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ANTON CHEKHOV'S

The Seagull

a new translation by **David French**

March 13th - April 8th, 1984

THE CAST

Irina Nikolayevna Arkadina, married name Treplyova, an actress	ELIZABETH SHEPHERD
Constantine Gavrilovich Treplyov (also Gavrilych), her son, also known as Kostya	MAURICE GODIN
Peter Nikolayevich Sorin, her brother	GRIFFITH BREWER
Nina Zarechnaya, a young girl, daughter of a rich landowner	ANNE WESSELS
Ilya Shamrayev, a retired army lieutenant who manages Sorin's estate	GERRY PEARSON
Polina, his wife	SHEENA LARKIN
Masha, his daughter	MARJORIE PAUCH
Boris Alekseyevich Trigorin, a writer	PETER MACNEILL
Yevgeny Sergeyevich Dorn (also Sergeich), a doctor	MARCEL SABOURIN
Semyon Medvedenko, a schoolmaster	ROBBIE O'NEILL
Yakov, a workman	MICHEL PERRON
Maid	BUBBLES
Cook	SUSAN A. JENNINGS

Directed by **MAURICE PODBREY**
Designed by **MICHAEL EAGAN**
Lighting by **STEVEN HAWKINS**
Stage Manager **PETER MCGUIRE**
Assistant Stage Manager **JENNIFER HAZEN**
Consultant **GRIGORI ZISKIN**

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ANTON CHEKHOV

Anton Chekhov was born on January 17, 1860, in the South Russian town of Taganrog. His father ran a small shop and before Anton started school his father expected him to mind the shop.

Chekhov spoke later bitterly: "In childhood I had no childhood". The following description, taken from the story "Three Years" is put into the mouth of a fictional character, but there can be little doubt that Chekhov had his own childhood in mind when he wrote it: "I remember that Father began to teach me, or (to put it more simply) to beat me, before I was even five years old. He used to hit me with a stick, tweak my ears, and clout me on the head. On waking up each morning my first thought was: 'Shall I get a beating today?' We weren't allowed to play games. We had to go to matins and early mass, kiss the hands of priests and monks, and read the Psalter at home. ...I am afraid of religion. Whenever I pass a church, I think of my childhood, and it gives me an unpleasant feeling. When I was eight years old they took me into the shop, and I worked as an ordinary shop-boy. This was bad for my health, because there too I was beaten every day. Later, when I was sent to high school, I used to be at my lessons till dinner time, and from dinner until evening I once more sat in confinement in the same old shop."

Chekhov spent his first nineteen years of life in the provincial town of Taganrog which he wrote about: "It was completely Asiatic, a place where people do nothing but eat, sleep and multiply, and have no other interests".

At first Chekhov was sent to the Greek School and then he entered the Classical Gymnasium (High School).

In 1876 Chekhov's father was forced to declare himself bankrupt and to leave Taganrog for Moscow. In Moscow he hoped to restore his fortunes but this plan never came near realization.

Anton stayed in Taganrog till 1879. In those years Chekhov's interest in the theatre and literary work increased. Dramatic writing played the biggest part in his literary activity at school. He wrote several short farces, but put his most serious work into a long play, called "Fatherless".

When Chekhov came to Moscow in 1879, he just started a strenuous five-year course at the School of Medicine of the Moscow University. At the same time he began to collaborate in different comic papers and humorous magazines. By the time he took his medical degree in 1884, writing had become his main interest and occupation. Chekhov was saying later that medicine was his "legal spouse" while literature was always his "mistress".

In 1888, a volume of Chekhov's collected stories was awarded the Pushkin Prize by the Imperial Academy of Sciences and Chekhov came to be recognized as one of Russia's leading young writers. Many stories in this volume show Chekhov's skill in creating a mood which permeates the atmosphere of the whole work. This technique of Chekhov's is the most significant aspect of his talent as a writer.

In 1892, Chekhov bought a country house in the village of Melikhovo, about fifty miles south of Moscow. The Melikhovo period was the most productive in Chekhov's life. Here he wrote such stories as "Ward No. 6", "My Life", "Three Years" and many, many others. It's here where he wrote **The Seagull** and "Uncle Vanya".

