in *Richard III*, which he co-wrote and co-produced, and most recently James Whale in *Gods and Monsters*. He has worked extensively at the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal National Theatre as well as with leading regional theatres. He toured with Prospect Theatre for several years and then co-founded the Actors' Company in 1972. He is a member of the Board of the Royal National Theatre, was knighted in 1991 and has received numerous awards for his acting.

TREVOR NUNN became the youngest Artistic Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1968, directing a host of major productions including *Nicholas Nickleby* (winner of five Tony Awards) and the musical, *Les Misérables*, before leaving the RSC in 1986. Subsequent productions have included *Cats*, *Starlight Express*, *Porgy and Bess* and *Arcadia*. He has worked extensively in television and film. He succeeded Sir Richard Eyre as Artistic Director of the Royal National Theatre.

PATRICE PAVIS is Professor of Theatre Studies at the University of Paris, Saint-Denis, Arts Composante, Théâtre. He is editor and commentator on Chekhov's plays for the edition *Le Livre de Poche*. Amongst many other articles and books, he is author of *Performance Analysis*, and of the *Dictionary of the Theatre*, 1998. He has written introductions to *La Mouette*, *Oncle Vania*, *Les Trois Soeurs*, as well as translated *La Cérémonie* with Elena Zahradnikova, for *Le Livre de Poche*. In addition he has written a contemporary version of *The Seagull (M(o)quettes)*, 1999.

EMMA A. POLOTSKAYA, DS (Philology) works at the Gorky Institute of World Literature, Moscow. Since 1955 she has written and published a number of books and essays on Chekhov. She is an authority on Chekhov's bibliography and textual analysis. Amongst other titles, she is author of *Chekhov: The Evolution of Aesthetic Thought*, 1979, and *Chekhov's Characters*, 1983. She was a member of the prestigious editorial board for the academic edition of *Chekhov's Collected Works and Letters in 30 Volumes*, 1974–83. She has taught at the Literary Institute in Moscow since 1957.

DONALD RAYFIELD was educated at Dulwich College and at Cambridge. He is Professor of Russian and Georgian at Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London. He has written a number of monographs on Chekhov,

Cambridge University Press
 0521581176 - The Cambridge Companion to Chekhov
 Edited by Vera Gottlieb and Paul Allain
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

including *Chekhov: The Evolution of His Art*, 1975, as well as a biography of the explorer Przhevalsky and a history of Georgian literature. He is currently editing for publication the diaries of Alexey Suvorin, Chekhov's publisher.

LAURENCE SENELICK is Fletcher Professor of Drama and Oratory at Tufts University and Honorary Curator of Russian Drama and Theatre at the Harvard Theatre Collection. His many books include *The Chekhov Theatre: A Century of the Plays in Performance*, 1997; *Anton Chekhov*, 1985; *Mikhail Shchepkin: His Life and Art*, 1984, and *Gordon Craig's Moscow 'Hamlet'*, 1982. Among works edited are *Russian Dramatic Theory from Pushkin to the Symbolists*, 1981; *Russian Satiric Comedy*, 1983, and *National Theatre in Europe 1746–1900*, 1991.

TATIANA K. SHAKH-AZIZOVA works at the State Institute of Arts Studies, Moscow, and is the author of *Chekhov and West European Drama of his Time*, 1966, and of numerous essays on the treatment of Chekhov's theatre on stage and screen. She has worked on several series of television and radio programmes on Chekhov's plays. Other work includes chapters in *The History of the Russian Theatre in 7 volumes*, Moscow, 1977–87, and essays on twentieth-century theatre and the inter-relationships of theatres. She is also a regular theatre critic whose numerous articles include several on the International Chekhov Theatre Festivals in Moscow between 1992 and 1998.

