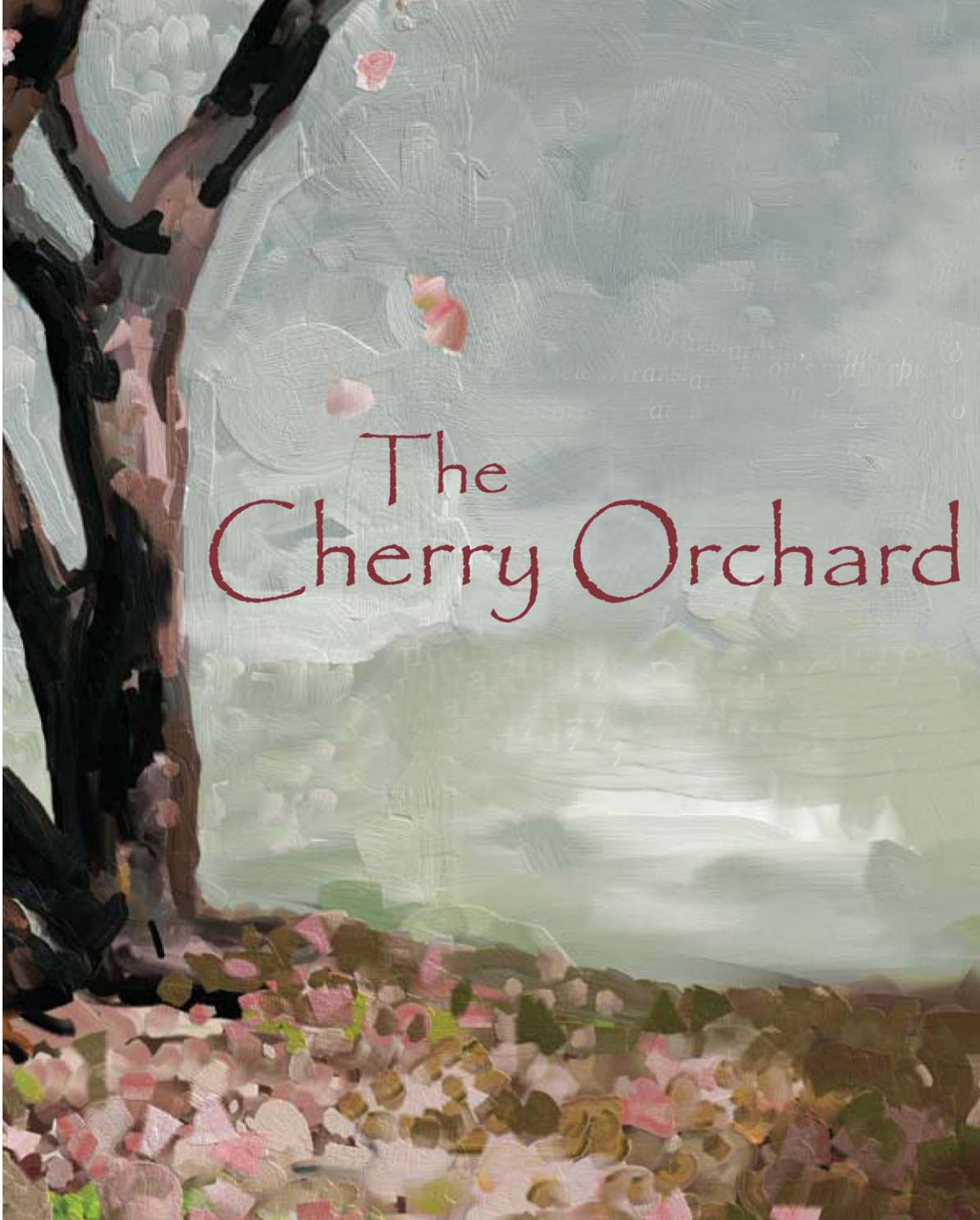


The  
Nora  
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SQUARE THEATER  
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**Study Guide and Activity Book**

**January 2009**

## Welcome to the Student Matinee Program!

On behalf of resident companies The Nora Theatre Company and Underground Railway Theater, thank you for being a part of Central Square Theater's Student Matinee Program. Both companies have a combined 50-year history of producing award winning professional theater for audiences across the nation. We're delighted that these audiences now include students and teachers in a program crafted specifically for you. Our companion study guides are designed to energize and engage your students in the performances through a variety of theatrically based activities. If you ever have questions about either the guide or our performances, our Education Staff is more than happy to help. Enjoy the show!

Maggie Moore Abdow  
Underground Railway Theater Education Director

### Central Square Theater Staff

Study Guide compiled by  
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Cynthia Bargar ..... Development Director  
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Diana Librizzi ..... Box Office Manager  
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Susan Wilson ..... Will Call  
Erika Noone ..... Concessions

### About The Nora Theater Company

The Nora Theatre Company began in 1987 and has since staged 57 productions, including 32 professional Greater Boston, New England or world premieres. From the beginning, the company has sought plays that jostle our hearts and minds and reveal our common humanity. During its two-decade history, audiences and the media have recognized The Nora for its exceptionally high quality work and mission-driven commitment to bring cutting-edge, thought-provoking and contemporary productions to New England audiences. The Nora's productions combine remarkable acting, innovative staging, and striking design elements. The company has been featured on annual "Best of" lists in *The Boston Globe* and *Boston Phoenix*, and has garnered six Elliot Norton Awards - Boston's answer to the Tony Awards - in production, directing, and design categories. The Nora has also been recognized by the Independent Reviewers of New England (IRNE) with one award and six IRNE nominations.

