This Study Guide was written by Kacey Roye and edited by Kate Jones-Waddell. It contains selected excerpts from public domain.
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**MISSION:** The Classic Theatre creates excellent theatre that is relevant, diverse, entertaining, and transformative.

**VISION:** We seek to achieve our mission by creating connections and conversations through compelling classic works.

The Classic Theatre of San Antonio is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501 (c) 3, non-profit corporation

### Classic Theatre Staff

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<th>Kelly Roush</th>
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<td>Kacey Roye</td>
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<td>Florence Bunten</td>
<td>Box Office Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Olivia Tober</td>
<td>Bookkeeper</td>
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<td>Zach Lewis, Chelsea Steele</td>
<td>House Managers</td>
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A Note from the Director

Dear Anton Pavlovich,

So many people think your plays are depressing and melodramatic, even though you thought of them as comedies.

But I think you are the bravest playwright ever. Your writing is vulnerable and open to interpretation. You don’t tell us about all the details that might exist in a single line of text; you trust us to explore, to mine, and to come up with our own. You don’t hold us to a plot line; you trust us to imagine the everyday existences of these characters for ourselves. Our unique palette of colors is required to complete the picture— it’s a partnership. In this way, you bravely put the text in our hands and say, “See what you can bring to it!” If we bring depression, well then, the text will be depressing. If we bring celebration, it will be celebratory. It’s a perfect mirror for what we bring to it.

Translator Richard Pevear echoes this idea beautifully in his introduction to your play. He writes, “A common tendency in productions of the play... has been to overdetermine the interpretation... to confine it to the elegiac, or the political, or the satirical, or the absurd. The essence of Chekhov’s art, on the contrary, is inclusion and simultaneity, the rapid shift from one tone to another, the mockery of the most moving moments with slapstick parodies of them.” Just as moving moments are followed by slapstick, we have approached your *Cherry Orchard* as Tragedy meets Hero’s Journey, as Political Romance with a side of Farce, as Russian-American Class Struggle plus Treatise on the Unfairness of Love, all at once. The customs, archetypes, social structure and politics belong to your Russia of 1904; but to stop at mere period and nationality would be to shortchange you. There’s something deeper about these characters, something you can’t confine, yet you can see in the face of anyone on earth. Your play chronicles what it’s like to be a human being— to yearn, to remember, to work, to feel scared, to laugh, to strive, to win and lose. This is the level of universality we want to reach with your play, and it is only through openness and bravery that we can get there.

You have blessed us with your trust, Anton Pavlovich, and we aspire to honor you in our interpretations. Thank you for your limitless generosity. We love you, and we hope you laugh.

-Andy Thornton
April, 2018

NOTE: The version we are using is Chekhov’s first script, submitted for production in 1904, which was changed somewhat by actor/director Konstantin Stanislavsky (he played Gayev in the first Moscow Art Theatre production). It is Stanislavsky’s altered version which is most frequently performed. Though the changes are moderate, they do affect the tone of some parts of the play, primarily in Act Two, and we are happy to bring this lesser-known original version back into the light.
Cast & Production Crew

Cast of Characters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cast of Characters</th>
<th>Lyubov Ranyevskaya</th>
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<tr>
<td>Kathy Couser</td>
<td>Samantha Harkiewicz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sarah Fisch</td>
<td>Charles Michael Howard*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin Majors</td>
<td>Sam Mandelbaum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gloria Sanchez-Molina</td>
<td>Linda Ford</td>
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<tr>
<td>Steven Starr</td>
<td>Makenzie Jené</td>
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<tr>
<td>George Burnette</td>
<td>Dorian Arriaga**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Julio Sepulveda</td>
<td>Cleon Ony**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyubov Ranyevskaya</td>
<td>Anya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varya</td>
<td>Gayev</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lopakhin</td>
<td>Trofimov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pishchik</td>
<td>Charlotte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yepikhodov</td>
<td>Dunyasha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firs</td>
<td>Yasha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traveler</td>
<td>Stationmaster</td>
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*This actor appears through the courtesy of Actors’ Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

**These actors appear as AIM High interns in our production

Production Crew

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Andy Thornton</th>
<th>Director</th>
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<tr>
<td>Allison Cornwell</td>
<td>Stage Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chuck Drew</td>
<td>Technical Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alfy Valdez</td>
<td>Set Designer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chuck Drew</td>
<td>Lighting Designer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Les Johnson</td>
<td>Prop Designer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Andy Thornton &amp; Chuck Drew</td>
<td>Sound Designer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jodi Karjala</td>
<td>Costume Design</td>
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Synopsis

One Spring morning, after a long absence in Paris, the widow Madame Ranevsky returns home to her family estate to find that it has been mortgaged to pay for her extravagances and that it will be auctioned off. Anya (her daughter) and Charlotta (Anya’s Governess) arrive. They are greeted by Varya (Ranevsky’s adopted daughter), Gayev (Ranevsky’s brother), Lopakhin (a former peasant who has become a wealthy merchant), and other neighbors, staff and friends.