ANATOLY SMELIANSKY, Doctor of Arts, is Associate Artistic Director of the Moscow Art Theatre, 1980–, Associate Head of the Moscow Art Theatre School, 1987–, and Visiting Professor of the Carnegie Mellon University/Moscow Art Theatre School MFA in Acting Program, 1994–. He has written many articles on Stanislavsky, Bulgakov and Chekhov. His books include *Is Comrade Bulgakov Dead?*, 1993, and *The Russian Theatre after Stalin*, 1999, as well as a book on Stanislavsky to be published by Cambridge University Press.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1860 (29 January) Anton Pavlovich Chekhov born in Taganrog, a port in the Crimea (an inlet of the Sea of Azov, itself an inlet of the Black Sea), 600 miles south of Moscow.¹ Grandfather, a former serf, liberated with the emancipation of 1861. Anton was the third son of shop-owner Pavel Yegorovich Chekhov and Yevgeniya Yakovlevna Chekhova.
- 1868 Attends Taganrog Grammar School (for Boys) after briefly attending the Greek school.
- 1873 Creates comic sketches for performance at home. Shows early interest in theatre. Sees local productions of *Hamlet* and Russian classics, Gogol's *The Government Inspector* and Griboyedov's *Woe from Wit* (also translated as *Wit Works Woe*).
- 1875 Begins his own humorous magazine *Stammerer (Zaika)* for circulation within the family, of comic sketches of Taganrog life.
- 1876 Father declared bankrupt. Family leaves for Moscow and Chekhov left alone in Taganrog to complete schooling. Works as tutor.
- 1877 First visit to Moscow, where his family is in hardship. He has to return to Taganrog to finish schooling.
- 1878 Writes full-length untitled play subsequently known as *Fatherlessness*, then *Platonov*, which was neither performed nor published in his lifetime. Writes two vaudevilles which were also unpublished.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1879 Begins regular submission of short stories to the humorous magazine *Dragonfly*. Moves to Moscow permanently and assumes father's place as head of family. Enrols at School of Medicine, Moscow University, in August.
- 1880 First sketch published in *Dragonfly*: 'Letter from the Don Landowner Stepan Vladimirovitch N. to His Learned Neighbour Dr Frederik'. More pieces accepted under various pseudonyms, such as 'Antosha Chekhonte' or 'My Brother's Brother'. Meets landscape painter Isaac Levitan, who becomes a close friend.
- 1881 Sarah Bernhardt performs in Moscow. Chekhov considers her acting 'artificial'.
- 1882 Increasingly dependent on writing to support family, while continuing with medical studies.
- 1883 Writes many pieces for popular magazine *Splinters (Oskolki)*.
- 1884 Publication of first book of selected pieces, *Tales of Melpomene*. Has now published more than 200 pieces. Graduates in medicine. Shows first symptoms of tuberculosis.
- 1885–86 More than 100 new short stories, many for *St Petersburg Gazette (Peterburgskaya gazeta)*. First story published under his own name, and first in *New Time (Novoye vremya)*. An influential letter from established novelist Grigorovich encourages him to take writing more seriously. First collection of selected tales is published, *Motley Tales* (1886). In the same year he meets A.S. Suvorin, owner of *New Time*, which is the beginning of a long friendship with Suvorin as his publisher. It is a friendship not without serious differences over politics, such as over the Dreyfus Case.
- 1887 Second book of selected stories published, *In the Twilight*. First publication of vaudeville, *Swan Song*. Initial version of *Ivanov* written at request of owner of the privately owned Korsh Theatre, Moscow. *Ivanov* premièred there, 19 November, to mixed reception.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1888 Story 'The Steppe' published in the serious journal *Northern Herald* (*Severny vestnik*). Plays *Swan Song* premièred at Korsh Theatre, 19 February, and *The Bear*, written in February, staged in October. Begins work on *The Wood-Demon* (considered by most critics to have developed into *Uncle Vanya*). Writes one-act farce *The Proposal*. Receives Pushkin Prize for 'In the Twilight'. First meeting with Stanislavsky.