# How to Use This Study Guide

Thank you for taking the time to look over our Study Guide and Activity Book for *The Cherry Orchard*. This guide contains information about the show and activities to help enrich your students' experience. The activities can be combined into one unit or done as stand-alone activities.

The Study Guide is divided into three sections:

- **Get Ready** to help you and your students prepare to see the show;
- **Deepen Understanding** to explore specific elements or themes from the show, and;
- **Reflect and Connect** to further engage students in the show they have seen.

Each section contains background information for you and your students, as well as interactive classroom activities and questions for discussion.

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# MA Curriculum Connections

The questions and activities in this Study Guide connect to many of the MA Curriculum Frameworks in both Arts and English Language Arts. The following list is a sampling of standards that connect with the lessons in this guide. These standards are taken from the Massachusetts Department of Education Curriculum Frameworks ([www.doe.mass.edu](http://www.doe.mass.edu)):

## **English Language Arts and Literacy Frameworks**

### **Language:**

- Students will use agreed-upon rules for informal and formal discussions in small and large groups.
- Students will pose questions, listen to the ideas of others, and contribute their own information or ideas in group discussions and interviews in order to acquire new knowledge.
- Students will identify, describe and apply knowledge of the structure of the English language and standard English conventions for sentence structure, usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.
- Students will determine the meaning of unfamiliar words using context clues.
- Students will determine pronunciations, meanings, alternative word choices, and parts of speech of words using dictionaries and thesauruses.

### **Literature:**

- Students will ask questions about the important settings, characters, and events.
- Students will restate main ideas.
- Students will identify sensory details and figurative language.
- Students will identify and analyze the author's use of dialogue and description.
- Students will relate themes in fiction and nonfiction to personal experience.
- Students will respond to and analyze the effects of sound, form, figurative language, and graphics in order to uncover the meaning in poetry.

## **Arts Curriculum Frameworks**

### **Theater:**

- Students will describe and demonstrate audience skills of observing attentively and responding appropriately in classroom presentations, rehearsals, and live performance settings.
- Students will identify and describe the visual, aural, oral, and kinetic details of classroom dramatizations and dramatic performances.

# Get Ready: Attending a Live Performance

Attending a live show is a unique experience. Going to see a play can be a great opportunity for students, but there is a lot of responsibility that goes with it. In a play, the actors are live onstage in front of the audience. This means they can hear, (and sometimes see) the audience. How you react as an audience member affects what the actors do onstage. Because of this, the audience can be considered another character in the show.

*Teachers: Before you come to the theater, please talk with your students about seeing a play and what is expected of them during a live show. Here are some important etiquette points to remember when going to the theater:*

- There is no food, candy or gum allowed in the theater.
- Cell phones, PSPs, mp3 players and other electronic devices should be turned off and put away for the performance. If audience members take these items out during intermission, they need to be completely turned off when the show starts again.
- During the performance students should focus their energy and attention on the action happening onstage.
- The audience will have a chance to talk with the actors and some of the production team after the show. During the show, students should be thinking of any questions they might have about what they see onstage.

## Get Ready: About Anton Chekhov

**Anton Chekhov** (1860-1904) was born on January 29, 1860, in Taganrog, a small port in southern Russia. When he was 15 his father went bankrupt and the family left for Moscow to avoid paying debts. Chekhov stayed behind to finish school but was deeply affected by the separation. At 19, Chekhov joined his family, studying medicine at Moscow University. While there he began writing stories, and by the time he became a doctor he had published hundreds of them. His first book, *Motley Stories*, was successful enough to inspire him further to pursue writing as a profession. At 28, he began to be taken seriously as a writer and he was awarded a literary prize. Four years later he became the physician for a poor area outside Moscow. While there he wrote some of his best short stories. From the proceeds of his writing he was able to purchase a modest home in the area and worked hard to improve conditions for the people living there. Subsequently, Chekhov suffered from tuberculosis and by his late 30s he had to move to the warmer climate at Yalta in the Crimea, in southern Russia. There he wrote his most famous plays: *Uncle Vanya*, *The Seagull*, *Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard*. Referred to as a 'moral compass', his plays and short stories are known for their realistic examination of the lives of ordinary Russians. He was a writer for the masses whose primary concern was for the common people, their hopes and dreams.

# Get Ready: Chekhov's Russian History

**1855** - Alexander II is crowned Emperor of the Russian Empire

**1860** - Anton Chekhov is born on January 29 in Taganrog, Russia, to Pavel and Yevgeniya Chekhov.

**1861** - Alexander II emancipates serfs, allowing serfs to become individual communal proprietors.

**1866** - Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* is published.

**1869** - Tolstoy's *War and Peace* is published.

**1876** - The Chekhov family is declared bankrupt and flees Taganrog to avoid going to Debtor's Prison. The family settles in Moscow; Anton remains behind in Taganrog.

