

Short Stories by Anton Chekhov Bk. 2 Talent and Other Stories

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REVIEWS

Anton Chekhov was one of the early masters of the short story as well as a great playwright. As is typical of Chekhov's stories, the five tracks here are carefully constructed slices of life, rich in portrait and moral ambiguity rather than dramatic experiences. Some listeners will find them a less familiar side of the author of UNCLE VANYA and THE CHERRY ORCHARD. Max Bollinger brings the authentic voice and soul of Russia to these classic Constance Garnett translations. While many of the issues in these stories are timeless, listeners will also get to visit, for a while, the old Russia of the czars.

D.M.H. AudioFile Magazine, Portland (USA)

Short Stories by Anton Chekhov is an audio book containing five of Chekhov's stories. They are delightfully narrated by Max Bollinger in his charming accented English. The stories are excellent examples of Chekhov's style. Superb characterisation and brilliantly observed slices of life. Chekhov's stories don't come to an end they just peter out inconclusively leaving you to draw your own conclusions. A very enjoyable collection.

Alan Moreton (Essex, UK) ★★★★★

This is an audio book, and the narrator has a light Russian accent that lends credibility to the stories. Each of the stories -there are 5 on this second disc of "Short Stories by Anton Chekhov" is a picture for me. In fact, I liken each of them to a Monet painting in which you can see the individual strokes of the brush if you stand too close, but stepping back you see the whole picture at once and not the bits that created the whole. Masterpieces!

Frayda Glass (MA, USA) ★★★★★

All the faults concerning my interaction with this work, are mine. I have trained myself to sit and read a book: it is an activity which absorbs one's main sensory organs, the eyes; and so, the World is closed out. With an audio book, such as this, one needs to block out all extraneous input and drink in the delightful atmosphere as the stories are beautifully read to one.

The tracks are superbly interspersed with snatches of music by Tchaikovsky, which set the mood perfectly. It would be exceedingly simple to overdo the 'Russian-ness' of this disc but, the editor has judged the mood perfectly. I have now listened to it a few times and will certainly do so again (hopefully, many times).

Enough about the style of the disc, what about the content? My youth coincided with the cold war and so, Russia has always seemed to be a mysterious place where the people are somehow different. These tales of nineteenth century Russia should therefore be totally alien. They are not, of course: Chekhov describes the human condition, it is inherently the same in Russia as in England, or where, and when, ever one happens to live. I suspect that if we do, eventually, find sentient life upon another planet, then they too would read, or listen to, these fables and nod their understanding.

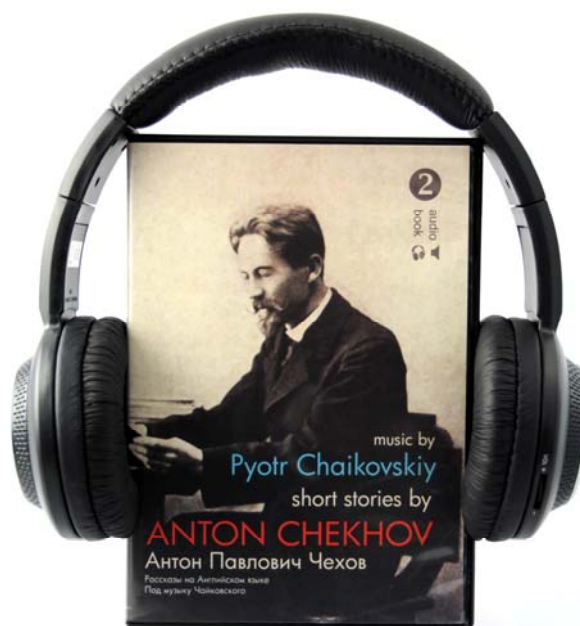
Ken Petersen (UK) ★★★★★

This was my first ever audiobook experience, and it was a good one. The stories were well-treated, a very enjoyable listen. The narrator's treatment of speech and the light piano music every so often were very good and the story choice came together to give an understanding of Chekhov's view of people and society, in a not completely depressing way.

Katy Nicholls (New Zealand)

I listened to these short stories in the car while driving to and from errands and to work. The stories were short, but poignant, and I was worried at first that the narrator's accent might distract me, but after a few sentences, it was not an issue.

At the conclusion of each short story, I was anxious to start the next, but also felt compelled to think about the



one I had just completed- and then to contemplate my own past, my own choices, my own story.

I love when literature sticks with me like this audio recording did. I am looking forward to listening to it again very soon.

Meg Downing (MA, USA) ★★★★★

This was my first experience with an audio book, at least for many years. I found the stories themselves captivating and now wish to read them in "regular" form. And only 5 stories is just a sample of Anton Chekhov's works. But I would listen to another collection of his stories again. His stories are about people, with real problems. There are no trite solutions for their problems, sometimes just an understanding of the characters' flaws. Each story offers a portrait of a person, a situation, and through simple dialogue we learn more about them than they know themselves. It is a wonderful experience to hear these stories.

Joseph Belliveau owning (Canada) ★★★★★

This was an enjoyable experience for me. Its not often that I listen to audiobooks. The readers lightly accented voice wasn't too fast, too slow or too annoying (which can happen with audiobooks and ruins them.) The little vignettes themselves were great. My favorite was the one about the 'little foot.' Hilarious

Renee (MI, USA) ★★★★★

This very solid instalment in Max Bollinger's series includes Chekhov's 'Talent', 'Anyunta', 'The Helpmate', 'Ivan Matveyitch', and 'Polinka'. The stories are each in the range of ten minutes in length (some a bit longer as in the postlude of Tchaikovsky's piano music at the end of 'The Talent'), but the variety of tales and the variations in the voices Bollinger uses makes the just over an hour of a CD pass like a breeze. It would be difficult to imagine a more verismo atmosphere to these great stories than that Max Bollinger offers the listener. This is echt Russian and a brilliant homage to Chekhov's artistry. Highly Recommended.