- 1889 Favourable reception of revised *Ivanov*, at the Imperial Alexandrinsky Theatre, St Petersburg, 31 January. Writes and publishes stories including 'The Princess', 'A Dreary Story', and the one-act plays *The Wedding* and *A Tragic Role*. Works on *The Wood-Demon*: first draft rejected by the Alexandrinsky Theatre; revised version performed at another private theatre, the Abramov Theatre, Moscow, on 27 December and unanimously condemned. Taken off after first performance. Brother Nikolai dies of tuberculosis.
- 1890 'Gusev' published. Leaves Moscow on 21 April and travels across Siberia by train, horse-drawn vehicle and river-boat, to investigate conditions on penal island of Sakhalin: compiles census there. Returns to Moscow in early December via Hong Kong, Singapore and Ceylon.
- 1891 'The Duel' and 'Peasant Women' published in *New Time*. Writes 'The Grasshopper' and completes the one-act play *The Anniversary* (*Jubilee*). Six-week tour of Western Europe with A.S. Suvorin. Helps with medical relief of famine victims in Central and South-East Russia.
- 1892–3 Twenty-one stories published, including 'Ward No. 6' (1892). Buys small estate, Melikhovo, fifty miles south of Moscow, and the family moves there in March 1892. Opens clinic and practises medicine for local peasants while continuing to write.
- 1893–4 Non-fictional work *The Island of Sakhalin* is completed and appears serially in *Russian Thought* (*Russkaya mysl*), leading to some penal reform.
- 1894 Writes 'The Black Monk'. Publishes another collection of selected stories, *Stories and Tales*. Travels again to Western Europe.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1895 'Three Years' published, and appears in book form. Writes 'Ariadne', 'The Murder', 'Anna Round the Neck'. Begins writing *The Seagull* in the autumn. First meeting with Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy.
- 1896 Revises *The Seagull* for première at the Imperial Alexandrinsky Theatre, St. Petersburg, 17 October. Extremely hostile reception devastates him.
- 1897 'Peasants' published. Publishes *Uncle Vanya* but refuses to allow performance until 1899. Undertakes work for national census. In March he has haemorrhage of the lungs and is diagnosed with tuberculosis. Visits Europe in August, for convalescence, and spends winter in southern France.
- 1898 'Ionytch', 'A Man in a Case', 'Concerning Love' and 'Gooseberries' published. Supports Zola over Dreyfus Case during the trial, resulting in near break with Suvorin. Nemirovich-Danchenko persuades a reluctant Chekhov to let him produce *The Seagull* at the new People's Art Theatre (later Moscow Art Theatre). Leaves France for Russia in early May. Attends Moscow Art Theatre rehearsals of *The Seagull*, September. Meets the actress Olga Knipper (later to be his wife), but leaves almost immediately for the Crimea before winter. Successful first performance of *The Seagull* by Moscow Art Theatre (MAT), 17 December, establishes Chekhov as a playwright. The fiasco of the first production (1896) had resulted in Chekhov's unwillingness to risk another public performance. Stanislavsky did not want to take the play but was persuaded by co-founder of MAT Nemirovich-Danchenko. In spite of some interpretative misunderstandings (which characterised all MAT productions of his plays) the production was a success. Meets Gorky in Yalta, where he buys land to build a house. Father, Pavel Yegorovich Chekhov, dies.
- 1899 'Lady with a Little Dog' and two short sketches, 'The New Villa' and 'On Official Business', are published. Begins writing *Three Sisters*. Completes contract with A. F. Marx, publisher, for *Complete Edition of Works*. Première of *Uncle Vanya* at MAT, 26 October, is moderate success. Chekhov confined to Yalta for health reasons and unable to attend. Olga Knipper