**1879** - Anton joins his family in Moscow and attends medical school at Moscow University.

**1880** - Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* is published.

**1881** - Alexander II is assassinated by radical youth. His son, Alexander III, is crowned Emperor of the Russian Empire.

**1884** - Anton qualifies as a physician of the Russian Empire.

**1887** - While practicing medicine in the outskirts of Moscow, Anton's writings begin to garner national attention; his collection of short stories *At Dusk* wins the Pushkin Prize, being noted "for the best literary production distinguished by high artistic worth."

**1894** - Alexander III passes away due to nephritis. His son, Nicholas II, is crowned Emperor of the Russian Empire. Nicholas II rules until 1917, when he is forced to abdicate his position. In 1918 Nicholas II and his family are assassinated.

**1896** - Anton's play *The Seagull* receives its first performance at the Alexandrinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg. The play is heavily criticized and generally dismissed.

# Get Ready: Chekhov's Russian History

**1897** - Anton is diagnosed with tuberculosis, though he suffered from symptoms of the disease since 1884, forcing his doctors to suggest a change in lifestyle. Anton moves to Yalta, on the southern coast of Ukraine.

**1898** - The Russian Social Democratic Labor Party is established and holds congress. Vladimir Lenin is one of the organizers.

**1898** - Konstantin Stanislavski convinces Anton to allow the Moscow Art Theater, under Stanislavski's direction, to produce *The Seagull*. This new interpretation wins over both audiences and critics and restores Anton's interest in playwriting. The Moscow Art Theater commissions further writings, resulting in *Uncle Vanya* (1899), *Three Sisters* (1901) and *The Cherry Orchard* (1904).

**1901** - Anton marries Olga Knipper, an actress he met while in rehearsals for *The Seagull*. While they had an extended courtship, the marriage was seen as sudden and surprising. Olga remains working in Moscow and sees Anton for only brief periods when they visit each other.

**1903** - The Russian Social Democratic Labor Party splits into Bolsheviks and Mensheviks allowing Lenin to gain further power.

**1903** - Anton begins writing *The Cherry Orchard*, based on a variety of life experiences and presents it to the Moscow Art Theater.

**1904** - *The Cherry Orchard* premieres on January 17 and is a critical success. The play is immediately produced in large cities throughout Europe and is seen as Anton's masterpiece.

**1904** - Anton and Olga take a vacation to a German spa, where Anton passes away on July 2.

**1905** - The Bloody Sunday Massacre occurs, in which an estimated 1,000 Russians are killed by the government. The crisis gives rise to a national revolution, resulting in the creation of the Duma (parliament), a new constitution and a multi-party political system.

# Get Ready: About *The Cherry Orchard*

## The Characters

**RANYEVSKAYA:** Lyubov Andreyevna Ranyevskaya

(Lyu-BOV' Ahn-DREH'-yev-nah Rah-NYEV'-skaya)

Owner of an estate, including the Cherry Orchard. She is generous with money, even when she has none.

**ANYA:** Anya (AH'-nya)

Ranyevskaya's 17 year old daughter.

**VARYA:** Varya (VAH'-rya)

Ranyevskaya's adopted daughter, 24. She manages the estate and is in love with Lopahin.

**GAYEV:** Leonid Andreyevitch Gayev

(Leh-oh-NEED' Ahn-DREH'-yeh-veetch GAH'-yev)

Ranyevskaya's brother.

**LOPAHIN:** Yermolai Alexeyevitch Lopahin

(Yer-moh-LIGH' Ah-lex-EY'-yeh-veetch Loh-PAH'-heen)

The son of former peasants who worked the orchard, he is now a wealthy merchant.

**TROFIMOV:** Pyotr Sergeyevitch Trofimov

(PYOTR' Sehr-GAY'-yeh-veetch Troh-FEE'-mov)

A student. He was the tutor for Ranyevskaya's son Grisha, who drowned six years ago.

**PISHCHIK:** Boris Borisovitch Simyonov-Pishchik

(Boh-REES' Boh-REE'-soh-veetch See-MYOH'-nov-PEEH'-shcheek)

A landowner. Like Ranyevskaya he owes money, but seems not to care.

**CHARLOTTA:** Charlotta Ivanovna (Shar-LOH'-tah Ee-VAH'-nohv-nah)

Anya's governess.

**DUNYASHA:** Dunyasha (Doo-NYAH'-shah)

A maid. She is in love with Yasha, who does not love her back.

**EPIHODOV:** Semyon Panteleyevitch Epihodov

(Seh-MYON' Pahn-teh-LEY'-yeh-veetch Eh-pee-HOH'-dov)

A bookkeeper who is in love with Dunyasha.

**FIRS:** Firs Nicolaivitch (FEERCE' Nee-koh-LIE'-veetch)

An old valet/footman on Ranyevskaya's estate.

**YASHA:** Yasha (YAH'-shah)

A young valet/footman.

# Get Ready: About *The Cherry Orchard*

## Play Synopsis

*The Cherry Orchard* was first produced in January 1904, and is also set in that time period. For historical context, this was after Alexander II's emancipation of the Russian serfs in 1861, but before the Russian Revolution in 1917, after which the old Tsarist autocracy was replaced by the Soviet Union.

