

CHEKHOV IN HUDSON

By John Paul Keeler
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“I Take Your Hand in Mine” a play fashioned by Carol Rocamora from the letters of Anton Chekhov and Olga Knipper opened at Space 360 on Warren Street and runs through November 29th.

It is challenging to produce a performance with two actors impersonating historic personages from their letters. “Walking the Dog Theatre” is renowned for doing plays of Shakespearian grandeur and the epic “Under Milk Wood” They are unbeatable in Minimalist theatricality and Benedicta Bertau’s beautiful direction and the superb acting of Bethany Caputo and David Anderson made Rocamora’s play work.

Anton Chekhov and his bride Olga Knipper came vividly to life.

Olga Knipper Chekhov’s lover and then wife is a fascinating character. A young, beautiful diva of the theatre, her letters show a complex character. She is infantile, ego-centric, charming and calculating. Her love-hate of the theatre shows through somewhat insincerely. Knipper reminds one of Alma Mahler and both these ladies set their sights on genius husbands. Chekhov comes out mature and noble. He loves his little talented sex kitten. To see him in the “fin de siecle” period of 19th century Russia with all its hardships and family ties becomes quite touching. His creative struggles and the normalcy of his life shine through his ongoing battle with tuberculosis. He indulges Olga all the way and even contends compassionately with her jealousy over his mother and sister. The one moment of tension occurs when Olga tells Chekhov that she has been overspending and needs 600 rubles to clear her debts. Chekhovs agreement to clear them is his simple statement “We will hear no more of that!”

Bethany Caputo plays Olga with relish and the shifting moods of the Diva come out wonderfully. Her facial expression and glancing eyes project her character tellingly. If she gives her scarf an undue workout like a theatrical linus blanket, perhaps in doing it Olga’s frivolity and superficiality are suggested?

David Anderson plays Chekhov with wonderful understatement .He voices Chekhov’s beautiful descriptions of life and nature and love with tenderness and a poetic sound. The play ends with the poignant letters describing the writers last days and here Bertau’s direction really counts as a “Romeo and Juliet” sadness projects from the stage with the dead Chekhov slumped in his chair. The full house loved the play and it would seem to be a portent for a successful run. The music of the company composer Jonathan Talbott was just right. Shows run through November 29th Evenings at 8 and matinee’s at 2PM. Tickets \$15-\$. 25 There are special prices throughout .Call 1 800 838 3006 or email [wtdtheater . org](mailto:wtdtheater.org)