CHRONOLOGY

- visits Melikhovo, which he sells in June. Moves to Yalta with his mother and sister Masha.
- 1900 Completes 'In the Ravine'. First two volumes of the Marx Edition of *Chekhov's Works* appear. MAT Company visits Sevastopol and Yalta and he sees *Uncle Vanya* for first time. Reads first draft of *Three Sisters* to MAT in November. Begins courting Olga Knipper.
- 1901 Première of *Three Sisters*, MAT, 31 January, with Olga Knipper as Masha, has moderate success. Ten of the eleven volumes of Marx Edition published by the end of 1901. Chekhov marries Olga Knipper, 25 May, in quiet ceremony in Moscow.
- 1902 Completes 'The Bishop' and begins work on *The Cherry Orchard*. His strength noticeably declines in the winter.
- 1903 Completes 'The Bride' and works on final volume of Marx Edition. Finishes first draft of *The Cherry Orchard*, 26 September, but undertakes second and third drafts, both only completed by 12 October. Arrives Moscow in early December, for MAT rehearsals of *The Cherry Orchard*. Disagrees over the casting and interpretation, with Stanislavsky advocating its serious nature above its comic elements.
- 1904 Première of *The Cherry Orchard*, MAT, 17 January, proves a success. Chekhov attends during third act. Leaves for Badenweiler 'to take the waters' in the Black Forest with Olga Knipper, where he dies of tuberculosis on 15 July. After a drink, his last words to Knipper are: 'It's a long time since I drank champagne'. Confusion of funeral procession as his coffin is transported in a railway wagon labelled 'Fresh Oysters'. Buried beside his father in Moscow.

NOTE

- 1 Even in Chekhov's lifetime, Taganrog was beginning to be superseded as a trade centre by Rostov-on-Don, given the development of the railways in the 1870s (see chapter 10 in this volume). The growing port of Odessa, directly on the Black Sea, also superseded Taganrog's position as a trade centre.

EDITORIAL NOTES

Transliteration

The editors took the decision *not* to standardise the various systems of transliteration used by contributors from Russia, from the United States, France, the Irish Republic and the UK. In the case of this volume, where there are different scholarly approaches, varied angles, emphases and priorities, one contributor may need one of the four systems of transliteration (American Library of Congress, Systems, I, II, III, IV) while another may require either a different system – or none at all, as in the case of chapters 9 and 11, for instance. We have therefore left each contributor free to choose the transliteration system that suits him or her best, rather than enforce consistency of any one system.

Translation and titles

In many instances, Russian-speaking contributors have translated their own excerpts from the plays or stories. Where contributors have relied on English translations of Chekhov, *The Oxford Chekhov in 9 Volumes*, translated and edited by Ronald Hingley, Oxford, 1965–80 (vols. I–III the plays; vols IV–IX, selected stories of 1888–1904), is for general reference (quoted by permission of Oxford University Press). For that reason we have retained, for reference purposes, Hingley’s translation of Chekhov’s act and scene divisions which Chekhov discontinued for the last four major plays e.g. Act Four, Scene IV.

The four volumes of stories translated by Ronald Wilks for Penguin, have also been used (by permission of Penguin Books Ltd.). The titles of stories and plays in English are those used by Ronald Hingley in *The Oxford Chekhov*, and Ronald Wilks’ Penguin editions of selected stories. (See Appendix 1.)

Cambridge University Press
 0521581176 - The Cambridge Companion to Chekhov
 Edited by Vera Gottlieb and Paul Allain
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

EDITORIAL NOTES

Russian-speaking contributors have used material from the following:

Collected Works, Letters, 1944–51, Chekhov, Anton, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem A.P. Chekhova, v 2oi tomakh, edited S. D. Balukhaty and others, Moscow, 1944–51.

Collected Works, Letters 1960–64, Chekhov, Anton, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v 12i tomakh, edited by V.V. Yermilov and others, Moscow, 1960–4.

Unless otherwise specified, the references to *Works and Letters* are from the most recent and comprehensive collection:

Chekhov, Anton, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v 3oi tomakh, 1974–83, (*Chekhov, Anton, Collected Works and Letters in 30 volumes*, Moscow 1974–83), edited by N. F. Belchikov and others, Moscow, 1974–83.