*The Cherry Orchard* is a play about family and home, social and economic classes, and most significantly, about resisting inevitable change. These themes are developed around the story of a once-wealthy family's struggle to save their estate from financial demise. The play is populated by a motley crew of characters: those of the immediate family, their servants and employees, and their neighbors.

At the top of the first act, it is May. The scene takes place in the nursery of the estate's main house. Lopahin, a merchant, waits for the family's return with the maid, Dunyasha, and clerk, Epikhodov. The traveling party returns, led by matriarch, Lyubov Anreyevna Ranyevskaya, who has been abroad for five years. She is joined by her 17-year-old daughter, Anya, and the governess, Charlotta, who retrieved Ranyevskaya from Paris, and the young valet, Yasha, who has been abroad with Ranyevskaya. Varya, her 24-year-old adopted daughter, and brother, Leonid Andreyevitch Gayev, escorted them home from the train station.

Ranyevskaya is happy and overwhelmed to be home again. Anya recounts to Varya the relative poverty in which she found her mother when she arrived in Paris and her frivolous spending habits. Varya reveals that the family's estate is to be sold at auction on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August, in order to pay their debts. Anya explains that her mother's departure for Paris was caused by her grief over the death of her husband six years before and of her son, Grisha, who drowned the following month.

Anya leaves for bed and Lopahin brings up the issue of the imminent sale. He proposes that Ranyevskaya should divide the estate into parcels and build cottages to lease during the summer. Gayev and Ranyevskaya dismiss the idea, not wanting to cut down the family's beloved cherry orchard. The old footman, Firs, reflects on the orchard's past prosperity but admits that many of the traditions surrounding it have been forgotten in recent generations. Before leaving, Lopakhin offers Ranyevskaya a loan of 50,000 rubles to buy the property at auction if she and Gayev change their minds, and predicts there will be no other way of saving the orchard. Ranyevskaya then lends some money, which she does not have to spare, to another poor landowner, Pishchik. Next, Trofimov arrives. He was Grisha's tutor, and his presence brings back painful memories for Ranyevskaya. After complaining about his sister's inability to curb her spending, Gayev suggests alternatives to Lopahin's plan, including a wealthy aunt who might provide a loan.

The second act finds the characters outdoors in a field. We learn that Dunyasha, Yasha, and Epikhodov are involved in a love triangle: Epikhodov loves Dunyasha, Dunyasha loves Yasha, and Yasha is only in love with himself. When Ranyevskaya and her daughters appear, they are again debating over Lopahin's plan to turn the orchard into cottage plots. Lopahin is frustrated with Ranyevskaya's reluctance, and she is appalled with his idea, proclaiming that if they plan to sell the cherry orchard, she wants to be sold along with it. Ranyevskaya reveals that she has a lover in Paris who has been sending her telegrams, asking her to return, but who previously robbed her and left her, driving her to attempt suicide.

Trofimov enters and lectures about the importance of work and the laziness and stupidity of Russian intellectuals. The sound of a snapping string is heard, and no one can identify its source. A drifter appears, asking for directions, and then money; Varya is frightened by him and Ranyevskaya ends up giving him a gold piece to send him on his way. Disturbed, most of the group leave, except for Anya and Trofimov. They know that Varya is suspicious that they will fall in love, but Trofimov declares that they are "above

love". The act ends with Epihodov sadly playing his guitar and Varya calling out, in vain, for Anya, who heads to the river with Trofimov.

In the third act, Ranyevskaya throws a party in the house on the day of the auction. The guests include several local officials, including the stationmaster and a post-office clerk. Charlotta entertains the guests with a series of magic tricks while Ranyevskaya worries anxiously about why Gayev and Lopahin have not yet returned. She fears that the orchard has been sold. She and Trofimov argue. Trofimov accuses her of not being able to face the truth, and she criticizes him for never falling in love. Lopahin and Gayev return and Lopahin announces that he has bought the estate and intends to carry out his plans to tear down the orchard. Anya tries unsuccessfully to comfort her mother.

In the last act, it is October. The trees in the cherry orchard are already being cut down as the characters prepare to leave. Lopahin will depart to Kharkov for the winter and Varya to the Ragulins', a family 50 miles away, to be their housekeeper. Gayev plans to live in the town, where he has gotten a bank job. Anya will go off to school, and Ranyevksaya will leave for Paris with Yasha, to rejoin her lover. Charlotta, often at a loose end, has no idea what she will do. Trofimov and Lopahin exchange a lukewarm goodbye. Yasha leaves Dunyasha weeping; Epihodov has been retained to work at the estate when Lopahin returns. Anya tearfully says goodbye to her mother and worries whether Firs, who has taken ill, has been sent to the hospital. Yasha carelessly assures her that he has. Ranyevskaya encourages Lopahin to propose to Varya, but he fails to do so, leaving Varya alone and in tears. Finally, Gayev and Ranyevskaya say goodbye to their house. Everyone leaves and the doors are locked. But Firs has accidentally been left behind. He walks onto the stage, alone, quietly muttering about how life has left him by. He lies down, motionless, as two sounds are heard; again, the sound of a string snapping, and the sound of an axe hitting wood in the orchard.

