

It was at this time that he began working with me on the first English version of his book, To the Actor: On the Technique of Acting.

Michael Chekhov was born in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1891. Nephew of the playwright Anton Chekhov, he was heir to a distinguished name in literature and in the theatre. As a young member of the Maly Theatre in St. Petersburg, he showed unusual promise as an actor, and in 1912 he was invited by Constantin Stanislavsky to join the Moscow Art Theatre where, during the ensuing sixteen years of collaboration, the scope of his talent was revealed. His genius-- of an intensity rarely to be found even in the Russian theatre - was fostered, disciplined and directed, first by Stanislavsky's System, then by collaboration with Vakhtangov, and later by his own method.

In conjunction with such brilliant actor-directors as Sulerzhitsky, Boleslavsky, and Vakhtangov, Chekhov assisted Stanislavsky in founding the First Studio which, in 1924, became the Second Moscow Art Theatre.<sup>1</sup> Chekhov was its director for the following <sup>two</sup> five years, during which time he continued teaching in his own dramatic school where he began the first experiments with his ideas for an inner acting technique.

As an actor, Chekhov's brilliant interpretation of a number of great classic roles (The Inspector General, Malvolio, King Lear, Eric XIV, Hamlet, and others) earned for him the distinction of Honored Artist of the Republic; but, in spite of both fame and popularity, his philosophical

<sup>1</sup> Important insights into the First Studio history will be found in Chapter III, "The First Studio: Sulerzhitsky-Vakhtangov-Chekhov" by P.A. Parkov, and Chapter XIII, "Inside the Moscow Art Theatre" by Oliver W. Saylor. Both appear in the appendix to this work.