

**Title:** Less is More: Tracing the Development of Chekhov's Art of the Unspoken  
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The significance of nonverbal attributes in Chekhov's poetics is widely acknowledged, and any comprehensive study of his plays addresses the question of the general role of pauses in his art of the unspoken. Most scholarly studies of Chekhov's use of silence in his plays, however, focus on the pauses explicitly marked in the text by the word "Pause." For the purposes of my analysis, I expand the definition of the pause to encompass also elliptical pauses, by far the most numerous in Chekhov's plays. Their significance, I argue, stems not only from the frequency of their use. Indeed, because Chekhov's artistry is revealed not in ornate poeticism, but in understated simplicity, the subtle elliptical pauses can be seen as the best manifestation of his poetics, with the ordinariness of life captured in their inconspicuous nature. This paper traces the development of Chekhov's art of the unspoken by examining the nonverbal texture of *Uncle Vanya* (1899), one of Chekhov's mature plays that is fully representative of his dramatic system and style, and *The Wood Demon*, a far more conventional play that premiered ten years earlier. Although the latter was considered a failure by the author himself, it is significant for the evolution of his art and serves as a good point of departure for the investigation of silence in his works, since *The Wood Demon* can essentially be seen as an earlier version of *Uncle Vanya*, with a significant number of the characters, scenes, and utterances carried over into the later work. Still, despite the many resemblances, the two plays are independent works, different in spirit, style, and overall approach. By exploring the dramatist's use of silence in *The Wood Demon* and *Uncle Vanya*, this paper examines how much of the latter play's complexity can be attributed to nonverbal attributes. It suggests that pauses in Chekhov evolve from serving mainly to create the impression of "life as it is," in the realist tradition, to bringing what Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko termed the lyrical "undercurrent" ("podvodnoe techenie") to the fore and becoming "apertures into Eternity," in the words of Andrei Bely. While realistic in their very nature, pauses in mature Chekhov can be seen as holes in the lattice of life, as breaks in the fabric of the text, which allow the transcendent undercurrents of human existence to come forth from just below the surface of the ordinariness of life portrayed.