# Deepen Understanding: Questions for Discussion

## Before Seeing the Show

- Have you ever seen a play before? What show did you see? What happened on stage? What was the experience of watching it like?
- Have you heard of Chekhov before? What have you seen or read? What do you know about Russia in the late 1800s and early 1900s?
- Look at the character list for the play. Based on the characters' names and descriptions, what do you think the play will be about?
- Look at the image on the front of this study guide. Does this give you any ideas about what you might see in the play?

## After the Show

- What aspects of the performance captured your attention or drew you in?
- Were there any things that happened in the play or any characters' actions that confused you or that you had questions about?
- Why do you think the play was called *The Cherry Orchard*? What was the significance of the cherry orchard in the play?
- What do you think were some of the themes of the play? What do you think the playwright was trying to say about money and wealth? About love? About change?
- Twice during the play there is the sound of a string breaking: once in the second scene in the woods and again at the end of the play. What do you think the significance of this sound is?

## Deepen Understanding: Design Elements

One of the important elements in any play is the design. The set, lights, costumes and sound all work together to create the world of the play. These design elements can also establish mood and tone and help illuminate the themes of the play.

For a show like *The Cherry Orchard*, the design is particularly important. The designers need to capture the look and feel of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Russia, costume characters of all ages and classes and build a set that shows Ranyevskaya's estate in each of the four acts.

In order to give you an idea of what it's like to design for the theater, we sat down with the Costume Designer for this production of *The Cherry Orchard*, Arthur Oliver. Arthur's interview gives his insight into the design process.

**Arthur Oliver** has been designing costumes professionally since 1991. Opera, theatre, film, television and academia have employed his talent at such notable institutions as The Atlanta Opera, Connecticut Opera, Berkshire Theatre Festival, the Charles Playhouse, the Colonial Theatre, Shakespeare & Company, Mixed Company, the Stratford Shakespearean Festival (Ontario), The Yard, New York University Tisch School of the Arts, Louisiana State University, Swine Palace, Trinity College, Gordon College, Simon's Rock College of Bard and The Boston Conservatory. In 1995 he designed a series of short films for The Tropicana Film Festival (Sydney, Australia). The 1997 worldwide broadcast of "Evening at Pops/Brush Up Your Shakespeare" (PBS/The Boston Pops) marked his debut in the television industry and was followed some years later with the 2004 ESPN live broadcast of a 1900's period baseball game. In the past 20 years Mr. Oliver has worked with popular entertainers such as Raquel Welch, Liza Minnelli, Alicia Silverstone, Keanu Reeves, Maureen Stapleton, Marge Champion, Harvey Fierstein, David Hyde-Pierce, Bebe Neuwirth, Carly Simon and Olympia Dukakis. In 2001 he designed the costumes for a fully staged *Romeo and Juliet*, with the accompaniment of the Virginia Symphony and the Buffalo Philharmonic, under the baton of Maestra JoAnn Faletta. A chapter on his personal views of designing for Shakespeare was published in *Shakespeare Festivals Around the World* (Xlibris Corporation) in 2004. In 2005 he collaborated with Grammy Award recipient Carly Simon and Artistic Director Wendy Taucher (The Yard) on *Created by Carly Simon: Dances at The Yard*, with new compositions by Ms. Simon. His Broadway debut was June 2007's *Broadway Bares XVII-Myth Behavior*, produced by Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS, Tony award winner Jerry Mitchell and Director Denis Jones. The event raised an unprecedented \$743,787 for the support of men, women and children living with HIV and AIDS. Through the years his work has been mentioned in some of the most important and influential press in America (*The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Boston Phoenix*, *The Boston Herald*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *Variety* magazine) and he has been profiled in national magazines *STAGEDOOR* and *Berkshire Living*.



# Deepen Understanding: Design Elements

## Interview with Costume Designer Arthur Oliver:

**CST:** For *The Cherry Orchard* what are the major themes or ideas in the play that influenced your design? What have you done to highlight those themes or ideas in your design?

**ARTHUR:** The softness of the cherry orchard with its white blossoms and gentle breezes gave me the impulse to make the clothes dreamy and light... pastels, sky blues, lavenders, soft pinks, etc. The traditional folk art of the period (1904) influenced my color choices for the domestics... burnt umbers, browns, rust, tan and greys, with a little bit of royal blue dropped in.

**CST:** Once you have some ideas about how you want the costumes to look, what are the steps involved in making them an onstage reality?

**ARTHUR:** That depends on the type of organization one is designing for. In my normal costume design, I work from costume renderings (drawings) that illustrate to the director and actors the look I am going for. These then go into the costume shop where they are put into the hands of cutter/drapers who work from the drawing to construct the actual garment(s) from scratch. For this production, we did not have the luxury of a costume staff so much of it was sourcing out costumes from other theatrical and academic institutions. Sort of like assembling what you might wear on a vacation - finding things off the rack that give the proper feel or impression one is trying to create through their outward appearance.

**CST:** What do you feel is the relationship between the costume design for the play and the work of the other artists involved in the production (director, actors, set designer, lighting designer, sound designer, and others)?

