



Chekhov: Scenes from a Life

By Rosamund Bartlett

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Rosamund Bartlett is steeped in Chekhov's writings, having worked as a translator, and in the culture and history of 19th-century Russia. She has written not simply another biography of Chekhov but brought new understanding to the writings and character of Chekhov set amidst the landscape of Russia. This is a book of enormous detail about the places Chekhov visited and lived in, which is vital for a good understanding of the character of this unusual and complex man. Examining these locations also informs and widens interpretation of the short stories. The author examines with careful precision Chekhov's genius, and shows that he is not simply the gloomy writer of popular myth but one with profound humanity and humour.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Anton Chekhov (1860–1904) is primarily known to Americans as a brilliant playwright of late 19th-century soulful Russian malaise. But he also wrote farces for the stage, as well as collections of short stories, from early comedic sketches to the more serious fare that defined his mature style. According to British scholar Bartlett (*Wagner and Russia*), Chekhov's range grew out of a restless spirit of adventure and love of travel. Bartlett calls her biography "deliberately impressionistic," which is an apt description, since she organizes it by place, from her subject's childhood on the steppes to Moscow, the far reaches of Siberia and beyond. This can lead to some confusion and the necessity to return to the same events repeatedly, but the book succeeds in ways that chronological biographies cannot. Using Chekhov's correspondence with relatives, editors and friends, as well as a knowledge of the geography and history of the Russian empire, Bartlett brings an era to life. Although long trapped by the official Soviet account of his life, Chekhov is here revealed as a man deeply attached to both natural settings and his relationships with the people around him. B&w photos. (Mar. 1)

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Review

"An excellent new biography, in fine Chekhovian style, by a writer with a deep knowledge of Russian culture and nature." —*Evening Standard*

About the Author

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Margaret Barone:

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