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to slow, James and some theater pals gathered in Brown's studio in June 2021. After a reading, he decided that with the cost of royalties, and no way of knowing the audience potential, rather than risk a full production he would plan a polished, staged reading on one weekend.

Actors Terri Baier and Cameron Lira will return for the production. Baier recently appeared in the troupe's comedy review "Simple Salmon: The Respawn," and Cameron Lira acted in a scene from Sheridan's "The School for Scandal" in the troupe's "Almost Baroque" variety show last year.

Newcomers on the scene include Nancy Watkins, a transplant from Chicago in her first Astoria play, and 2020 Astoria High School graduate Sean Cooney, most recently seen as the butler in the high school's production of "Clue." They will be joined by experienced community actors Jordan Griffin, Mark Erickson and Mick Alderman.

Alderman, who recently directed "The 39 Steps" at the Coaster Theatre Playhouse in Cannon Beach, portrays Doyle Trigorin, Posner's version of the writer who some consider Chekhov's finest male role. Dan Gerth provides music for the show.

James noted that Posner once described his work as "a sort of adaptation" of Chekhov's 1896 work. The original version featured two writers with contrasting styles, an ingenue and a fading actress, addressing love, art and growing up while searching for meaning.

"Like 'The Seagull,' the teacher loves Masha who loves Conrad who loves Nina

who loves the esteemed writer Trigorin who is loved by Conrad's mother, a famous actress," he said. "And those story arcs exquisitely play through the two hours traffic on the stage," James said.

"The Seagull" was the first of Chekhov's four memorable plays, but was not an immediate success. The play's character Constantine, who acts as the author's mouthpiece, called for new forms of theater. These were embraced by nontraditional Russian stage director Konstantin Stanislavski, whose concept of method acting was later adopted by actor Marlon Brando, among others.

"The Seagull" was a dud until it came to the attention of the newly formed Moscow Art Theater and Stanislavski himself," James said, "it became their first commercial and artistic success. The seagull became the emblem of the theater," he added.

One of Posner's characters is equally vociferous about the need for new forms of theater. "My notion of Chekhov is that through seemingly innocuous dialogue he exposes the innermost angst and despair and hopelessness of his characters," James said. "Posner gives voice to the characters' three o'clock in the morning inner dialog. Both plays are humorous in their way. Posner's humor is brash, boisterous, challenges the boundaries," he added.

James, who acted professionally before moving back to Astoria, is intrigued to observe how audiences react. "My hope is that 'Stupid F\*!#ing Bird' will present an evening of touching drama, uproarious laughter and enough thought provocation that you'll have to talk about it after you leave the theater. As great theater does," he said.

**Jordan Griffin, right, plays a teacher who has eyes for a cook, played by Terri Baier, left, in 'Stupid F\*!#ing Bird.'**

Photos by Patrick Webb



**A doctor, played by Mark Erickson, right, tries to console a troubled young woman in love, portrayed by Terri Baier, left.**



**A fading actress, played by Nancy Watkins, left, watches with scorn as an ingenue, played by Cameron Lira, center, moves in on her man, a writer played by Mick Alderman, right, in a tense moment.**