Chekhov v vospominaniyakh sovremennikov (Chekhov in the Memoirs of his Contemporaries), edited by N. I. Brodsky and others, Moscow, 1954.

For non-Russian readers, the editors would like to emphasise the centrality to English-language Chekhov studies of Ronald Hingley's *The Oxford Chekhov* (above), and *A New Life of Chekhov*, London, 1976.

For further source material see Selected bibliography.

Calendar dates

Dates before October 1917 conform to the old-style Julian calendar. Not all contributors, however, have followed this system of dating.

PREFACE

Editing a collection of essays on a writer as internationally renowned, complex and productive as Chekhov must, inevitably, result in some hard choices. We knew, however, that these choices would define themselves given three essential prerequisites with which we began. First, we wanted the book to include contributions from professional practitioners of Chekhov's work in the theatre, namely actors, directors, designers, writers and critics, since it is from practice that much of theory arises – or may be tested. Second, the momentous changes in Russia (and thus Eastern Europe) starting with the Gorbachev era have enabled us to take full advantage of contributions from some of Russia's leading Chekhov specialists, whether practitioners or academics (a 'division' not recognised by our Russian colleagues): the director, Leonid Heifetz; the literary manager of the Moscow Art Theatre, Anatoly Smeliansky; the leading critic, Tatiana Shakh-Azizova, and the theatre historians and Chekhov scholars, Alexander Chudakov and Emma Polotskaya. Each brings a particular perception to the subject at a time when history is being redefined and reevaluated, whether political, social or theatre history. Finally, we wanted the book to offer the reader as much insight as possible into other aspects of Chekhov's work, although the emphasis of the collection as a whole is on Chekhov and production. Thus the many screen versions of Chekhov's works – far more than of such contemporaries as Ibsen, Strindberg, Wilde or Shaw or, later, Brecht – are analysed by one of Britain's leading film critics: Philip French, who reviews films of the plays *and* also some of the stories. Equally, Chekhov's short stories, although *seemingly* confined to only one chapter by Donald Rayfield, are also discussed by several other contributors, particularly Alexander Chudakov, Emma Polotskaya and Cynthia Marsh, and are referred to by others where the dramatic and literary Chekhovian themes become inseparable in content, although not in medium or genre.

Writing about Chekhov with the historical perspectives of 1999 has cast

PREFACE

an unusual light on the importance, treatment and approach to Chekhov throughout the twentieth century, so we would hope that the volume provides the student of Chekhov with different viewpoints from those of previous collections.

It is evident, too, from the work of all our contributors, of whatever nationality (Russian, American, British, Irish or French) that some chapters have the end of this century *and* the coming millennium as an implicit subtext, with a sense of time and movement which would obviously have been lacking either fifty years ago or, for different reasons, during the period of the Cold War. This collection is inevitably informed by the 'symbol' of 1989: the collapse of the Berlin Wall, and all that has subsequently followed over the last ten years.

However diverse the approaches, personalities and specialisms of our contributors, they all share an expertise in Chekhov's work – differences in interpretations arise not only through the normal variations of reading, but also through the diverse perspectives of their relationship to his work. Thus Ian McKellen brings to the subject the perspective of a great British actor who has played many Chekhovian roles; directors like Trevor Nunn and Leonid Heifetz approach the plays from another angle in which sometimes minute detail from a production alternates with broad brushstrokes. In his chapter on *The Seagull*, the writer Thomas Kilroy debates the relationship between the original play and his own version, set in Ireland, which raises many new and important issues. Likewise, the scenographer Arnold Aronson draws the reader in to the vital area of visual interpretation and the staging of many of the plays. No less significant are the chapters by the theatre scholars and historians, Laurence Senelick (author of a major study of the plays in performance), Edward Braun and Patrice Pavis. It is relevant to their perceptions that some have themselves created viable production texts: Edward Braun translated an innovatory version of *The Cherry Orchard* for the British director Peter Gill, while Patrice Pavis is both scholar and commentator of all Chekhov's major plays in French – an important aspect of Pavis' work which is not always generally known outside France, but the popular and accessible *Le Livre de Poche* editions of the plays are introduced by Pavis.