Chekhov's last years of life were connected with the Moscow Art Theatre. He was admirably fitted to become the leading dramatist of this theatre because he thoroughly agreed with Nemirovich-Danchenko and Stanislavsky in wanting to get away from the conventions and atmosphere of the existing Russian stage. His four major plays - **The Seagull**, "Uncle

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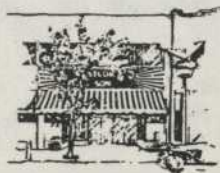
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Vanya", "Three Sisters" and "The Cherry Orchard" - mark a break with tradition so startling that many critics call him a "revolutionary" dramatist. In one of his letters Chekhov expounds his own conception of drama in the following way "...People don't spend every minute shooting at each other, hanging themselves and making confessions of love. They don't spend all the time saying clever things. They're more occupied with eating, drinking, flirting and talking stupidities - and these are the things which ought to be shown on the stage. A play should be written in which people arrive, go away, have dinner, talk about the weather and play cards. Life must be exactly as it is, and people as they are - not on stilts. ...Let everything on the stage be just as complicated, and at the same time just as simple as it is in life. People eat their dinner, just eat their dinner, and all the time their happiness is being established or their lives are being broken up". And he wrote such plays.

In 1901, Chekhov married Olga Knipper, an actress of the Moscow Art Theatre.

In 1903, he was elected president of the Russian Literary Society. Chekhov's health had begun to fail some time earlier. His illness, diagnosed as consumption, compelled him to stay away from Moscow's harsh climate and he took up residence in Yalta.

In July, 1904, he died in Germany while undergoing treatment, at the age of 44.

The Seagull, one of the best plays in world repertoire, had a remarkable inception. Its première in 1896, which took place at the Alexandrine Theatre in St. Petersburg, was a complete fiasco. The failure of the production was so total that the author himself rejected further attempts at staging it. But in 1898 the Moscow Art Theatre put Chekhov's great work on anew.

This time the celebrated author gave his assent after being persuaded to do so by Nemerovich-Danchenko, one of the co-founders of the radically new theatrical tradition (in the West more commonly associated with the name of Stanislavsky). **The Seagull**, after its new production, became the innovative symbol of this new direction in the theatre which broke so drastically with the past.

The Seagull represents the infinitely subtle product of Chekhov's dramatic genius. Like life itself, it is both simple and complicated. On the one hand all the traditional ingredients of dramatic action, such as love, jealousy, betrayal, suicide, to be found in this Chekhovian drama are employed in a new way. Rather than being used as ends in themselves or as plot devices to further action, they become for Chekhov indirect means for focusing attention on the inner lives of the characters themselves.

Of all Chekhov's plays, **The Seagull** may be considered the most personal. It is the only work of his to be explicitly devoted to the theme of Art. In this play the author expresses his most cherished thoughts - thoughts concerning the difficulties facing the artist, on what constitutes the essence of artistic talent, and on the nature of happiness.

The Seagull is the most lyrical and poetic of Chekhov's plays. In this work realism transcends reality and is raised to the level of symbol.

Today this play sounds as modern as when it was written, its literary worth immortalised by its lasting philosophical significance. Like the smile of Mona Lisa, **The Seagull** is something of a riddle for the theatre-goers today, as it was in Chekhov's lifetime. Every generation has to find its own key for unlocking the secret mechanism of Chekhov's masterpiece.

by Grigori Ziskin

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GRIFFITH BREWER (Sorin): has been part of the **Centaur** team from its beginning, not only with performances in plays such as **ON THE JOB**, **THE ENTERTAINER**, **TRAVESTIES**, **COMEDIANS**, **DR. FAUSTUS** and **BLOOD RELATIONS** but also as **Centaur's** Properties Master. Recent **Centaur** stage credits include **MOVING** and **84 CHARING CROSS ROAD**. He has also participated in both film and radio extensively.

