

# Classy cast pulls off both plays

## Theatre

*King Lear* and *The Seagull*  
August 18-25  
Aotea Centre  
Reviewed by Elizabeth Allan

If you've ever forgotten your life-long pin number at the ATM, you'll appreciate how hard it must be to remember every weighted word of a serious play – let alone two plays on alternate days.

Yet that is what most of the cast of Shakespeare's *King Lear* and *The Seagull* by Russian writer Anton Chekhov did last month when the Royal Shakespeare Company brought its joint productions to Auckland's Aotea Centre.

Each play was performed five

times over eight days. I went to *King Lear* on Tuesday August 21 and *The Seagull* on Thursday August 23.

The cast was of such calibre there didn't seem to be a single dialogue fluff or toe put wrong in either performance, which were each more than three hours long.

I hung on every meaningful word of Shakespeare's tragic tale of familial deceit and misplaced loyalty, listening out for the lines we picked apart at school. And I was intrigued by the melodrama in *The Seagull*, which is a satirical story of unrequited love and artistic aspiration.

Sir Ian McKellen, of Gandalf fame, was riveting as King Lear, who becomes increasingly crazy and fragile as the play marches on – maddened by his misjudg-

ment of his three daughters.

He even gave the audience a look at his family jewels as Lear shed his clothes in lament of mankind, while roaming mad on the moors.

Misty water genuinely drenched the actors and howling noises added to the chaos of the scene.

But while McKellen dominated *King Lear* – earning a full-house, standing ovation at curtain call – he had a minor, comical role in *The Seagull*.

Instead, Lear's three daughters, reincarnated, stole the stage in the latter play. The eldest and wickedest daughter became a conceited actress and negligent mother; the equally self-serving middle daughter turned into a depressive, hard-drinking drunk;

and the youngest, purest daughter was a somewhat irritating outsider.

To switch roles night to night, not to mention remembering all those lines, can't be an easy task. But the two plays are comparable and complementary in many ways. Both explore the complex, often duplicitous, relationships among families. And both warn against nurturing your vanity over your loved ones.

Yet there were moments when the crowd laughed out loud too. Lear's fool served up light comic relief with wizened cracks about people's stupidity and slapstick routines. And Sorin broke the brooding navel-gazing of *The Seagull* with self-deprecating asides.

The Royal Shakespeare



PHOTO: MANUEL HARLAN

SIR IAN MCKELLEN

Company often has two plays in action at the same time – performed in repertoire, as theatre buffs would say – and you should seize the chance to see one at the earliest opportunity.

# Ryan Adams inventive but stubborn

## Concert

*Ryan Adams and The Cardinals*  
August 15  
Bruce Mason Centre  
Reviewed by Dan Satherley

It turns out Ryan Adams is human after all. This is not to suggest he somehow stumbled, showed weakness, or just plain wasn't worth the hype. Oh no, not at all.

But seeing him on the stage – heavy-metal t-shirt, jeans and all – confirmed that yes, he is in fact an actual human being. Releasing nine brilliant albums in a seven-year solo career (a couple of them doubles) lent credence to the possibility Ryan Adams was some kind of god, you see.

The audience was expecting a varied mix from his genre-hop-

ping back catalogue. Unsurprisingly though, the set drew heavily from the albums featuring his current backing band The Cardinals – *Cold Roses*, *Jacksonville City Nights* and the recent *Easy Tiger*.

As requests for old classics such as Oh My Sweet Carolina and Come Pick Me Up echoed between songs, one of Ryan's few well-known human qualities – stubbornness – won out. Trips down memory lane were limited to a new arrangement of Demolition's Dear Chicago and a brilliant I See Monsters, fleshed out from the spooky acoustic *Love Is Hell* original.

What the show lacked in hits, however, it made up for in atmosphere and invention. Goodnight Rose set the scene, lasting double the length of the studio version,

and was twice as good.

The sweet country-rock of Easy Plateau ventured into Wilco's free noise territory, with the audience remaining deathly silent during the brooding, almost Floydian recovery. Both songs, as well as the title track to *Cold Roses*, were embellished with three, four and sometimes five-part harmonies as well as

new instrumental breaks.