Further aspects are provided by the major academic critics and Slavists: Donald Rayfield writes directly about the short stories, yet brings them into a natural relationship with the dramatic works; while Cynthia Marsh, another Slavist scholar, explores what may be seen as a particular 'female' (as distinct from 'feminist') critique of Chekhov's work. Alexander Chudakov's biography of Chekhov provides some material either little known or previously under-emphasised outside Russia, while both Emma Polotskaya

PREFACE

and Tatiana Shakh-Azizova offer the non-Russian reader or spectator significant new perspectives and insights. All of the contributors have in common their shared interest in, affection for, and specialist knowledge of Chekhov's work.

Emanating from this is a basic and essential humanism which is needed all the more given the vacuum of ideas or even ideals with which we face not only the end of a decade, and the end of a century – with reason described as ‘the century of barbarism’ – but also the new millennium. It is hard to imagine that Chekhov's literary and dramatic works would or could attract the interest and respect of those who do not place human needs and human rights as a central part of their individual priorities and beliefs – surely one explanation of the paucity of Chekhov productions during the Stalinist period. Shakh-Azizova quotes the Soviet novelist Vasily Grossman, in whose *Life and Fate* one of the characters says: ‘Chekhov's way is the way of Russian freedom, the embodiment of the Russian democracy, true and humane, which never took shape.’ And in their respective chapters, both Trevor Nunn and Ian McKellen emphasise the ‘egalitarian’ process of Chekhov in production: a collective and ensemble-forming process in which Chekhov is – in McKellen's words – ‘a friend to the actor’, requiring as much of a seemingly ‘small’ role, like Charlotta Ivanovna in *The Cherry Orchard* as of Ranevskaya or Lopakhin: ‘Chekhov appeals to me [as an actor] because you cannot realise the play in production *unless* every part has been worked on fully’. In this way, Chekhov's philosophy, his dramatic form, and the *process* of production are all inextricably bound up with the egalitarian, the humane and the democratic. His plays simply could not flourish under *any* dictatorship – or political and social system in which ordinary people (the subjects of his stories as much as of his plays) are not perceived as important, and within whom some elements of potency potentially reside.

Thus even if a performer or a reader or spectator is more concerned with form, Chekhov's plays are almost inevitably going to invite the interest and concern of the humanist – of those attracted by his deep understanding of human beings and psychology; of our place in relation to a social and economic context, and the metaphysical determinants of life, death, nature, the seasons, the passage of time and our place in the written and as yet unwritten history of human kind. Chekhov was as much aware of the need to have financial sufficiency if one is not to be ‘dispossessed’ and so ‘disempowered’ as he was aware of the need to live usefully, to make a contribution to life – not a judgemental or loaded issue in the works, but an inherent value system which is often articulated by the characters. This is not to say, however, that Chekhov himself may be associated with any

PREFACE

particular character – in fact, his objectivity and detachment provoked much criticism during his lifetime, and may still lead to interpretative misunderstandings. His objectivity, however, is not a denial of commitment. To this end, he avoids the sentimental or melodramatic *or* deliberately utilises them to deflate and expose. It is here that one finds the greatest controversy attached to his plays, depending on the epoch and ‘culture’ which ‘reads’ him: his work has been seen as tragic, gloomy, heavy or, to put it in the terms of one of the earliest books on him: as ‘the voice of twilight Russia’. But with such an interpretation the director has to go against the *form* of his work – and ignore the vital role of the comedy which enables Chekhov’s tone to remain non-judgemental, detached and reserved. The interpretation of a ‘gloomy’ Chekhov requires a slow pace of action, as in the Pitoëff Company’s Paris production of *Uncle Vanya*, over thirty years ago, in which the first page of the script lasted nearly fifteen minutes. The yawns and silences of Astrov and Marina were echoed by the audience.