BUBBLES (Maid): after having been semi-retired, returns to the stage for the first time in twelve years since her appearance here in **THE ENTERTAINER**. Born in Montreal to Russian immigrant parents, she has had a versatile career in Canada and the United States in radio, television and film, starting in 1951 with CBC in Toronto and later touring with musical variety shows. Numerous film credits include "Godfather II", "Duddy Kravitz", "Quintet" and the soon-to-be-released "Once Upon A Time In America" with Robert DeNiro.

MAURICE GODIN (Constantine): graduated from the Ryerson Theatre Program in 1981, after which he spent a season at Shaw Festival. He has appeared in a variety of stage roles including Jesus Christ in "Godspell", Roat in "Wait Until Dark" and Soliony in Chekhov's "Three Sisters". He comes to **Centaur** having just returned from the Neptune Theatre in Halifax where he appeared in "West Side Story" and played Mercutio in their highly-acclaimed production of "Romeo and Juliet". Recent television credits include CBC's "Homefires". This is Mr. Godin's first appearance at **Centaur**.

SHEENA LARKIN (Polina): is familiar to Montreal theatre-goers for her many appearances at La Poudrière in roles such as Marge in "Time and Time Again" and Anna in "Absent Friends". Her stage career has also taken her to The Piggery in North Hatley, Stratford Festival, Neptune Theatre in Halifax, the National Arts Centre and most recently, as Madge in "The Dresser" at the Citadel in Edmonton. Television credits include "The Immigrants" and Mrs. Chisholm in "Empire". This is her first appearance at **Centaur**.

PETER MACNEILL (Trigorin): returns to the **Centaur** stage where he was last seen in the colourful role of Johnnie in **BALCONVILLE**. He also won accolades for his performances as Jackie in **NOTHING TO LOSE**, John in **WEEDS** and George McBrain in **THE COMEDIANS**. A Montrealer, who has performed in a variety of roles in theatres across Canada, he now resides in Toronto where, among his many stage appearances are Bottom in "A Midsummer Night's Dream", the title role in "Booster McCrane, P.M." and Dolty in the Chalmers award-winning production of "Translations" for the Toronto Free Theatre directed by Guy Sprung and C.K. Dexter Haven in "The Philadelphia Story" for Toronto Arts Productions. He has appeared as Harry in "The Sea Horse" for Calgary Theatre Centre and Hank in "History of American Film" at the National Arts Centre. Mr. MacNeill can also be seen in the television and home-video versions of **BALCONVILLE** in the same role which he created for **Centaur's** original stage production and in the popular CBC-TV series "Backstretch".

ROBBIE O'NEILL (Medvedenko): is a native of Nova Scotia and a co-founder of the Mulgrave Road Co-op Theatre Company for whom he has appeared in numerous productions. Other theatre credits include John Merrick in "The Elephant Man" for Actors Tryworks in Halifax and appearances at the National Arts Centre, Theatre Passe Muraille, the Great Canadian Theatre Company, Newfoundland's Stephenville Festival and the Blyth Summer Festival. Mr. O'Neill has toured his highly-acclaimed one-man show "Tighten the Traces/Haul in the Reins" nationally and has performed extended runs at the Vancouver East Cultural Centre, Citadel Theatre for Workshop West, the Bread and Roses Festival, Windsor Performing Arts Festival, more than fifty performances in the Maritimes, Newfoundland and the State of Maine, and most recently, the National Arts Centre. Last December he appeared in a special broadcast of "Tighten the Traces/Haul in the Reins" for CBC-TV for which he won an ACTRA Award. Mr. O'Neill is currently working on a new play to be produced by the Mulgrave Road Co-op Theatre later this year. This is his first engagement with **Centaur**.

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MARJORIE PAUCH (Masha): is a native Montrealer and a graduate of Dawson College Professional Theatre Program. She has had feature roles at The Piggery in North Hatley, where she played in "Ladies in Retirement" and "Wait Until Dark"; the Saidye Bronfman Theatre in "Vanities", "Zone", "Dreyfus in Rehearsal" and "Story Theatre"; at La Poudrière in "Apples for Eve" and most recently in Les Masques Dinner Theatre's production of "Accommodations". Her television appearances include "Excuse My French", "90 Minutes Live" and numerous television commercials. Miss Pauch is also an accomplished make-up artist and teacher with credits ranging as far away as the Bermuda International Theatre Festival. This is her first appearance at **Centaur**.