Grady Harp (CA, USA) ★★★★★



I really enjoyed this short story collection, read by Max Bollinger with music by Chaikovskiy. I loved hearing the stories read with the Russian accent and the music really pulled the whole cd together. The stories are all about ten minutes long and the whole listening experience is calming and enjoyable. As always, Chekov's stories are interesting and provide a great listening experience.

Elena Garabis (VA, USA) ★★★★★

I usually do not enjoy audio books, as I feel that they do not always represent the works with full justice. However, the way this audio book intermingled short pieces of Tchaikovsky's with a great selection of Chekov's short stories, was really intriguing. I listened to the disc while driving, and it complements a long trip very well.

The narrator's tone and speed are spot-on, making the stories easy to comprehend, even when driving. He does a great job representing the many voices of the dialogue, without ever adopting a ridiculous, phony voice. Though accented, his voice is consistently clear and understandable. The music also adds to the atmosphere while driving, so that you are not just sitting in silence listening to someone speak.

I have been a fan of Chekhov for some time, and this selection of stories includes some of his best. This disk would offer a great introduction to the author for

someone who has never experienced him before, but would also be new and refreshing for long-time Chekhovian readers. These stories also provide an insightful look into the daily lives of Russians of Chekhov's time, and would be a great historical learning experience for those unfamiliar with Russian history. The stories that are included in this collection do a great job in illustrating the Russian human experience while approaching the subject with interspersed humour to keep the stories from being too depressing.

Kristine Kowalski (New Jersey, USA) ★★★★★

The selection of short stories in this collection combined with accent and style of reader Max Bollinger combine to great effect in this sound recording. For me the addition of musical selections by Chaikovskiy did not enhance (nor detract) from the work. Chekhov's stated ambition with his short stories was to hold up a mirror to the drear and dismal lives of his readers with a view to compelling them to see themselves in the stories and then work to improve their own lives. The stories are well written, and beautifully read, the characters compelling but simultaneously repulsive- ranging from the pathetic to the unpleasant. Five stories were for me enough in one go as the effect is to create a melancholy atmosphere when listening to them

Lisa Oldham (New Zealand) ★★★★★

Chekhov is the master of the short story. I've always liked Chekhov and I was thrilled to be able to 'consume' his stories in a new way. The stories on these CD all describe people at crucial points of their lives: having to make choices about their future, but somehow unable to really get a grip on their lives. Hindered by their character, their family or by other reasons... at the end of each story you are left with the feeling that these people could - or maybe should - have made some better decisions than they did, and should - or maybe could - have acted less naive than they did. It took some time to get used to the voice of the reader, especially because of the intonation used. But I think it is a good voice for these stories and I liked the way he pronounced the Russian names. The music didn't add much to the stories. But it didn't hinder me also.

Roland Bron (The Netherlands) ★★★★★

A lovely listen, rich, velvety Russian voice, never obtrusive. Well-paced reading, nicely interspersed with Tchaikovsky for atmosphere. A good addition to reading the plays or stories. I will recommend it to my pupils who are studying The Cherry Orchard.

Liz O'Sullivan (France) ★★★★★

Talent is the opening piece of this book on DVD, and for anyone who listens to it, I suggest you pay attention - this is the work Anton Chekhov, after all, and he is gonna be subtle. And he ain't gonna to comment directly, though he has a lot to say. Not much happens in Talent; there are no big moments, no cataclysmic scenes, and the story ends without climactic denouement. There are, however, ideas threaded throughout, and Chekhov evinces these in a couple of masterful ways. The images are wonderful, which is good because this is a story of a painter. But said images aren't merely pretty, they tell, they contain little gems of information, little bits of Chekhovian thought. Anton isn't simply going to come out and tell you what he thinks, he wants you to work for it, to chip some gold from the surrounding stone. Mostly, yer gonna hafta catch the parallels yerself - this is the main method Chekhov employs to display his colors. We have a painter. We have the painter's painter friends. We have the painter's neglected girlfriend whose neglected mother is also the painter's landlord. And we have a backdrop of workers, cobwebs, dust, and lots of dreaming about the future without a lot of effort put in to achieve it. And the connections between all of these provide an interesting commentary on art, work, class, and duty. An excellent story.

The second story is Anyuta: A medical student; an artist; a body. (The body of the Anyuta as it turns out - alas, she is alive - to the listener at least.) Chekhov employs the aforementioned strategies. Again, they are very effective. (What is the leap one must make to be a doctor or an artist? Listen, it's quite good.)

Number 3. The Helpmate. Even if one does not care for some of Chekhov's attitudes here, (and that assumes he is speaking universally, and is not merely describing a unique individual), it's still a fine piece with some nice twists and wonderful irony. Be careful with your choices in this life!

Four: Ivan Matveyitch. Mildly Amusing. (But the relationship in this bit reverberates somehow.)

Lastly (5), Polinka. And in this story, all of Chekhov's greatness is distilled. Tight as a whalebone corset.

Lance Caabrese (CA, USA) ★★★★★½

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