**ARTHUR:** Theatre is 80 % dialogue, so the collaboration between all of the aforementioned is essential. When the exchange of ideas is nurtured, the production comes together with a cohesiveness wherein each contribution from the other artists supports the other, as well as supporting the performers and, hopefully, delighting the audience.

**CST:** What inspired you to become a costume designer and what continues to inspire you in your work?

**ARTHUR:** My inspiration was the many talented, working and established costume designers who supported and encouraged my work and interest when I began working in the industry at the age of 16. Excitement and joy in my craft inspire my work.

# Deepen Understanding: Be a Designer

## Classroom Activity

Now that your students have some new ideas about the process of designing for the theater, you can ask them to be costume designers for their own production. They will go through the process of selecting a production, choosing a character, identifying the key elements that go into the design and creating a look that captures these ideas.

**Recommended Class Time:** 1 Period

### **Materials:**

- A source text to use for design (you can use *The Cherry Orchard* or another play or novel your students are reading)
- A list of possible characters to select for design project.
- A copy of the “Costume Design Worksheet” (included in this Study Guide) for each student.
- Pens, pencils, markers, colored pencils.

### **Designing Costumes with Students:**

- Read the interview with Arthur Oliver on the preceding pages with your class. Ask students to identify any quotes that they feel are central to the process of costume design.
- Introduce your source text for the activity, and let students know they are going to design a costume for one character from the text. If you are asking your students to design for *The Cherry Orchard* after they have seen the show, let them know they should create an original costume.
- Pass out the “Costume Design Worksheet” and ask students to select a character to use as the basis for their costume designs.
- Students should completely fill in the “Preparing to Design” questions before they begin drawing their design. If students do not feel they are able to draw a costume, they can find pictures that show the different elements they feel are essential to their design vision.

# Costume Design Worksheet

Designer's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Production Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Character: \_\_\_\_\_

What are the basic details of this character's identity that will inform my design?  
(age, gender, social class, job, time period) \_\_\_\_\_

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What are three things this character *does* that will impact the costume I design?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Is there an overall mood, tone, theme or idea that I want to represent with my design? How can I do this? (Think about the use of color, material, shape, etc)

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What other aspects of this character do I want to represent in my design? (Think about personality, attitude, thematic importance, relationship to setting or to other characters). How can my costume choices capture these elements? \_\_\_\_\_

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***On the back of this page or on a separate sheet draw a picture of your design.***

## Reflect and Connect: Work of the Translator

The Nora Theatre Company's production of *The Cherry Orchard* is a new translation from the original Russian by George Malko. Often, we think of translation as a simple task; it's hard to image that converting a sentence of Russian into a sentence of English can be a nuanced task. However, there are dozens of English translations of Chekhov's work, and each one is different.

The job of a translator is not to blindly translate each word, but to translate the whole of the text. This requires interpreting the playwright's intentions regarding the theme, characters and tone of the play. It also requires a translator to make judgments about the kind of language to be used. *The Cherry Orchard* was written in 1904 and many early translations use language that has an "old fashioned" feel to a modern audience. Modern translators must decide whether they want to update the language to make the play feel contemporary to modern audiences or preserve a sense of the original language.

An additional challenge with *The Cherry Orchard* is the translator and director's challenge of interpreting the tone and thematic mood of the play. When Chekhov wrote the play, he considered it a comedy. However, in the original production at the Moscow Art Theater, the play was interpreted by the director, Constantin Stanislavsky, as a tragedy.

The following pages include three versions of a selection from *The Cherry Orchard*. The original Russian alongside two English translations, including the version used for this production. There is also a statement from translator George Malko, regarding his views on translating *The Cherry Orchard* and an activity that asks students to step into the role of translator.

# Reflect and Connect: Work of the Translator

Below are three versions of the opening lines of the Cherry Orchard, including one in the original Russian.

## Вишневый сад Антон Чехов

**Лопухин.** Пришел поезд, слава богу. Который час?

**Дуняша.** Скоро два. *(Тушит свечу.)* Уже светло.

**Лопухин.** На сколько же это опоздал поезд? Часа на два, по крайней мере. *(Зекает и потягивается.)* Я-то хорош, какого дурака сваял! Нарочно приехал сюда, чтобы на станции встретить, и вдруг проспал... Сидя уснул. Досада... Хоть бы ты меня разбудила.

**Дуняша.** Я думала, что вы уехали. *(Прислушивается.)* Вот, кажется, уже едут.

## The Cherry Orchard Translated by Eugene K. Bristow

**Lopakhin:** The train's arrived, thank the Lord. What's the time?

**Dunyasha:** Almost two o'clock. *(Extinguishes the candle.)* It's already light.

**Lopakhin:** How late was the train, how many hours? About two, at least. *(Yawns and stretches himself.)* Of all the stupid tricks to pull, damned if I haven't gone and done it again. I came here on purpose so I could meet them at the station and before you know, I slept right through it... Went dead to sleep sitting up. Annoying, that's what... If only you might've awakened me.