GERRY PEARSON (Shamrayev): is making his first appearance at **Centaur** having worked in theatre, television and film in Canada, the U.S., England and Europe. His stage appearances range from the classics to contemporary in roles such as The Baron in "Camino Real", Phil in David French's "Jitters", Banished Duke in "As You Like It" and Algernon in "The Importance of Being Earnest". He appeared in several television roles in England and most recently, in Canada on "The Littlest Hobo" and "Seeing Things".

MICHEL PERRON (Yakov): is making his first appearance at **Centaur**. A recent graduate of Dawson College Professional Theatre Program, his roles there included Otto Stroll in "The Memorandum" and J.R. Chebutykin in Chekhov's "Three Sisters". Last year he played Chief in Dario Fo's "Accidental Death of an Anarchist" for the Paper Moon Theatre Co., here in Montreal, and later toured schools in and around Montreal with "A Christmas Carol" for The Shoe String Shakespeare Company.

MARCEL SABOURIN (Dorn): is a well-known Quebecois actor-director-songwriter-author, whose vast experience in all areas of entertainment has taken him around the world including Canada, the U.S., Paris, London and the USSR. Several stage productions in which he has appeared in lead roles during his extensive career include "Ubu-Roi" and "Le Neveu de Rameau" for Théâtre du Nouveau Monde, "Henri V" and Henry VI" for Stratford Theatre and "Chin-Chin" directed by Eddy Gilbert at the Egregore. For several years he was associated with Les Jeunes Comédiens du Théâtre du Nouveau Monde for which he wrote "Sparages", "Gallipottes" and "L'Ange". His play for children "Pleurer Pour Rire" won the 1982 Chalmers Award for Best Play for Children. As a songwriter, he has written a number of hits for Robert Charlebois, Louise Forestier and Vos Voisins (Yvon Deschamps' musicians). Familiar to television audiences, his most recent credits include "Henry V" for CTV and "La Chose La Plus Douce au Monde", "Riel" and "Duplessis" for CBC. For the past three years he has played in the radio series of Robert Blondin's "Le Bonheur" for Radio-Canada. Mr. Sabourin has appeared in over thirty feature films including "Le Temps d'une Chasse", "Doux Aveux" and "Eliza's Horoscope". As a film writer, his "J.A. Martin, Photographe" won many prizes in Canada, two at the Cannes Festival and was among the ten best foreign films for the Oscar. He also created one of Quebec film's biggest box office hits in "Cordelia". In between these numerous stage, television, radio and film involvements he managed to find time to hold the position of Assistant Director of the French section of Ecole National du Théâtre. THE SEAGULL marks his first appearance in English-language theatre in Quebec.

ELIZABETH SHEPHERD (Mme. Arkadina): is no stranger to **Centaur** audiences. She will be remembered for her highly-acclaimed performances as Anna in OLD TIMES, Carla in KENNEDY'S CHILDREN and Blanche Dubois in A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE. During her extensive stage career which began in her native England, she has starred in over forty productions with leading repertory companies there and in numerous productions in London's West End including Natasha in Tolstoy's "War and Peace" and Sonia in Chekhov's first play "Don Juan in the Russian Manner" (Platanov). Now residing in North America, she is familiar to audiences at Shaw Festival (eg.: Eliza Doolittle in "Pygmalion", Rebekka West in

