

How would you want
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How would you want your audience to respond to Nina in her final appearance of the play? Discuss how you would perform the role, in three sections of the play, in order to achieve your aims. At the end of 'The Seagull' the audience will have seen Nina's journey from youthful optimism in Act One, as the adored girlfriend of Konstantin and a would-be actress, to disappointment and unhappiness in Act Four, as the abandoned lover of Trigorin and a third rate professional actress. If I were to play the role of Nina, I would want my audience to be saddened by my final appearance at the end of the play and yet to respond positively to my fortitude. The audience see that my dreams have been thwarted, although not extinguished.

Nina is a very significant character in the play, she is the character most clearly associated with the motif of the seagull, and, although not always considered to be the main role in the play, this association suggests that 'The Seagull' might be considered to be Nina's story. In order to achieve my preferred audience response of sadness and respect for Nina at the end of the play, I intend to play the role naturalistically; I will have to prepare the audience, carefully in the Acts leading up to it. All of the characters in the play seem to be unfulfilled in some way but Nina's youth and purity should mark her out especially for audience sympathy.

I will play Nina as a very pretty young girl in Act One with natural beauty and an open and unaffected charm. I will be blonde haired and blue-eyed and rounded in my figure. I envisage Madame Arkadina as dark haired and very trim in her figure; where she is imperious and affected, Nina is sweet, a little shy, and very natural. The contrast between the two women is significant as

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Arkadina is a great actress and Nina aspires to be similarly successful. Nina's fresh faced beauty inspires jealousy in Arkadina, while Arkadina only inspires Nina's admiration.

My very first appearance should charm the audience as much as I charm Konstantin and Sorin. When Konstantin addresses Nina as ' Enchantress', I will look coyly away and then back at him directly with a big smile. I am out of breath from rushing but the pleasure of having arrived in time for the performance allows me to laugh easily as I re-call that I have been hurrying, ' whipping and whipping the horse'. I will imitate the action here in an unreserved way- causing both Sorin and Konstantin to laugh with me. When Nina is left alone with Konstantin I will smile widely at him. At this point in the play the audience needs to know what the relationship is exactly between Nina and Konstantin. When I am talking about my father's disapproval of the ' bohemian' reputation of Konstantin's family I will giggle to myself then slow down and take Konstantin's hand, saying earnestly, ' But it's the lake that draws me here, like a seagull' - this line is so important in establishing Nina as the seagull that I will pause afterwards, drop Konstantin's hand and use my shawl like a pair of wings as I twirl around, smiling. After a pause I say, ' ...My heart's full of you' again smiling directly into Konstantin's face.

The audience will remember this moment in the final scene when I recite some lines from Konstantin's play. I have already said, quite tenderly, ' It was good, (pause) before, Kostya' and, having reached the end of the recitation, I will hold my arms out again, clutching my white shawl, in a

movement that will remind them of my earlier frivolity so that they will be

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saddened to see what has happened to the girl who was drawn to the lake, and to Kostya, before she met Trigorin. In Act One, although I am nervous about being seen by the others, I allow Konstantin to kiss me, but then, in keeping with late nineteenth century conventions of courtship, I modestly pull away and ask about the elm tree, to try to divert Konstantin and prevent him from any more amorous behaviour.

I will show my purity by looking a little flustered after the kiss, re-arranging my hair and smoothing my skirt. This is not the way I behave at the end of Act Three when Trigorin takes Nina in his arms and they engage in ' a prolonged kiss'. While my feelings for Konstantin were genuine, they were comparatively chaste; the audience, watching me reciprocate while Trigorin kisses me, will be alerted to the fact that I am now a woman whose passions have been aroused and I ignore conventions of modesty. I will hold Trigorin's head as he kisses me and lift one foot off the ground behind me as I almost swoon into him. This will prepare the audience for Nina's sacrifice to the man who so resembles his ' idea for a short story', who destroys her, ' quite idly'.

It will add to their feelings of sympathy and sadness when they see her in Act Four, bereft of Trigorin and startled when she hears his laughter ringing through the house. One of the reasons why the audience will feel sympathy for Nina at the end of the play is that they have seen her embark on her own course of self-destruction, oblivious to the dangers posed by Trigorin.