The straight-ahead country of A Kiss Before I Go, one of few tracks done relatively faithfully, benefited from the extra weight of two electric guitars, while the brief, McCartney-esque Off Broadway became an epic show closer.

The album *Easy Tiger* may have arrived bearing only Ryan's

name, but The Cardinals certainly carried their weight musically. Drummer Brad Pemberton had masterful control over the dynamics of each individual song, while slide guitarist Jon Graboff filled gaps in the melodies with precision – even finding spots to country-up a bit in the heavier new material they debuted.

Not without humour, Ryan punctuated the show with obscure references to pirates and caves, and introduced Jon no fewer than five times. Another clue this wasn't your grandfather's country show was a bass player only known as "Spacewolf".

So though his band may be out-of-this-world, Ryan is most definitely human. But while love may be hell, seeing The Cardinals live is pretty close to heaven.



PHOTO: FRONTIER TOURING

OUT OF THIS WORLD: Ryan Adams and The Cardinals.

## music

### Switchfoot

*TelstraClear Pacific Events Centre*  
September 5

Parachute Music presents San Diego-based band Switchfoot who had hit singles Dare You To Move and Meant To Live. Tickets \$45 from Ticketdirect.

### OpShop and Guests

*King's Arms, Newton*  
September 7

Catch OpShop as they embark on three months of shows throughout New Zealand. Tickets \$20 from Ticketek.

### Ink/Coherent Birthday

*264 - 268 K Rd*  
September 7

Joint celebration for Coherent nightclub's first birthday and Ink Bar's sixth, with the Fanatics and the Defendants, plus DJs Greg Churchill, Dick Johnson, Ange and much more. \$15 presales from Real Groovy or \$20 on the door.

### Hogwild & Pages of Conspiracy and Love Shakes

*Shadows*  
September 15

Watch out for AUT's own Love Shakes - pop/indie/electro. \$5 at the door.

### Static fm 88.1

Mon -	8-10am Gavin & Luke 10-12pm Holly M & Kinsey 4-6pm Tina & Holly J 6-8pm Liz & Nick
Tues -	8-10am "AA" 12-2pm Lauren and Dom 2-4pm Rich & Nancy 4-6pm Vaughan & Althea
Wed -	10-12pm Amber M & Lisa 2-4pm Lana & Sara C 4-6pm Amy & Alea
Thur -	8-10am Tim & Erin 12-2pm Scott & Clint 4-6pm Jax & Livi
Fri -	2-4pm Amber & Ilsa 4-6pm Leon & Thomas

### Planet fm 104.6

Mon-	Tongan 6.30am Mandarin 1.35pm Arabic 2.10pm Singhalese 6.00pm Niuean 8.00am Ghanaian 6.15pm Russian 7.20pm Kiribati 9.20pm Hindi 8.00am
Tue-	Cantonese 1.35pm Punjabi 4.25pm Sri Lankan 8.15pm Tongan 6.00am Korean 11.35am Cook Islands 6.30pm Samoan 7.40pm
Fri-	Fijian 4.55pm Dutch 7.25pm Romanian 8.30pm Latino 10.40pm Albanian 9.25am Scottish 11.05am French 3.35pm Portuguese 8.40pm Jewish 9.00am Finnish 1.15pm South African 2.55pm Bangladeshi 7.10pm

## Entertainment editor's picks:

### Snow Patrol

*Auckland Vector Arena*  
September 14

The British rock act impressed audiences earlier this year and will surely do it again. Appearing with OpShop and Ian Archer. Ticket price includes a CD of Snow Patrol's *Final Straw* album. \$85 - \$89 tickets from Ticketmaster.

### AUT Maori Expo 2007

*Aotea Centre*  
August 31 9am-5pm

Main stage acts include Che Fu, Nesian Mistik and dance troupe DZIAH while top secondary school kapa haka groups from the 2007 Polyfest will also perform. There will be guest appearances from top sporting personalities plus a fashion catwalk and education exhibition.

### The Pillowman

*Auckland Maidment Theatre*  
To September 13

The New Zealand premiere of this new spellbinding and funny work from Martin McDonagh will definitely entertain. The play mesmerised audiences in London and New York. Starring Michael Hurst, Craig Parker. \$30 - \$54 tickets available from the Maidment Theatre.



PHOTO: AUCKLAND THEATRE CO.

THE PILLOWMAN