

Director's Note

I have often witnessed
People at their best,
When I see snapshots
Capturing their past

Aloft I see a white bird
Beautiful, up high;
In her beak, a fish,
Dying in the sky.

People on the lawn below
Holding on to what's dear.
Unable to see or choose,
to accept or even to refuse,
fledged with fear.

A young actress,
Meets an old writer.
A young playwright,
Needs an old actress.

The bird is slaughtered
The young man, destroyed.
The girl is deserted,
The love song is crooned.
The tea, being served.

"I can't say I'm not enjoying writing," Checkhov told his publisher about *The Sea Gull* in 1895. "I'm flagrantly disregarding the basic tenets of the stage. The comedy has four acts, a view of a lake, much conversation about literature, little action, and five tons of love." It's that last bit that is difficult to work into the play. What does five tons of love look like on the stage?

Checkhov had a remarkable ability to capture human relations in intimate detail, yet not to take them too seriously. He shows us the love at the center of each of us by allowing us to see the layers of artifice surrounding it. Treplev's fantastical play at the beginning of Act 1 sets the tone: it's exaggerated; it tries so hard to be earnest, that it becomes simply comical. Then we watch Checkhov's characters (and through them we watch each other) and see that they are trying so hard that they, too, become comical as well. Yet they seem so much like us: grasping for a moment of intimacy, seeking a bit of

attention, wondering if it is possible to find happiness. Our amusement turns to affection, and soon the world of the play seems not so unlike our own: plenty of love, if only we could send it-and receive it-in the right way.