

CHEKHOV ALOUD

Mondays 10-12

Temple Beth-El

Syllabus

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Course Description: After Shakespeare, Anton Chekhov's plays are the most frequently produced works by professional theatres throughout the world. We'll uncover Chekhov's greatness as a dramatist by reading some of his full length plays aloud in class. Discussions will focus on the ways in which he created stories filled with dramatic tension through setting, characterization, imagery and language. *This is not an acting class.* Reading dramatic texts aloud allows readers and listeners to more fully engage with the play.

Text/Resources: This recommended translation of the collected major plays and farces of Chekhov can be purchased on Amazon or from Thriftbooks and is available at local libraries and bookstores.

The Plays of Anton Chekhov, a new translation by Paul Schmidt

Details

Below is an aspirational syllabus in that I've assigned approximate reading times to each Act. We may feel a need to spend more time with certain Acts, which is fine. I still think that we can get through a reading of three full-length plays. However, this may require that we add an extra 10-15 minutes to some classes. Let me know if that is not feasible for you.

Each week I'll assign a role for you to read. If you know ahead of time that you will be absent that class, please let me know as soon as you can.

Week 1 - March 20

In preparation for this class, read the entire play *Three Sisters*.

Introductions

Presentation on 19th century Russian theatre – Wendy

In class read Act I of *Three Sisters* aloud, with assigned roles. Discuss.

** Some initial discussion questions will be sent to you a few days before class.

Week 2 - March 27

In class read Acts 2 and 3 of *Three Sisters* aloud, with assigned roles. Discuss.

** Some initial discussion questions will be sent to you a few days before class.

Week 3 - April 3

In class read Act 4 of *Three Sisters* aloud, with assigned roles.

Discussion of that Act and of Chekhov's themes and dramatic structure in this play.

Week 4 - April 10

In preparation for this class, read the entire play *The Seagull*.

In class read Acts 1 and 2 aloud, with assigned roles. Discuss.

** Some initial discussion questions will be sent to you a few days before class.

Week 5 April 17

In class read Acts 3 and 4 of *The Seagull* aloud, with assigned roles.

Discuss this Act and the whole play.

** Bring your discussion questions to class.

Week 6 April 24

In preparation for this class, read the entire play *The Cherry Orchard*.

In class read Act 1 aloud, with assigned roles. Each person will discuss their character through the lens

of information given in the Act. A description of this exercise will be sent to you a few days prior to class.

Week 7 May 1

In class read Acts 2 and 3 of *The Cherry Orchard* aloud, with assigned roles.

Discuss these Acts.

** Bring your discussion questions to class.

Week 8 May 8

- Class will begin with a characterization exercise.
- Discuss Act 4 of *The Cherry Orchard*.
- Discuss the whole play.
- Discuss the article about translating and adapting Chekhov.
- Discuss Chekhov as a playwright.