

**Gregory  
PECK**

**Lloyd  
BRIDGES**

**Leslie  
CARON**

**Sharon  
GLESS**

**Patricia  
NEAL**

**Jack  
PALANCE**

**Mala  
POWERS**

**Anthony  
QUINN**

**Richard  
SCHICKEL**

**Craig  
SHEFFER**

**Robert  
STACK**

**Beatrice  
STRAIGHT**

**and many  
MORE...**



"A valentine to  
two influential and beloved  
teachers of the thespian craft"

*-Variety*

**ART...  
POLITICS...  
REVOLUTION...  
WAR...**

# ***FROM RUSSIA TO HOLLYWOOD:***

*The 100-Year Odyssey of Chekhov and Shdanoff*

  
**PATHFINDER**  
HOME ENTERTAINMENT

# FROM RUSSIA TO HOLLYWOOD:

*The 100-Year Odyssey of Chekhov and Shdanoff*

P R E S S R E L E A S E

CONTACT: Frederick Keeve ■ 4120 Jasmine Avenue, Culver City, CA 90232 ■ 310-841-6966 ■ Fax 310-876-1683 ■ keeve@attbi.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 23, 2002

*From Russia to Hollywood: The 100-Year Odyssey of Chekhov and Shdanoff*, narrated by Gregory Peck and Mala Powers, focuses on the epic journey of Michael Chekhov and George Shdanoff whose careers encompassed the major political events of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Mr. Chekhov, one of the great actor/artists of our time, and Mr. Shdanoff, an accomplished actor/director/teacher in his own right, were colleagues for many years, developing the acting techniques that influenced generations of noted actors and directors in Hollywood.

Chekhov was the Moscow Art Theater's most brilliant star, but his success was in direct contrast to a tumultuous personal life which included escape from persecution, revolution, war, divorce, family deaths, alcoholism and insanity. Although he survived his personal turmoil, the Stalinist regime in Russia deemed Chekhov a 'mystic' and targeted him for 'liquidation.' Forced to escape Russia at the height of his career in 1928, he landed in Berlin where he met George Shdanoff, a Russian Jew whose family was also exiled from mother Russia. Shdanoff sought out Chekhov and a new age of acting technique was born. The two men became not only close personal friends, but artistic collaborators for over twenty-five years, until Chekhov's untimely death in 1955.

Anthony Quinn, Jack Palance, Patricia Neal, Leslie Caron, Robert Stack, Lloyd Bridges, Sharon Gless, Beatrice Straight, Craig Sheffer, John Berry, Hurd Hatfield, Ford Rainey, Jack Larson, and many others reveal through intimate stories and memories the impact which these two acting teachers, Chekhov and Shdanoff, had on their lives and careers. The audience gains first-hand knowledge of how legendary actors and directors such as Marilyn Monroe, James Dean, Ingrid Bergman, Tyrone Power, Gary Cooper, Rex Harrison, Paul Newman, Clint Eastwood, Jack Nicholson, Jack Palance, Jennifer Jones, Gregory Peck, Yul Brynner, Robert Taylor, Arthur Penn, Martin Ritt and other noted artists have used the Chekhov/Shdanoff techniques to develop the seminal roles of their careers, many of which won them Oscars™ and Tony Awards. Chekhov himself was nominated for best supporting actor for his performance in Hitchcock's *Spellbound*.

The film is directed by Frederick Keeve, who conceived of this project while studying acting with the then ninety-year-old Mr. Shdanoff. Mr. Keeve worked on the project for more than seven years, having shot over 200 hours of footage in various countries around the world. Keeve is joined by co-producer Lisa Dalton, President of the Michael Chekhov Studio USA West, and by Mala Powers, Executrix of the Chekhov Estate. Charles X Block and Peter Spirer have collaborated with Mr. Keeve as producers on this unique documentary. Mr. Block and Mr. Spirer are the producers of the film *Rhyme & Reason* (Miramax), and the Academy Award-nominated *Blood Ties*.



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## TWENTIETH CENTURY'S LEGENDARY STARS TALK ABOUT THEIR ACTING TECHNIQUES AND THE TWO MEN WHO SHAPED THEIR CAREERS

Los Angeles, California—*From Russia to Hollywood: The 100-Year Odyssey of Chekhov and Shdanoff*, narrated by Gregory Peck and Mala Powers, focuses on the epic journey of Michael Chekhov and George Shdanoff whose careers encompassed the major political events of the Twentieth Century. Chekhov, one of the great actor/artists of our time, and Shdanoff, an accomplished actor/director/teacher in his own right, were colleagues for many years, developing the acting techniques that influenced generations of noted actors and directors in Hollywood.

