



THE QUESTOR THEATRE



the
seagull

by ANTON CHEKHOV
in a new version by THOMAS KILROY

The Minack Cliffside Theatre

Porthcurno



THE QUESTORS THEATRE COMPANY

First performance: 13th May 1989

First performance at the Minack Theatre:

18th June 1989

THE SEAGULL

CHEKHOV AND KILROY : RUSSIA AND IRELAND

The Seagull is the first play by Chekhov ever to be seen at the Minack. In view of this it may seem perverse to present a version of the play in which the action is transferred from Russia to Ireland. Our argument is that this version is more faithful to Chekhov's intentions than many 'straight' translations which fail to catch the spirit of the play.

The parallels between Russia and Ireland at the end of the 19th century are genuine and have often been noted before. The Anglo-Irish, essentially a Protestant land-owning class, had enjoyed a period of power and expansion during the 18th century (the 'Ascendancy'). By the period of this play, many events had occurred to shake their secure power-base and to isolate them increasingly from the government of England, the country which many still regarded as their home. The terrible potato famines of the 1840s had left their legacy, part of which was a political backlash resulting in the Fenian Risings of 1866/7. So when another potato famine loomed in 1879, the Irish National Land League was formed by Michael Davitt, with Charles Stewart Parnell as its president. The 'Land Leaguers' resisted evictions, withheld rents, boycotted farms and assaulted and assassinated landlords and their agents.

An English Government under Gladstone sought to solve the problem by distancing themselves from the Anglo-Irish landlords and gradually introducing legislation to allow the mainly Catholic tenant-farmers to buy the land they worked and lived on from their landlords. As a result, the Anglo-Irish lived out a period when, like their Russian counterparts, their lands were broken up, their incomes decimated and their way of life destroyed for ever.

By transferring the play to a more recognisable setting (to English audiences) Kilroy strips it of its 'distracting' elements (the samovars, the obscure references to Russian literature and history) and allows us to concentrate on the play's characters, relationships and themes — all of which are faithfully rendered. As Francis King said of the original production in the *Sunday Telegraph* in 1981: 'I suspect that what we see . . . may come closer to Chekhov's intentions than all those past productions shimmering with poetic tears.'

I feel sure that Chekhov, were he here to see us, would approve.

JOHN DAVEY

THE SEAGULL

by Anton Chekhov

(In a version by Thomas Kilroy)

Cast in order of speaking

| | |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| JAMES | SIMON ROBERTS |
| MARY | GWENAN EVANS |
| PETER | MICHAEL HILLER |
| CONSTANTINE | ALEX NASH |
| JACK | MICHAEL GREEN |
| LILY | HEATHER NAYLOR |
| PAULINE | DOROTHY BOYD-TAYLOR |
| DR. HICKEY | TONY RUSHFORTH |
| GREGORY | ALAN CHAMBERS |
| ISOBEL DESMOND | ANNE RENN |
| ASTON | BEN CROCKER |
| WORKMEN | { RAY DUNNING |
| | { PETER TERRY |
| MAID | KATE ARMSTRONG |
| COOK | MARIA BRUSA |

The action is set on the Desmond Estate in East Galway in the West of Ireland, in the latter part of the 19th century.

ACT 1: In the grounds of the estate. Summer.
Late evening.

ACT 2: The garden of the Desmond house. A
few days later. Late morning.

INTERVAL OF TWENTY MINUTES

ACT 3: The dining-room. A week later.
Morning.

ACT 4: The drawing-room, now serving as
Constantine's study. Two years later. A
November evening.

MEMBERS OF THE AUDIENCE ARE ASKED

- Not to walk on the stage at any time and to keep to paths and steps when in the theatre.
- Not to smoke during the performance.
- To place all litter including cigarette ends in the bins provided.

Director **John Davey**
Designer **Ray Dunning**
Costumes designed by **Ray Childe**
Lighting and sound designed by **Martin Udall**
Songs sung by **Caroline Bleakley**
Pianist **Robert Guinea**

Stage Manager **Peter Terry**
Deputy
Stage Managers **Ian Gwyn Thomas, Susanna Fyson**
Assistant Stage Managers **Harriet Simon**
Susan Jagger, Claire Broughton,
Ray Dunning, Kate Armstrong

Construction **Peter Terry**
Properties **Glyn Backshall**
Debbie Ward

Prompt **Lesley Harris**
Wardrobe Master **Brad Askew**
assisted by **Lyn Williams, Tess Walsh**
Ladies' Costume **Mary Anderson**
Christine Brand, Tim Haywood
Lyn Williams, Val Moran, Betty Howard

Men's Costume **Sylvia Juren**
Michael Marsh

Lighting Operator **Andrew Rungen**
Sound Operator **Richard Hetherington**
Dialect Coach **Sally Grace**
Wigs and Make Up **GREASEPAINT**

Traditional Irish music arranged and performed by
'Moving Statues' (**Jane Halliday, Nicky Hirst, Colin**
Mulberg and Rob Murphy).

