

Q&A: Seagull

ERIC PETERSON ON HIS ROLE IN THE CROW'S THEATRE PRODUCTION OF CHEKOV'S CLASSIC DRAMA



The *Seagull* by Anton Chekhov is a play about a family at the end of an era in late-19th century Russia. It has stood the test of time since it first opened to terrible reviews in 1895, and continues to draw artists, such as contemporary adaptor Robert Falls of Chicago's Goodman Theatre, to its powerful story and characters.

This month, Crow's Theatre offers Toronto audiences a new production of Falls' adaptation in association with The Company Theatre and Canadian Stage. Directed by Chris Abraham, *The Seagull* features an all-star Canadian cast, including Yanna McIntosh as Arkadina, Eric Peterson as Sorin, Philip Riccio as Konstantin, Christine Horne as Nina, Bahia Watson as Masha, Tom Rooney as Trigorin, Tom McCamus as Dorn, Tony Nappo as Shamrayev, and Tara Nicodemo as Polina.

We caught up with veteran performer Eric Peterson to find out more about his role in this enduring tale of love and longing.

Theatromania: How would you describe Chris Abraham's production of *The Seagull* in a few sentences.

EP: I'm watching a group of very industrious, talented and capable people in a space grappling with visual, audio and human elements, to create a performance of a hundred-and-some-odd-year-old Russian play titled *THE SEAGULL* under the leadership of a man passionate and insightful about the play and very skilled at guiding all of us as we grope toward the living expression of it.

Theatromania: Sorin. What motivates him?

EP: A man at the end of his life, self-deprecatingly expressing regret that he didn't live enough, but nevertheless, genial and dedicated to his nephew and sister.

Theatromania: How did you prepare for this role?

EP: Intense study of the script, and researching historical elements that might be informative of the times as well as information on Chekhov and his writing.

Theatromania: What are some of the challenges you've experienced working on this particular piece?

EP: The fame of the play and playwright and the weight of expectation that comes with that; this applies to the audience as much as the creative team, and as much as possible must be held at bay so we all can experience the play with fresh uninhibited eyes...

Theatromania: What have you learned from this process so far?

EP: That I'm getting old; stiff of joint, short of breath, and slow and slight of memory. Thankfully much of this is useful for the part.

Theatromania: Why is this play relevant today?

EP: Well why wouldn't it be? It has been such a lasting play because it touches on life that doesn't change in characters we can easily identify with. Characters who love, have longing and disappointment, who fear as well as hope, who live in a world that may differ in externals but whose humanness is identical to ours...