Trigorin's interest in Nina is fuelled partly by his own vanity and when he reads his own words engraved on the medallion that Nina presents him with, he is flattered into arranging an assignation. I would emphasise Nina's

naivete in Act Three when giving Trigorin the medallion; I would not want the <https://assignbuster.com/how-would-you-want-your-audience-to-respond-to-nina-in-her-final-appearance-of-the-play-essay/>

audience to believe that I am flirting with him. I will approach him childishly with my hand clenched and outstretched when I say ‘ Odds or evens? ’

Looking up at him, hopefully, more like a little girl than an attractive woman.

When Trigorin will not be drawn into whether or not Nina should become an actress, I will shyly open the other hand and reveal the medallion – underlining the innocence behind the gesture. While Nina is obviously attracted to Trigorin, she should seem more in awe of his talent than his person; I don’t want her to appear at all conscious that he might become her lover, until the kiss at the end of the Act, already mentioned. When Nina appears in the final Act, the audience have just heard Konstantin telling Doctor Dorn what has happened to her. They know that the ‘ affair’ that they saw begin in Act Three has resulted in a baby and that the baby has died.

They know that Nina’s professional acting is often crude and awkward and they are prepared to see an unhappy woman when Konstantin brings her gently into the room and out of the storm. What they will not be prepared for is the transformation that Nina has undergone. I want the audience to be surprised by my physical appearance. I will wear make-up that makes me look drawn and my eyes, as Konstantin comments, look larger. While previously I always appeared prettily dressed, in Act Four I will look untidy; I will have wet straggly hair and my shawl will look quite tattered. I will stare about me as Konstantin leads me into the house, trying to recognise the room that has been adapted into Kostya’s study. I want the audience to be shocked by the physical transformation in me. In Acts One and Three, Nina’s speech pattern is pacey and filled with her exuberance but in Act Four I will

speak haltingly; looking quizzically at Konstantin and when I say ' I am the seagull.

No, that's not right. ' I will stare at him imploringly as if waiting for him to reassure me. The audience should be concerned for Nina's sanity and sympathise with her for having given herself so completely to the man they have just seen showing indifference, in fact incomprehension, when presented with the stuffed seagull by Shamrayev. However, Chekhov's intentions seem to be that Nina is the only character in the play who has grown. Sorin is dying, Dorn is as cynical as ever and Arkadina continues to have a hold over the weak and vain Trigorin. Despite having achieved modest success as a writer, even Konstantin reveals that he has lost his way. His encounter with Nina, who continues to believe that she will become a great actress, pushes him to suicide.

It's important to play Nina's strength as well as her misery in this final Act to earn the respect of the audience. For this reason, when delivering Nina's speech of affirmation in Act Four, having heard Trigorin's empty laughter and recollected his ' idea for a short story', my voice will regain some of its former strength as I talk about my acting. I will take Kostya's hands and looking directly into his eyes, explain, ' I've become a real actress' – emphasising ' real'. As I describe my feelings, ' I have the feeling that every day my spiritual strength has grown' I will nod my head, looking into Kostya's eyes directly. The key to Nina's strength comes from her, painfully acquired, selfknowledge – something that eludes all of the other characters.

I will rise from my seat when saying, ' I know now Kostya, I understand now that in our work.... he main thing...is the ability to endure' I will say this with determination and belief. For the first time, it is Nina who is counselling Kostya, when I try to help him by saying, ' have faith. I have faith', I will touch his hand and then look up with new resolve when I say, ' when I think of my vocation, I am not afraid of life', the audience will see a strength in Nina that perhaps they did not think her capable of. I want the audience to admire her, finally.

Despite her hunger and weariness, when she recites ' Men and Lions, partridges and eagles' I will speak the lines with a passion that was missing in Act One and make Kostya's lines sound impressive rather than foolish. Hurriedly exiting after one brief embrace of Konstantin, I wish the audience to feel satisfied that this seagull has not been destroyed – only wounded – and that I will recover, and fly again.