This is a central production question of all of Chekhov’s plays, and similarly found in both Beckett’s and some of Pinter’s plays: how to illustrate the boredom or lethargy or aimlessness of the characters without sending the audience to sleep? The answer, of course, lies in the pace of the production – and full use of the comic devices which remained largely unacknowledged by Stanislavsky and certainly by many of Stanislavsky’s followers, particularly filtered through Lee Strasberg’s reinterpretations – based as they were on the wildly inaccurate English-language translations of Stanislavsky’s writings. As several contributors point out, whether Shakh-Azizova, Smeliansky, Braun or Senelick, it has only been over the last twenty-five to thirty years that directors have risked innovatory Chekhov – directed by Heifetz and Nunn, and other radical directors such as Richard Eyre, Mike Alfreds, Anatoly Efros, Peter Gill, Otomer Krejča, Andrei Serban, Yannis Kokkos, Adolph Shapiro, Peter Stein, Giorgio Strehler, Yuri Lyubimov, Jean Vilar, Oleg Yefremov, and, of course, Peter Brook. This radicalism was also instigated and inspired by the varying visual interpretations of some of world theatre’s leading designers such as Valery Levental, Josef Svoboda, David Borovsky, Barkhin, Sofiya Yunovich, Santo Loquasto, Kokkos, Motley, Ashley, Martin-Davies, Pamela Howard – amongst many scenographers whose visual interpretation has carried not only place, space and time, but also image, symbol and metaphor. And over the century there have been different approaches to acting Chekhov: the performances by Ian McKellen and many other actors have made it possible for the plays to be reconceived – and rediscovered. This has also happened through different versions of the plays – from Trevor Griffiths’ version of

Cambridge University Press
0521581176 - The Cambridge Companion to Chekhov
Edited by Vera Gottlieb and Paul Allain
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

PREFACE

The Cherry Orchard, Thomas Kilroy's reconception of *The Seagull* which gave it a completely new dimension, the innovatory reinterpretation by Efros, or Peter Brook's interpretation of *The Cherry Orchard* as timeless.

The collection attempts to raise some of the central questions about Chekhov's work – although the emphasis is primarily on the plays. The book falls into three parts: 'Chekhov in context', 'Chekhov in production' and 'Chekhov the writer'. And given the diversity of contributors, we hope that a diversity of approaches is evident: whether the biographical; the historical, both social and theatrical; the 'woman's perspective', for want of a better description; the critical, and the production-based perceptions of different theatre specialists. Ian McKellen sums up many of the salient points about acting Chekhov: he is 'hard to pin down' given 'many, many different styles within his writing' and 'so many themes going on'. And also, a point made earlier, it is the group, or emerging ensemble, which *makes* the production since 'no one actor is allowed to run away with the play'.

Chekhov is frequently linked with Shakespeare, not only in Russia but internationally, a point made by Shakh-Azizova, Heifetz and Nunn – if this volume fails to justify this comparison in terms of importance, constant reinterpretation and frequency of performance, then it can only be through the failure of the editors, and not the contributors. Few editors could have met with such sustained courtesy, patience and expertise as from the contributors of this volume. Like others in the Cambridge Series, contributors have responded to faxes, phone calls, e-mails and ordinary letters: in spite of the difficulties of distance and time zones, responses have been unfailingly swift and generous, making the role of editor a delightful and enjoyable task.

It is, perhaps, unusual to mention the Chekhov specialists whose work could not be included in this volume solely given limitations of space, but it would be wrong to leave the important work of John Tulloch, for example, or Patrick Miles, Maria Shevtsova, Harvey Pitcher or Harai Golumb amongst others, simply to the bibliography. Their influence may be felt in different parts of the book. Equally, those whose help has had a direct bearing on the volume are justly mentioned in the acknowledgements, though none are responsible for any errors – those are entirely the responsibility of the editors.

June 2000