This film features intimate stories and memories of today's best-loved actors on how these two men impacted their lives and careers. The audience gains first-hand knowledge of how legendary actors have used the Chekhov/Shdanoff techniques to develop the seminal roles of their careers, many of which won them Oscars™ and Tony Awards—the most recent public acknowledgment was at the Golden Globe Awards when Jack Nicholson accepted a Career Achievement Award.

Directed by Frederick Keeve, who studied acting with George Shdanoff, this film was seven years in the making, with over 200 hours of footage shot in various countries around the world. Keeve is joined by co-producer Lisa Dalton, President of the Michael Chekhov Studio USA West, and Mala Powers, Executrix of the Chekhov Estate. Charles X Block and Peter Spierer collaborated with Keeve as producers on this unique documentary.

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## PARTIAL LIST OF ACTORS APPEARING IN THIS FILM

Ingrid Bergman	Jack Larson
John Berry	Jack Lemmon
Marlon Brando	Dorothy Malone
Lloyd Bridges	Dorothy McGuire
Yul Brynner	Marilyn Monroe
Leslie Caron	Patricia Neal
Gary Cooper	Paul Newman
Jeff Corey	Jack Nicholson
Tony Curtis	David Niven
Joan Crawford	Jack Palance
Kirk Douglas	Gregory Peck
Faye Dunaway	Tyrone Power
Clint Eastwood	Mala Powers
Tom Ewell	Anthony Quinn
Jose Ferrer	Ford Rainey
Sharon Gless	Ronald Reagan
Farley Granger	Paul Rogers
Rex Harrison	Craig Sheffer
Hurd Hatfield	Robert Stack
Sterling Hayden	Barbara Stanwyck
Audrey Hepburn	Beatrice Straight
William Holden	Elizabeth Taylor
Rock Hudson	Robert Taylor
Jennifer Jones	Gene Tierney
Deborah Kerr	Robert Walker
Gene Kelly	

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## PARTIAL LIST OF ACTORS WHO STUDIED WITH CHEKHOV, SHDANOFF &/OR SCHREIBER

John Abbott	Grace Kelly
Ingrid Bergman	Tony Martin
John Berry (actor/director)	Joanna Merlin
Betsy Blair	Marilyn Monroe
Janet Blair	Patricia Neal
Lloyd Bridges	Paul Newman
Geraldine Brooks	Jack Nicholson
Yul Brynner	Jack Palance
Leslie Caron	Lili Palmer
Cyd Charisse	Jerry Paris
Gary Cooper	Suzy Parker
Yvonne de Carlo	Gregory Peck
James Dean	Arthur Penn (director)
Clint Eastwood	Tyrone Power
Eva Gabor	Mala Powers
Sharon Gless	Anthony Quinn
Farley Granger	Ford Rainey
Jane Greer	Martin Ritt (actor/director)
Rex Harrison	Paul Rogers
Hurd Hatfield	Robert Stack
Sterling Hayden	Beatrice Straight
Jennifer Jones	Robert Taylor
Gene Kelly	Vera-Ellen
	Robert Walker

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## PARTIAL LIST OF FILM CLIPS

A Fistful of Dollars	Niagara
All About Eve	No Man's Land (1931)
An American in Paris	One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest
Anastasia	Rebel without a Cause
Blowing Wild	Shane
Bus Stop	Singin' in the Rain
Cape Fear (1962)	Spellbound
Cyrano de Bergerac	Some Like it Hot
Dirty Harry	Sudden Fear
Duel in the Sun	Superman (TV series)
Dr. Strangelove	The Asphalt Jungle
East of Eden	The Big Knife
Gentlemen Prefer Blondes	The Fountainhead
Gentlemen's Agreement	The Good, the Bad, the Ugly
Giant	The Guns of Navarone
Gigi	The King and I
High Noon	The King of Marvin Gardens
How to Marry A Millionaire	The Magnificent Seven
Hud	The Outlaw Josie Wales
Ivanhoe	The Razor's Edge
Lawrence of Arabia	The Seven Year Itch
Lili	To Kill a Mockingbird
Moby Dick	True Grit
Monkey Business	Viva Zapata
My Fair Lady	Written on the Wind
Network	

