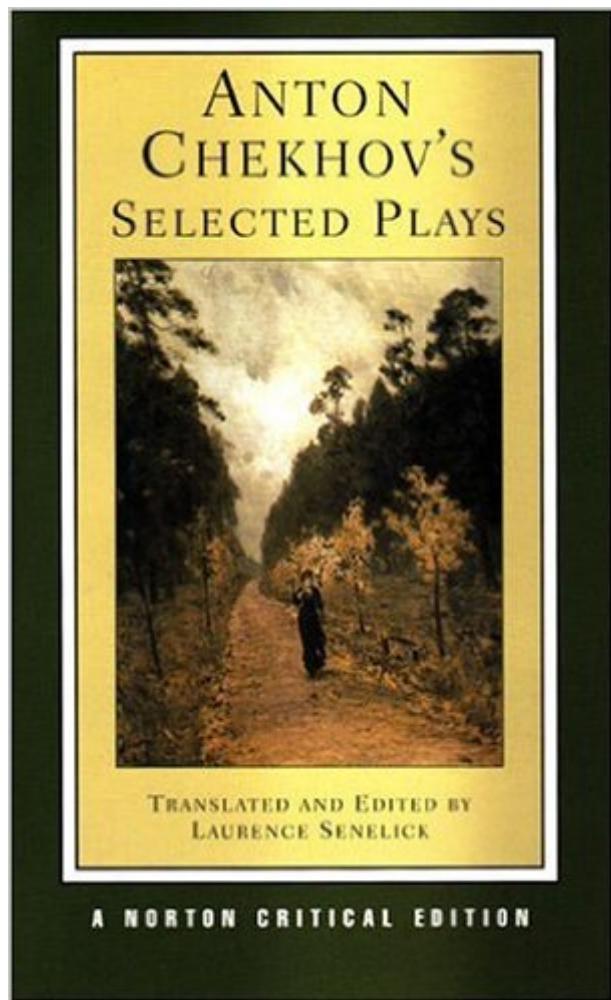


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# Anton Chekhov's Selected Plays (Norton Critical Editions)



## Synopsis

Anton Chekhov revolutionized Russian theater through his inimitable portrayals of characters faced with complex moral dilemmas. This Norton Critical Edition includes five of Chekhov's major plays—*Ivanov*, *The Seagull*, *Uncle Vanya*, *Three Sisters*, and *The Cherry Orchard*—and three early one-act farces that inform his later work—*The Bear*, *The Wedding*, and *The Celebration*. Laurence Senelick's masterful translations closely preserve Chekhov's singular style—his abundant jokes and literary allusions and his careful use of phrase repetition to bind the plays together. "Letters" is the largest collection of Chekhov's commentary on his plays ever to appear in an English-language edition. "Criticism" includes eleven essays by leading European and Russian Chekhov scholars, most appearing in English for the first time, including those by Boris Zingerman, Maria Deppermann, and Lev Shestor. This volume also provides discussion of Chekhov's plays by some of the twentieth century's great directors, including Konstantin Stanislavsky, Peter Brook, and Mark Rozovsky. A Chronology and Selected Bibliography are also included.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Given the Norton Critical reputation for value and excellence, it is not in the least surprising that a collection of Chekhov's essential plays represent only the tip of the iceberg, and appear alongside a wealth of supplemental material that has been carefully selected by a qualified editor. Laurence Senelick is both editor and translator. It must be said that the high level of accuracy which Senelick

claims to have obtained in his translation, was achieved at the cost of fluidity and pleasant-soundingness. The collection of plays is ideal. Chekhov's five major plays--Ivanov, The Seagull, Uncle Vanya, Three Sisters, and The Cherry Orchard--are included along with three single act comic sketches--The Bear, The Wedding, and The Celebration. Each play is heavily annotated, perhaps, one could argue, to an excess. The footnotes, many of which seemed superfluous, were so abundant as to distract me from the flow of reading. Far more invaluable were the variants provided after each play. These contain passages that did not make it past the censors, or that appeared in subsequent versions of the play. The omitted passages add to one's understanding of the material, at times providing a cleared glimpse into Chekhov's original artistic vision. Following the manuscripts, there is an extensive collection of Chekhov's personal letters. Supposedly, Senelick has included every letter that contains mentioned of the selected volume's plays. Most frequently, the letters provide insight into Chekhov's process and his attitudes towards the performance of his plays. Following the letters there are 200 pages of criticism, including essays by nine established directors. Unfortunately, there were no familiar names among the contributors; likely because inclusion was limited to those who had read Chekhov in Russian. I'd have liked to hear what famous English authors or top film directors had to say about Chekhov

I've been using this text in my Chekhov/Stanislavski class for the past 10 years and the translation by Eugene Bristow is outstanding. Very neutral and keeping with the poetry of Chekhov's writing. Norton Critical Edition has decided to discontinue this edition and bring out a new edition with Lawrence Senelick's translation, which is absolutely an abomination to the Chekhovian text. It is crass, un-poetic and he has all the serfs and peasants speaking like southern African Americans. It is an embarrassment to the American Classics of Chekhov. I will be using another company for my texts in the future!

This translation is OK, but there are better ones out there. For example I believe, in my opinion, that Robert W. Corrigan has a better translation, and it is more preferred by Directors and Actors. Corrigan's translation is more typical of modern-day American English. This version is a little more archaic in its English.

I don't know why another customer (a professor, clearly) thought Senelick's serfs and peasants sound like Afro-American country people. They don't. The plays are very much in Chekhov's tone--a pleasure to read. Above all, Senelick's NOTES are really useful! You can learn about how Chekhov

himself thought of the characters, about Stanislavsky's reactions when he saw the plays, etc. A beautifully done edition in every way.- David Ball

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