Poster design **Ray Dunning**

Tour Management . **Marguerite Minster**
Publicity **Sylvia Robert-Sargeant**
Box Office **Christine Garland**
Treasurer **Tony Barber**

Assistance with various aspects of the tour from:
Inge Berthold, Maria Brusa, Esther Hetherington,
Geoff Moore, Phil Pinkham, Mike Ranger, Ken
Ratcliffe, Aruna Reddy, Mary Rogers, Anne
Sawbridge, John Stacey, Martin Udall, Roy
Brierley, David Walton

THE AUTHORS

THOMAS KILROY

was born in Callan, County Kilkenny in 1934. In the 1960s he was a visiting professor to four American universities and since 1978 he has been Professor of Modern English at University College, Galway. In 1967 he was awarded first prize in a BBC Radio competition for his play, *The Door*. His first stage play, *The Death and Resurrection of Mr. Roche* was presented at the Dublin Theatre Festival in 1968 and later at the Hampstead Theatre Club. *The O'Neill* (1969), *Tea and Sex and Shakespeare* (1976), revised 1988) and *Talbot's Box* (1977) were all presented at the Abbey Theatre in 1978. *Double Cross*, his play about William Joyce (Lord Haw-Haw) and Brendan Bracken, appeared in the West End in 1986. He was awarded the Guardian Fiction Prize and the Heinemann Award for Literature for his novel *The Big Chapel* (1971). He has also written two plays for Irish television, *Farmers* (1978) and *The Black Joker* (1981).

ANTON CHEKHOV

was born at Taganrog in 1860. He came from humble parentage but graduated as a doctor from Moscow University in 1884. He was a prolific and successful short-story writer even during his student days, but also developed an interest in the theatre. His earliest plays were one-act comedies ('vaudevilles'), among them *The Bear* (1888), *The Proposal* (1889) and *The Wedding* (1890). His first full-length plays, *Ivanov* (1887) and *The Wood Demon* (1889) were not very successful, and *The Seagull* (1896) was a spectacular failure when first performed at the old-fashioned Alexandrinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg. When, however, it was revived by the newly-founded Moscow Arts Theatre two years later under the direction of Constantin Stanislavsky it became a spectacular success. The Moscow Arts Theatre took a seagull as its symbol, which it bears to the present day. It was followed by *Uncle Vanya* (1899), *Three Sisters* (1901) and *The Cherry Orchard* (1904), the years in which Chekhov died, at the height of his powers. His other full-length play *Platonov* (written in 1880/1, but not discovered until after his death) was first produced in Germany in 1928. It was seen as *Wild Honey* (a version by Michael Frayn) at the National Theatre in 1984.

NEXT WEEK AT THE MINACK

The Phoenix Theatre presents
The Merchant of Venice
by William Shakespeare

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The Questors Theatre is one of the leading amateur theatres in Great Britain. The company has over 4,000 members and its own premises in West London including a modern, flexible playhouse, a Studio theatre, rehearsal rooms and workshop. Each season, fourteen productions are presented in the playhouse and some eight in the Studio theatre.

As well as presenting a wide variety of plays, Questors runs a two-year training course for actors and an annual Student Playwriting Competition. The Company also plays host to visiting companies from home and abroad, mounts regular art exhibitions, runs workshops and clubs for young people and occasionally tours productions in this country and overseas.

For further details contact:

The Questors Theatre, Mattock Lane, Ealing W5 5BQ.
Tel: 01-567 0011. Membership secretary: 01-567 8736.

Beginning next season at The Questors:

- September* **CLAY**
by Peter Whelan
- October* **A TRIPLE BILL of HAROLD PINTER**
SHORT PLAYS
- November* **MOTHER COURAGE**
by Bertolt Brecht (Jubilee production)
- December* **PELLEAS AND MELISANDE**
by Maeterlinck
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The Company would like to express its sincere thanks to the Management of The Minack Theatre for its help.