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Rosmersholm") and Stratford Festival (eg.: Cordelia in "King Lear") and theatres across Canada and the United States including off-Broadway and as Marjorie Hasseltine in "Conduct Unbecoming" on Broadway. Among her many television credits are guest star appearances in over twenty series including "The Duchess of Duke Street" and as a regular in CBC's "The Collaborators" and most recently, "The Phoenix Team". She has appeared in many individual dramas including Hermione in "The Winter's Tale" which earned her an Emmy Award nomination and as Mrs. Patricia Campbell in "The First Night of Pygmalion" for which she received the Anik Award for Best Actress. Film credits include Ligeia/Rowena in "The Tomb of Ligeia" with Vincent Price, Joan Hart in "Damien: Omen 2", Joan Scott in "The Kidnapping of a President" and Caroline Lady Braunceston in the soon-to-be-released "Invitation to the Wedding" with Sirs Ralph Richardson and John Gielgud. Recently, Miss Shepherd has been in England working in film and with BBC in roles such as Isabel Batchelor in "Frost in May", Lady Sutton in "By the Sword Divided" and Cleopatra II in "The Cleopatras", all of which will be shown in North America.

ANNE WESSELS (Nina): makes her first appearance at **Centaur**, having recently graduated from the National Theatre School. Roles there included The Doctor in "Woyzeck", Ilona in "The Guardsman", and Aline in "The Master Builder". Other stage credits include Sally in "The Love Course" directed by Elsa Bolam for Centre Stage Hour Company and most recently, as Puss in "Puss in Boots" for Regina's Globe Theatre.

DAVID FRENCH (Translator): is Canada's most popular playwright. Born in Coley's Point, Newfoundland, he moved with his family to Toronto in 1945. After high school he studied acting in Toronto and at the Pasadena Playhouse in California and then worked for several years as an actor. In 1962, he sold his first one-act play to CBC television. During the next ten years he wrote numerous scripts for radio and television, as well as short stories and a novel. **LEAVING HOME**, his first play, was runner-up for the Chalmers Award in 1972. Following its première that year at the Tarragon Theatre in Toronto, it had 80 productions across the country and a CBC presentation. **OF THE FIELDS, LATELY**, the sequel to **LEAVING HOME**, premièred at Tarragon in 1973 and won the Chalmers Award as Best Canadian Play of that season. Since then more than 40 productions have been done in Canada and the play, translated into Spanish, enjoyed a successful engagement in Argentina. It was seen on CBC and received ACTRA Award nominations as Best TV Drama, Best Playwright and Sean Sullivan won Best Actor. His third major play, **ONE CRACK OUT**, opened at the Tarragon in May 1975 and was subsequently produced at Phoenix Theatre in New York. **JITTERS**, his first comedy, received more than 100 productions in Canada and a successful run at the Long Wharf Theatre in New Haven. It was acclaimed the Best Play of the Year by the Toronto Star and was a runner-up for the Chalmers Award for 1979. His second comedy, **RIDDLE OF THE WORLD**, premiered in 1981 at the Tarragon and was seen two seasons ago at **Centaur**. **LEAVING HOME**, **OF THE FIELDS, LATELY**, **ONE CRACK OUT** and **JITTERS** were also seen at **Centaur**. His translation of **THE SEAGULL** was first presented at the Tarragon in 1977.

MAURICE PODBREY (Director): is founding Artistic Director of **Centaur**. Originally from South Africa, he trained for the theatre in England, where he launched an extensive career as actor and director in London's West End and the provincial theatres. He began directing in Dundee, Scotland and became Artistic Director of the Chester Playhouse. Mr. Podbrey came to Canada in 1967 to become Assistant Director of the English section of the National Theatre School. Since **Centaur's** inception in 1969, he has been seen in a variety of productions including **THE BIRTHDAY PARTY**, **THE ODD COUPLE**, **THE BLOOD KNOT**, **UNCLE VANYA**, the world première of **A LESSON FROM ALOES** which also played in Toronto at TWP and most recently in **DUET FOR ONE**, last season. **Centaur** audiences will remember **SIZWE BANSI IS DEAD**, **BACK TO BEULAH**, **CREEPS**, **WEEDS**, **ASHES**, **NIGHT AND DAY**, **LADY FROM THE SEA**, **SWEET LIKE SUGA** and most recently **K2** and **A MAJORITY OF TWO** as some of his numerous directing credits. Mr. Pod-