Madame Ranevsky is reminded that the estate will be sold to clear their debts in August, unless the family can raise enough funds. Ranevsky seems incapable of recognizing and acting on her desperate situation. Lopakhin offers to lend Ranevsky 50,000 rubles to cover the debts and save the estate—if she will permit the land to be divided into lots for summer tourist homes. This, however, involves cutting down the estate’s famous cherry orchard, which Ranevsky loves dearly; and the plan is rejected as sacrilege. Several other ideas to save the estate also arise: Gayev will try to secure a loan, or maybe Anya will be able to marry rich, but there is no final resolution.

Later in the summer, courtship seems to be more important than business. The new servant, Yasha, competes with the estate clerk, Yepikhodov, for the attentions of Dunyasha the maid. Varya tries to prevent a union between Anya and the perpetual student, Trofimov and everybody assumes that Varya will marry Lopakhin, although there has been no proposal and little interest on his part. Meanwhile, Lopakhin tries desperately to urge the family to be more practical, but Ranevsky confesses that she squandered her fortune on her unfaithful lover in Paris and is probably not capable of practically dealing with the problem. Firs, an aged servant, longs for “the good old days” before the serfs were emancipated, but Trofimov dreams of progress. He is glad the estate will be sold, for to him, every leaf in the cherry orchard tells of a serf’s complaints and sufferings.

August arrives, and the estate must be auctioned to meet the mortgage payments. Gayev attends the sale, hopeful that the great-aunt’s money will be enough to satisfy the creditors. At the mansion, a farewell party is underway even though there are no funds for the orchestra. The household members dance and quarrel until Lopakhin returns with Gayev from the auction to announce that he has bought the estate where his father and other family members once were serfs, and he intends to carry out his plan for cutting down the orchard. Seeing Ranevsky’s sorrow, Lopakhin remorsefully wishes that “this miserable disjointed life could somehow be changed.” Anya comforts her mother, promising that together they will build a new, happy life.

In the fall with the estate and orchard now gone, Ranevsky readies for her departure to Paris, where she will live on the money from the great-aunt. Anya will accompany her and attend school. Gayev has a job as a bank clerk and Trofimov, as a translator. Lopakhin has failed to propose to Varya, so she will become a housekeeper for others. However, Lopakhin does hire Yepikhodov to work for him and promises to find a new position for Charlotta. Ranevsky is worried about the old and ailing Firs, but is told that he is in the hospital. Once the family leaves, however, Firs finds himself alone, locked in the deserted house. Axe strokes resound outside, as the woodsmen begin at last to cut down the beloved cherry orchard.
About the Playwright

Anton Chekhov dealt with cold realism, in the irony of unfulfillment, and he disapproved of adjectives. He detested arbitrariness, though he believed without bias that it universally existed.

Chekhov did not look the part of an author or a playwright; his physical appearance most stereotypically resembled his alternate profession as a doctor. Medicine was his “lawful wife,” and writing was his “mistress,” and for this reason, we must look at the human plight more scientifically. We must not allow ourselves to view the style of Chekhov with too much morbidity. His heroes love, marry, give birth, and die. He omitted political, religious, and philosophical views.

Anton Chekhov was born in the Azov seaport of Taganrog, Russia. *The Kreutzer Sonata* by Leo Tolstoy was Chekhov’s favorite book, but he was only partly influenced by his Russian contemporaries and did not mimic their styles. Chekhov is distinct from other Russian authors and playwrights at the time in the fact that instead of the actor being given full reign on stage, his plays were designed to subjugate the actor directly to the text. Words, the words on the script, were responsible for mood and for staging, and it was not how or what the characters said that was most important, but more why they said it. Some have suggested that one of his motives in doing this was to antagonize actors as well as audience members.

He did not try to force opinions upon others. In fact, his resolve to leave his stories and plays in a way unresolved, reveals him as unassuming, noncommittal, and almost undecided in most kinds of politics. A good example of this was pointed out by Professor Nilsson, that stage directions may sometimes consist of opposing parts: “cheerfully, through tears.” We do know that Chekhov did not believe life to be a series of resolutions; happy endings in his opinion were almost nonexistent.

Chekhov’s most successful plays were *Ivanov, The Seagull, Uncle Vanya,* and *The Cherry Orchard.*
Facts About *The Cherry Orchard*

*The Cherry Orchard* was first produced at the Moscow Art Theater on January 30, 1904 under the direction of Konstantin Stanislavsky.

Though Chekhov insisted that the play was “a comedy, in places even a farce,” playgoers and readers often find a touch of tragedy in the decline of the charming Ranevskaya family.

