



STAGE RUSSIA HD PRESENTS

THE CHERRY ORCHARD

CAPTURED LIVE ON STAGE AT THE MOSCOW ART THEATRE

Experience the mastery of Russian theater in cinemas
with the Stage Russia HD presentation of *The Cherry Orchard*



PROGRAM NOTES

SYNOPSIS

After living abroad in Paris for a long while, the widow Madame Ranevsky returns home to her family estate to find that it has been heavily mortgaged to pay for her extravagances and that it is to be auctioned off. With her arrives her daughter, Anya, and Anya's German governess, Charlotte. They are greeted by Varya, Ranevsky's adopted daughter who manages the remnants of the once-grand estate; Gayev, Ranevsky's brother; Lopakhin, a former peasant who has become a wealthy merchant and neighbor; members of the staff; and other neighbors and friends.

Generous and distracted, 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 perhaps Anya will visit her wealthy great-aunt, a countess in distant Yaroslavl, and be richly married. Nothing is resolved.

Later in the summer, courtship seems to preclude 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 her sister, Anya, and the perpetual student Trofimov (former tutor to Ranevsky's infant son, who drowned at age six), and everybody assumes that Varya will marry Lopakhin, though there has been no proposal.

In the midst of this, Lopakhin tries vainly to get 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 immediate 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. 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.

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; Trofimov, as a translator. Lopakhin has failed to propose to Varya, so she will become a housekeeper for others. Ranevsky is worried about the old and ailing Firs, but is told that he is in the hospital. Once the family and their entourage depart, 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.

THE PRODUCTION

The Cherry Orchard, written by playwright Anton Chekhov, was first performed at the Moscow Art Theatre on Chekhov's 44th birthday, January 17, 1904. This inaugural staging was directed by co-founder of the theatre, Konstantin Stanislavski. It was the staging of several of Chekhov's works, including *The Cherry Orchard*, that first brought success to the theatre.

Over a century since the first performance, *The Cherry Orchard* returns to the Moscow Art Theatre, captured live in HD for the Stage Russia series. Starring Russian stage and screen legend Renata Litvinova, director Adolf Shapiro's interpretation asks the question, where would the characters of this play live today years after their cherry orchard has been cut down? The answer, which lies in the material world created by set designer, David Borovsky, is, of course, on the stage.

This production brings *The Cherry Orchard* full circle, with its wandering band of characters never at peace, but finally back home.

CAST

Ranevskaya	Renata Litvinova
Anya	Yana Gladkikh
Varya	Jana Sekste
Gaev	Sergey Dreiden
Lopakhin	Andrey Smolyakov
Firs	Nikolay Chindyaykin

Directed for the stage by Adolf Shapiro

Presented in Russian with English subtitles

SPECTICAST
ENTERTAINMENT

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