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MICHAEL EAGAN (Designer): is one of Canada's foremost designers and a 'regular' at **Centaur** since its inception, with over twenty shows to his credit including *EVE*, *BACK TO BEULAH*, *NIGHT AND DAY* and *TRAVESTIES*. An alumni of the National Theatre School, where he later taught for five years, his designs are familiar to theatre audiences all across Canada. His credits include numerous designs for Shaw and Stratford Festival and most recently designs such as "Of Mice and Men" for Young People's Theatre, "The Lady from Maxim's" for Theatre Plus, "How I Got That Story" for Toronto Workshop Productions, "Richard III" and "Nicholas Nickleby" for Manitoba Theatre Centre, "Guys and Dolls" for the Citadel and "Le Bateau Pour Lipäia" for Le Théâtre du P'tit Bonheur -to name a few. Montrealers recently saw his design of "The Club" at Encore Theatre. Future projects include "Cloud 9" for Encore, "Goat Island" for the Juilliard School in New York and "Kismet" for Rainbow Stage in Winnipeg. Mr. Eagan will be designing **Centaur's** final show of the season, *GLORIOUS MUD*.

STEVEN HAWKINS (Lighting Designer): has designed extensively in Montreal where his credits for **Centaur** include *QUIET IN THE LAND*, *NIGHT AND DAY*, *A LESSON FROM ALOES* and the original production of *BALCONVILLE* and its Canadian and British tours. He has designed a number of productions for Encore Theatre including "Godspell", "The Club", "Relative Strangers" and most recently, "La Ronde". Other credits include eight productions for the Saidye Bronfman Theatre, "Romeo and Juliet" for Young People's Theatre, "The Sun Runner" for Toronto Free Theatre and "The Farewell Heart" for the Tarragon Theatre. For the Stratford Festival, he has designed eight shows including the highly successful productions of "Much Ado About Nothing", "Love's Labour's Lost", "All's Well That Ends Well" and "A Midsummer Night's Dream" for the Third Stage Company. He returns to Stratford this summer to re-design "Love's Labour's Lost" for the Festival Stage.

GRIGORI ZISKIN (Consultant): was educated in Moscow, where he completed his training at one of the Soviet capital's leading theatrical institutes. After graduating he was taken on as a TV producer by the State Broadcasting Corporation (the Soviet equivalent of the CBC) and at the same time he pursued his main interest by directing various stage productions throughout the USSR. He was responsible for putting on classical dramas and modern plays by authors such as Molière, Mérimée, Pushkin, Tolstoy, Chekhov, Wilde, Bulgakov, Arthur Miller, Eduardo de Filippo and many others. In 1982 Grigori Ziskin left Russia and now lives in Montreal. He is a script-writer for the international service of the CBC.

PETER MCGUIRE (Stage Manager): has recently completed his fourth season with the stage management staff of the National Arts Centre Theatre Company where productions included "The Oresteia", "Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolfe", "A Midsummer Night's Dream", "Julius Caesar", "Richard III", "The Tempest", "Duet for One", "Journey's End" and "Lone Star". He worked for three seasons with the Charlottetown Festival on shows such as "Anne of Green Gables", "Johnny Belinda" and "Singin' and Dancin' Tonight!". Credits also include stage management for the Kawartha Summer Festival, Young People's Theatre and Bastion Theatre. This is his first engagement with **Centaur**.

JENNIFER HAZEN (Assistant Stage Manager): is a graduate of the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School. She recently worked as Assistant Stage Manager for Theatre Plus in Toronto as well as for three seasons at Kawartha Summer Theatre. For Neptune Theatre she was Assistant Stage Manager for the production of "Step/Dance" in Halifax and on tour and earlier this season for **Centaur** as Assistant Stage Manager on *MOVING* and *84 CHARING CROSS ROAD*.

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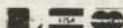
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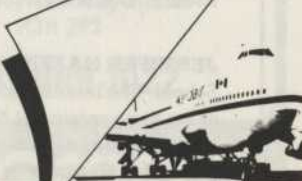
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Centaur Theatre Company, a professional company operating within the jurisdiction of Canadian Actors' Equity Association and a member of the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres performs under the auspices of the Centaur Foundation for the Performing Arts.

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