**Dunyasha:** I thought you'd left. *(Listens.)* There, I think they're coming now.

## The Cherry Orchard Nora Theatre Company translation by George Malko

**Lopahin:** Thank God, the train's come. What time is it?

**Dunyasha:** It will be two soon. *(extinguishes the candle)* It's light already.

**Lopahin:** So how late is the train? At least two hours. *(yawns, stretches)* I'm a fine one, made a real clown of myself! I came here especially to be there at the station to meet them, and instead slept right through it ... Fell asleep in a chair. Really annoying... You could have at least woken me.

**Dunyasha:** I thought you'd gone. *(cocks her head, listens--)* I think it's them.

### Questions for discussion:

- After reading these translations, what do you notice about the English versions?
- How would you describe the differences between them?
- What is it like looking at the Russian text next to the English text?

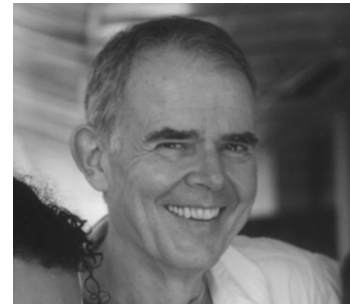
# Reflect and Connect: Work of the Translator

## From the Translator

When any of us is tempted to say, "Life's funny," a cynic within earshot might quickly retort, "As compared to what?" Anton Chekhov would never have suggested that life, in the complexity of all of its dimensions, is not funny. We need little more proof than *The Cherry Orchard*, which sadly proved to be the last of his four great plays. When he completed it in 1903 and rehearsals began almost immediately, The Moscow Art Theatre, and Konstantin Stanislavsky in particular, insisted on seeing the play as a tragedy. Chekhov more than disagreed and wrote to his friend Stanislavsky that not only was this play a comedy, but in fact possessed elements of farce. Stanislavsky was reluctant to concur, but the proof of Chekhov's work lies, as it always has and always will, in his writings, which speak for themselves. They show us, often in the smallest gesture or murmured aside, that the key to Chekhov's humanity lies in the fact that his plays are comedies because he genuinely loves every one of his characters; in the broadest and most vibrantly human and humane sense of the word "comedy," Anton Chekhov's plays are about life.

-George Malko

**George Malko** (*Translator*) speaks, reads, and writes Russian fluently. He started out in broadcasting, first at NBC as a writer/reporter, then a summer in Moscow for NBC News, then to Australia as a writer/producer/director for the Australian Broadcasting Commission, and then to CBS News as a documentary producer. Since leaving CBS News, he has had original full-length and one-act plays produced on television, regionally, Off-Broadway, in Europe, and in various workshops. Many of his translations of short dramatic works by Anton Chekhov have also been produced. He published *A Tragic Man Despite Himself: The Complete Short Plays of Anton Chekhov*, a collection of nineteen translated pieces, six in English for the very first time, three of the one-acts given their first performances by The Nora Theatre Company. In January, 2009, the Actors' Summit Theatre in Hudson, Ohio, will present four of the short Chekhovs under the collective title, *Russians In Love*. His produced screen and television writing credits include *Dogs of War*, *Luna* (with Bernardo Bertolucci), *Sweet Lorraine*, *Out Cold*, *The Wolf Dog*, and *Tidal Wave*, as well as episodes for TV series and uncredited rewrites of major theatrical feature films. He has published two novels, three non-fiction books, articles in major American magazines, and short stories in various literary journals. A recipient of an NEA grant for playwrighting as well as a Guggenheim Fellowship in screenwriting, he is an Adjunct Professor of screen and television writing in the Goldberg Department of Dramatic Writing at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, and Visiting Professor of Screenwriting at the International School of Film & Television, San Antonio de los Baños, Cuba.



# Reflect and Connect: Creating Adaptations Classroom Activity

In the Creating Adaptations activity, students will have the opportunity to adapt part of *The Cherry Orchard*, adding their own point of view to the original text.

**Recommended Time:** 2 Class Periods

## **Materials:**

- Selected scenes from *The Cherry Orchard*.
- Copies of the “Adaptation Worksheet” from this guide.
- Simple prop and costume pieces (hats, fabric, etc.) -- *optional*--

## **Creating Adaptations:**

- Divide the class into groups of 3 or 4 students.
- Ask students to select a short scene or a character relationship from *The Cherry Orchard*. A sample scene is included, which your students can use.
- Working in small groups, students should identify the key elements of their scene, using the accompanying worksheet.
- Also using the worksheet, students should come up with at least 3 “styles” in which they could present their scene. For example, students could re-imagine their scene as a Drama, a Sitcom, a Horror Film, a Musical, a Western, etc.
- Students should create a short performance of their scene in at least two different styles. Ask students to spend one period brainstorming ideas and rehearsing their scenes and another period to share their performances with the class.

# Adaptation Worksheet

Names: \_\_\_\_\_

Who are the characters in the scene you will be adapting?

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What is the relationship between the characters in this scene? \_\_\_\_\_

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What is the major event in this scene? What is a key moment that is central to all of the characters in the scene and their relationship to one another?