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## MICHAEL CHEKHOV

Michael Chekhov, the nephew of the renowned Russian author Anton Chekhov, was the Moscow Art Theater's most brilliant star. However, his success was in direct contrast to a tumultuous personal life which included escape from persecution, revolution, war, divorce, family deaths, alcoholism and insanity. Although he survived his personal turmoil, the Stalinist regime in Russia deemed Chekhov a "mystic" and targeted him for "liquidation." Forced to escape Russia in 1928 at the height of his career, he landed in Berlin where he met George Shdanoff, a Russian Jew whose family was also exiled from Russia. Shdanoff sought out Chekhov, and a new age of acting technique was born. The two men became not only close personal friends, but artistic collaborators for over twenty-five years, until Chekhov's untimely death.

Chekhov was reborn as a star in Berlin in the early thirties starring in three successful German films, in addition to creating the role of Skid in Max Reinhardt's version of the Broadway hit *Artists*. Escaping Hitler's Germany, Chekhov toured the United States with the Moscow Art Players to great critical acclaim and it was in Philadelphia that actress Beatrice Straight saw Chekhov in *The Inspector General* and immediately hired him to become artistic director of the newly created Michael Chekhov Studio at Dartington Hall in Devonshire, England. Chekhov convinced his good friend and colleague George Shdanoff to become co-director at the Chekhov Studio and together they created many plays and productions, both at Dartington Hall and later in Ridgefield, Connecticut and in New York. Their first Broadway production was *The Possessed* which Shdanoff wrote and Chekhov directed. They also co-directed a series of groundbreaking plays for the Chekhov Theater Studio which toured much of the United States. Yul Brynner, Hurd Hatfield, Paul Rogers, Ford Rainey, Beatrice Straight were only a few of the noted actors in their company.

As World War II took shape, the draft kept "plucking out our Malvolios," and Chekhov and Shdanoff, along with their wives, headed for Hollywood in 1943. They witnessed friends being persecuted via the HUAC's hunt for Communists in the entertainment industry, but Chekhov and Shdanoff overcame this by not only working at the Actor's Lab, but privately coaching some of the most legendary stars in Hollywood. Chekhov earned an Academy Award nomination for his work in Hitchcock's *Spellbound* with Gregory Peck and Ingrid Bergman. He starred in a total of twelve Hollywood films, taught classes in Hollywood attended by many noted and upcoming actors such as Gary Cooper, James Dean, Marilyn Monroe and many others. Chekhov died at the age of 64 in 1955.

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## GEORGE SHDANOFF

George Shdanoff grew up in the provincial town of Smolensk, Russia. His mother and father were both very respected doctors in spite of being of Jewish descent. As the Revolution of 1917 and Civil War besieged the country, George's father had no choice but to move his family to a safer 'haven'—Berlin. It was in Berlin in 1928 that Shdanoff, already a noted actor at the Statstheatre, met Chekhov for the first time. It was the beginning of an auspicious professional relationship as well as a warm, close friendship. While Chekhov was acting in films and on stage in Berlin and in nearby European countries, George proceeded to co-direct a groundbreaking film entitled *No Man's Land*. It became one of the most acclaimed films of its time. When Hitler heard of this anti-war film, he had his henchmen release thousands of rats in the theaters to drive audiences away. He succeeded in destroying all but one copy of the film which made its way to the United States under the title of *Hell on Earth*. Lost for over thirty years, it was rediscovered and painstakingly restored to show print quality today by producer Maurice Zouary.

George not only co-directed many plays with Chekhov throughout the thirties and forties, he also coached, along with his talented wife, Elsa Schreiber, some of the most legendary stars of the Golden Age of Hollywood. Shdanoff and Chekhov appeared together in the film *Spectre of the Rose* with Dame Judith Anderson, and their most notable stage appearance together was in *The Music Box*. After Chekhov's untimely death in 1955, George carried on their work for over forty years, teaching and evolving the acting work that he and Michael Chekhov had developed together. George's passing in August 1998 marked an end of an era, but the work is continued through the International Michael Chekhov Association, Mala Powers who is Executrix of the Chekhov Estate, former acting students and through the many Chekhov-trained acting teachers throughout the world.