*Photo of Diane Lane in Broadway’s production of The Cherry Orchard in 2016.*

Chekhov's Gun' is a concept that describes how every element of a story should contribute to the whole. It comes from Anton Chekhov's famous book writing advice: 'If in the first act you have hung a pistol on the wall, then in the following one it should be fired.
Analysis of Major Themes

The Struggle Over Memory

Because The Cherry Orchard depicts a changing society, the characters spend a lot of time thinking about how now compares to then. How characters relate to the past determines their investment in the play's major question: will the cherry orchard be saved? As a symbol of the past of the Russian empire, the orchard evokes longing, regret, or disgust – sometimes a combination of all three. Despite the painful resistance of most characters, in the end, a cord to the past is snipped. The cherry orchard is sold, the house is shuttered, and the old servant is left to die.

The cast of The Cherry Orchard at The Classic Theatre of San Antonio. Photo by Siggi Ragnar

In The Cherry Orchard, memory is seen both as source of personal identity and as a burden preventing the attainment of happiness. Each character is involved in a struggle to remember, but more importantly in a struggle to forget, certain aspects of their past. Ranevsky wants to seek refuge in the past from the despair of her present life; she wants to remember the past and forget the present. But the estate itself contains awful memories of the death of her son, memories she is reminded of as soon as she arrives and sees Trofimov, her son's tutor. For Lopakhin, memories are oppressive, for they are memories of a brutal, uncultured peasant upbringing. They conflict with his identity as a well-heeled businessman that he tries to cultivate with his fancy clothes and his allusions to Shakespeare, so they are a source of self-doubt and confusion; it is these memories that he wishes to forget. Trofimov is concerned more with Russia's historical memory of its past, a past which he views as oppressive and needing an explicit renunciation if Russia is to move forward. He elucidates this view in a series of speeches at the end of Act Two. What Trofimov wishes Russia to forget are the beautiful and redeeming
aspects of that past. First, finally, lives solely in memory—most of his speeches in the play relate
to what life was like before the serfs were freed, telling of the recipe for making cherry jam,
which now even he can’t remember. At the end of the play, he is literally forgotten by the other
characters, symbolizing the "forgotten" era with which he is so strongly associated.

**Modernity Vs. the Old Russia**

"Time," says Lopakhin, "does go." Profound? Not so much – but a strong undercurrent in The
Cherry Orchard. Characters are acutely aware of the passage of time. Varya and Lopakhin check
their watches regularly, the more old-fashioned characters lament on their age, commenting on
the weather, and some characters celebrate the 100th birthday of a bookcase.

A recurrent theme throughout Russian literature of the nineteenth century is the clash between
the values of modernity and the values of old Russia. Modernity is here meant to signify
Western modernity, its rationalism, secularism and materialism. Russia, especially its nobility,
had been adopting these values since the early eighteenth century, in the time of Peter the
Great. But much of late nineteenth-century Russian literature was written in reaction to this
change, and in praise of an idealized vision of Russia's history and folklore. Western values are
often represented as false, pretentious, and spiritually and morally bankrupt. Russian culture by
contrast—for example, in the character of Prince Myshkin in Fyodor Dostoyevsky's The Idiot,
himself a representative of the old landowning nobility, or Tatyana in Alexander Pushkin's
Eugene Onegin—is exalted as honest and morally pure.

The conflict between Gayev and Ranevsky on the one hand and Lopakhin and Trofimov on the
other can be seen as emblematic of the disputes between the old feudal order and
Westernization. The conflict is made most explicit in the speeches of Trofimov, who views
Russia's historical legacy as an oppressive one, something to be abandoned instead of exalted,
and proposes an ideology that is distinctly influenced by the Western ideas such as Marxism
and Darwinism.

*Dorian Arriaga as Yasha and Kathy Couser as Madame Ranevsky in Classic
Theatre's production of The Cherry Orchard*
Pre-Play Activities

DISCUSS!

In small groups, discuss the idea of modernity today. What new technologies have come about in the past 10 years? Do you think that people of the older generations are having a more difficult time adapting to the new, modern world? What does it mean to be a millennial today? What do you think are some struggles millennials have vs. non-millenials? Where have you seen conflicts of interest in your own life? Do you think that this new technology will help or hinder us?

LITERARY ACTIVITY!

With your class, make a chart of freedoms we have today. Rank these freedoms in order of importance. Why have you chosen these freedoms over others? Do you think that freedoms vary depending on who you are? Why is this so? Does freedom make us independent? Discuss these questions as a class. Try to relate your answers to your own life.

PERFORMANCE ACTIVITY!

Distribute scenes from this adaptation of The Cherry Orchard (link on page 11 of this study guide) to students.

1. Ask them to read the scene first for sense, then go back through and choose at least one line where their character’s subtext doesn’t match what he or she says.