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What is one *style* in which you could re-imagine this scene? \_\_\_\_\_

What is one thing you can do to perform the scene in this style? \_\_\_\_\_

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What is another *style* in which you could re-imagine this scene? \_\_\_\_\_

What is one thing you can do to perform the scene in this style? \_\_\_\_\_

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What is another *style* in which you could re-imagine this scene? \_\_\_\_\_

What is one thing you can do to perform the scene in this style? \_\_\_\_\_

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## Scene from The Cherry Orchard

RANYEVSKAYA: Owner of the Orchard    GAYEV: Her Brother    LOPAHIN: A Merchant

LOPAHIN

That rich man, Deriganov, is preparing to buy your estate. They're saying he'll personally be at the auction.

RANYEVSKAYA

Where did you hear this?

LOPAHIN

They're saying so in town.

GAYEV

Our auntie in Yaroslavl has promised to send something, but when and how much is unknown...

LOPAHIN

How much is she likely to send? A hundred thousand. Two hundred?

RANYEVSKAYA

Well... maybe ten thousand—fifteen, and even for that thank you.

LOPAHIN

Forgive me, but such frivolous people as you, ladies and gentlemen, so unbusinesslike, so outlandish, I've never met before. You're told, in simple Russian, that your estate is about to be sold, and you're as if you don't grasp it.

RANYEVSKAYA

What are we supposed to do? Teach us, would you?

LOPAHIN

I'm teaching you every day. Every day I'm saying one and the same thing. It is imperative that the cherry orchard and the land be leased as dachas, and do it now, as quickly as possible—the auction's looking us in the face! You must understand! Once you make the final decision that there will be dachas, they'll give you as much money as you want, and you'll be saved.

RANYEVSKAYA

Dachas and vacationers—forgive me, but it's so tasteless.

GAYEV

I totally agree with you.

LOPAHIN

I'm either going to burst into tears, or start screaming, or faint dead away. I can't stand it! You're killing me! (to Gayev) You're an old hag!

GAYEV

What?

LOPAHIN

Hag! (he wants to leave)

RANYEVSKAYA (frightened)

No, don't go, stay, dear one. I'm asking you. Maybe we can think up something!

LOPAHIN

What is there to think about!

RANYEVSKAYA

Don't go, I implore you. With you here, it's somehow more cheerful. (a pause) I keep waiting for something, as if the house is going to fall to pieces around us.

GAYEV (in deep thought)

Doublette in the corner... Croisé into the side...

RANYEVSKAYA

We've sinned so much...

LOPAHIN

What sins could you have...

GAYEV (Gayev puts a fruit drop in his mouth)

They say I've squandered all my wealth on fruit drops... (laughs)

RANYEVSKAYA

Oh, my sins... I always threw my money around with abandon, like I was crazy, and married a man who could do nothing but accumulate debts. My husband died of champagne—he drank horribly—and, my luck, I fell in love with another, went off with him, and just at that time—it was my first punishment, a blow to my head—right here in the river... my son drowned, and I left the country so as not to see this river... I closed my eyes and ran, out of my mind, and he followed... heartlessly, cruelly. I bought a villa near Menton because he fell ill there, and for three years, night and day, I knew no respite; the invalid took everything out of me, my soul dried up. But last year, when the villa was sold to pay off debts, I left for Paris, and there he cleaned me out, dumped me, went off with another, I tried to poison myself... So ridiculous, so shameful... and suddenly I was drawn to Russia, to my motherland, to my little girl... (wipes away tears) O God, God, be merciful, forgive me my sins! Do not punish me any more!

## Reflect and Connect: Write a Review

After your students have seen the show *The Cherry Orchard*, ask them to be theater critics and write a review of the show. Here are some questions you can use as prompts in your writing:

- What was the most compelling or intriguing aspect of the production you saw?
- What questions did you have about *The Cherry Orchard* or what was something that confused you?
- Can you make any connections between this play and other plays you have seen? Between the play and books you have read or movies you have seen? Between the play and something from your own life?
- If you could speak with the playwright, the director or one of the actors, what would you say? What are some things you would discuss?

We love to hear from students and teachers who have come to see shows at Central Square Theater. If your students have written a review of the show or generated any other work based on their experiences at the theater, please send work to:

Central Square Theater  
ATTN: Education  
450 Massachusetts Ave  
Cambridge, MA 02139

Or e-mail work to [edu@undergroundrailwaytheater.org](mailto:edu@undergroundrailwaytheater.org)

## Resources for Further Study

Theatre Database Anton Chekhov Site

*Comprehensive Biography and links to plays, stories and critical work.*

[http://theatredatabase.com/19th\\_century/anton\\_chekhov\\_001.html](http://theatredatabase.com/19th_century/anton_chekhov_001.html)

Interpreting Chekhov by Geoffrey Borny

*Includes a Chapter on The Cherry Orchard and notes about translating Chekhov.*

<http://epress.anu.edu.au/chekhov/pdf/chekhov-whole.pdf>

Chekov's Plays in the Original Russian

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Forum/1702/index.html>

Russian History Database

*Links to timelines, images and articles on Russian History.*

<http://www.bucknell.edu/x17601.xml>

Central Square Theater Website

*Information on upcoming programs from resident companies The Nora Theatre and Underground Railway Theater.*

[www.centalsquaretheater.org](http://www.centalsquaretheater.org)