2. Have students write out the character’s subtext below the line.

3. Ask students to rehearse their scene several times, exploring different ways they can convey their character’s subtext. Hold an open rehearsal of the scenes, presenting them in the order they appear in the play.

4. Ask the group: What was the subtext of that line? How did you know? What do you think The Cherry Orchard is about? Why?

5. Ask the actors: Why did you choose that line and that subtext? How did writing out the subtext change rehearsal for you?

In modern theatre (or life) it’s not uncommon for a character to say one thing, but mean another. Take, for example, the phrase, “It’s great to see you.” Depending on the speaker’s attitude and tone it can convey anything from delight to disdain. This meaning-underneath-the-words is called subtext.
Post-Play Activities

How does a playwright use word choice to set a story in a different context?

DISCUSS!

1. Create a list of possible times and places to set The Cherry Orchard. How does each setting connect to the play’s themes?
2. Using the list the group brainstormed, have each student choose a new context for the play and adapt a chosen section of the text to fit that context.
3. Ask the group: Where and when was this adaptation set? How did you know? What choices did the playwright make in their adaptation?

WRITE!

How does an actor improvise from the perspective of a character?

The Cherry Orchard ends with each character moving off into a different, and uncertain, future. How does each feel about the events of the play, and what will happen to them going forward?

1. Ask students to choose a character from the play that they agreed with or understood. Have them write a few sentences, from the perspective of that character, about what happened to them at the end of the play and what they think their life will be like moving forward. Also have each student write their characters name on a sticky name tag and affix it to their shirt.
2. Create an Oprah-like talk show set up in the classroom. The host can be played by a student or teacher, and can be given a Russian thematic name like Oprahkov Winfreyev.
3. Students take turns as guests on the show, speaking as their characters, as the host asks them questions that reveal their perspective on the events of the play and their hopes for the future. Questions for specific characters can also be taken from the audience.
4. What did you discover about your character when you wrote and spoke from their perspective? How did the talk show change your understanding of other characters?

DOWNLOAD!

THE CHERRY ORCHARD by Anton Chekhov Translated from the Russian by Maria Amadei Ashot

Scenes from The Cherry Orchard (Allison Horsely Translation)
Theatre Etiquette

Going to a play is a special experience, one that you will remember for a long time. Everyone in the audience has been looking forward to seeing the performance. A production team puts in many long hours and a lot of hard work to mount a performance for an audience. If you keep in mind common courtesy for the performers as well as your fellow audience members, everyone’s theatre experience will be optimized. What follows are a few reminders for attending the theatre.

1. Plan to arrive at the theatre thirty minutes before the performance begins.

2. Gum, food, drinks, or candy are never allowed in the theatre. You may, however, bring a water bottle.

3. Please go to the bathroom before seating for the performance or at intermission.

4. TURN OFF ALL CELL PHONES or anything else that can disturb the production, actors, and audience members during the performance. It is very impolite to have your phone go off during the show.

5. Lights will dim just before a performance and then go dark. Acknowledge this by sitting quietly and calmly.

6. Do not talk or whisper during the performance. The actors on stage can hear you, which is why you can hear them so well. Laughter is of course permissible at appropriate times.

7. Keep body movements to a minimum. You can't get up and move around during the performance.

8. No taking of pictures or video recording is allowed.

9. Don't leave your seat until the cast has taken their curtain call at the end.

10. Show your appreciation by clapping. The actors love to hear applause. This shows how much you enjoyed the performance!
**Education Programs**

**Classics in the Classroom**
Let Classic come to you! With our student outreach program, artist educators take classic plays and literature into San Antonio area middle school and high school classrooms to eliminate the fear, and introduce performance elements! We work closely with the teachers, visiting classes to present 3 workshops, culminating in an in-class performance.

**AIM High**
Our Apprentice, Intern, Mentor program offers a total immersion in technical production, directing, stage management, and acting through hands-on experience working directly with professional artists on a production, as it moves from rehearsal to opening night, and throughout the run of the show. Previous AIM High interns frequently appear in productions and receive paid positions at our theatre!

**Student Performances**
Come enjoy a night of compelling professional live theatre! On designated Thursday nights, we reserve free performances for middle schools, high schools and colleges, that include a talk-back with the cast and crew after the show. Contact us to reserve your spot or for more information!

Contact Kroye@classictheatre.org for more info | classictheatre.org
CAMP CLASSIC
A THEATRE ARTS CAMP
EXPLORING CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY
FOUR ONE WEEK SESSIONS
A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM
Written by William Shakespeare
September 7-30

MISS BENNETT: CHRISTMAS AT PEMBERLEY
Written by Lauren Gunderson and Margot Melcon
November 30-December 23

A TRIP TO BOUNTIFUL
Written by Horton Foote
February 15-March 10

THE LITTLE FOXES
Written by Lillian Hellman
May 3-26