

King Lear star Eryn Jean Norvill spills on Geoffrey Rush, Neil Armfield and the challenge of Shakespeare's women

Sydney Theatre Company's *RISING* star of the stage Eryn Jean Norvill is Geoffrey Rush's favourite daughter — in fiction, if not in reality. The Sydney-based actress opens up about playing Shakespearean women and working opposite Oscar-winner Rush in the *King Lear*.

Norvill and Rush have joined forces with director Neil Armfield to present Shakespeare's tale of the king and his youngest daughter, both of whom are destined for fatal ends.

Hamlet — Norvill is no stranger to inhabiting and pushing the boundaries of a Shakespeare woman- the Sydney-based actress has been Romeo's Juliet and the water-bound Ophelia in now rounding out a trio of ill-fated females with her interpretation of Cordelia.

"Playing a Shakespearean woman can be tricky. Their journeys happen off the page, as footnotes or trigger points for the male protagonists to realise they should be better people," Norvill said.

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Geoffrey Rush and Eryn Jean Norvill in rehearsal for STC's *King Lear*.

"In a world surrounded by men who are cruel and self-indulgent, she somehow manages to be the youngest with this bizarre breadth of perspective. She's a better person than I am — I struggle with her." "But my rage and my small mindedness, all the things that make me a smaller person she struggles with as well." *Lear*, which runs at an impressive three hours, hides nothing of the king's descent into madness as he obsessively tries to weed out those who would betray him — including his most beloved daughter.

This sense of exile, of being separated from one's home, is a theme which Norvill said resonates with the current political climate around the world, and especially in Australia.

Geoffrey Rush and Eryn Jean Norvill in Sydney Theatre Company's *King Lear*. Picture: Heidrun Lohr "It's so frustrating what is going on in the world today with the amount of people displaced, asking "what is home?"", she said.

"We are very lucky as Australians ... when we think of these people and how they find strength. I hope that in telling this story we reach to their depths." "The heart of the piece and the intellect of the piece are these character who need, who you empathise with and feel, how all you want to do is rail against the machine."

Working opposite Oscar-winner Geoffrey Rush, who is “always flipping the coin to see what’s underneath” is exciting, Norvill said.

“Geoffrey is just forever playful. He’s so generous, he’s very cheeky which is perfect for me. I feel very privileged to work with him and proud to be his ‘favourite daughter’,” she joked.

Eryn Jean Norvill and Geoffrey Rush in Sydney Theatre Company’s *King Lear*. Picture: Heidrun Lohr This sense of playfulness means that the cast are “forever mining away” at the “beast” of a play — mirroring director Armfield’s desire for a fresh piece which asks unexpected questions.

Suddenly Last Summer, Robyn Nevin, who Norvill played opposite in STC’s production of plays *The Fool*, which is traditionally played by a man.

“There’s this idea of a person who this slippery form of gender. She can move through the cracks ... there is something to be said about how deeply the genius of Shakespeare runs. I don’t see why we can’t take them and explore them with women at the helm.” “Sometimes you get to do these roles which end with a question mark about what makes a good person or leader, how can we be better humans? Women like Ophelia and Juliet and Cordelia, they’re people that have some ability to hope.”

Geoffrey Rush and Eryn Jean Norvill in rehearsal for STC’s *King Lear*.

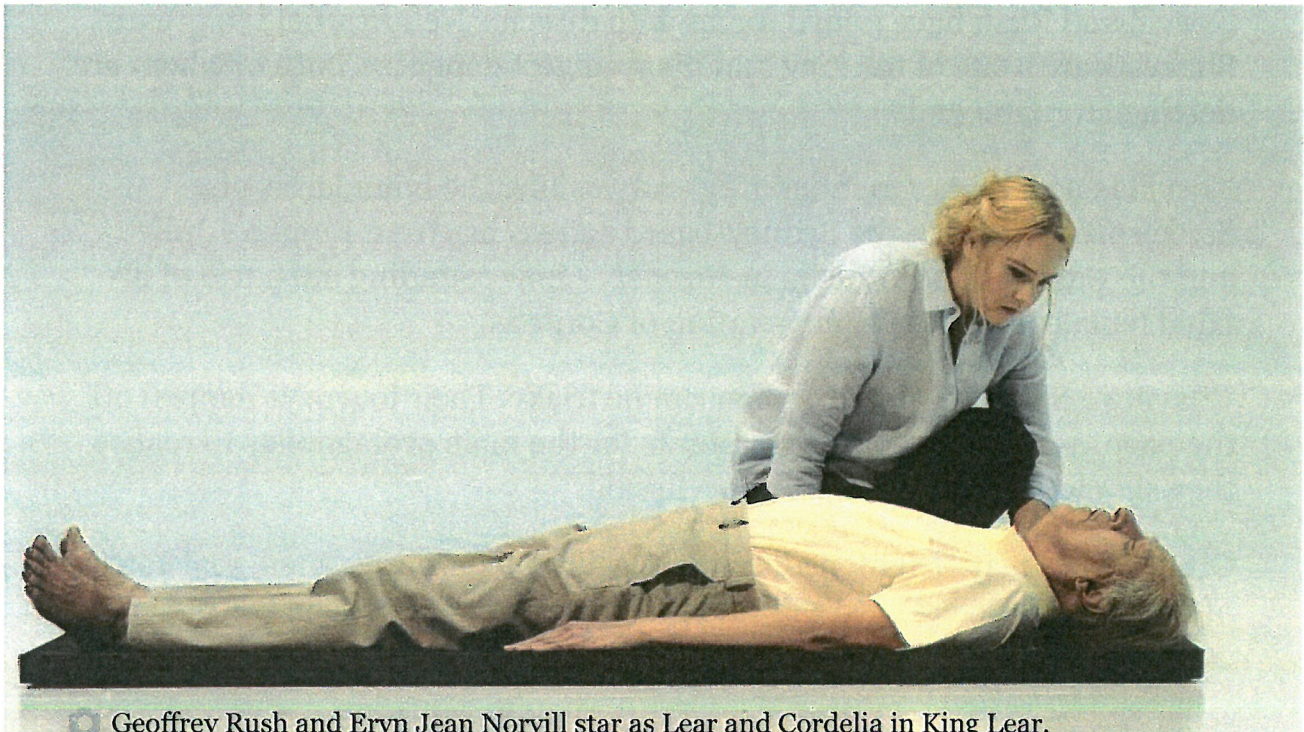
Geoffrey Rush and Eryn Jean Norvill in Sydney Theatre Company’s *King Lear*.

Picture: Heidrun Lohr Eryn Jean Norvill and Geoffrey Rush in Sydney Theatre Company’s *King Lear*. Picture: Heidrun Lohr Geoffrey Rush and Eryn Jean Norvill star as Lear and Cordelia in *King Lear*.

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Geoffrey Rush and Eryn Jean Norvill star as Lear and Cordelia in King Lear.

CITY EAST

King Lear star Eryn Jean Norvill spills on Geoffrey Rush, Neil Armfield and the challenge of Shakespeare's women

Heather McNab, CENTRAL
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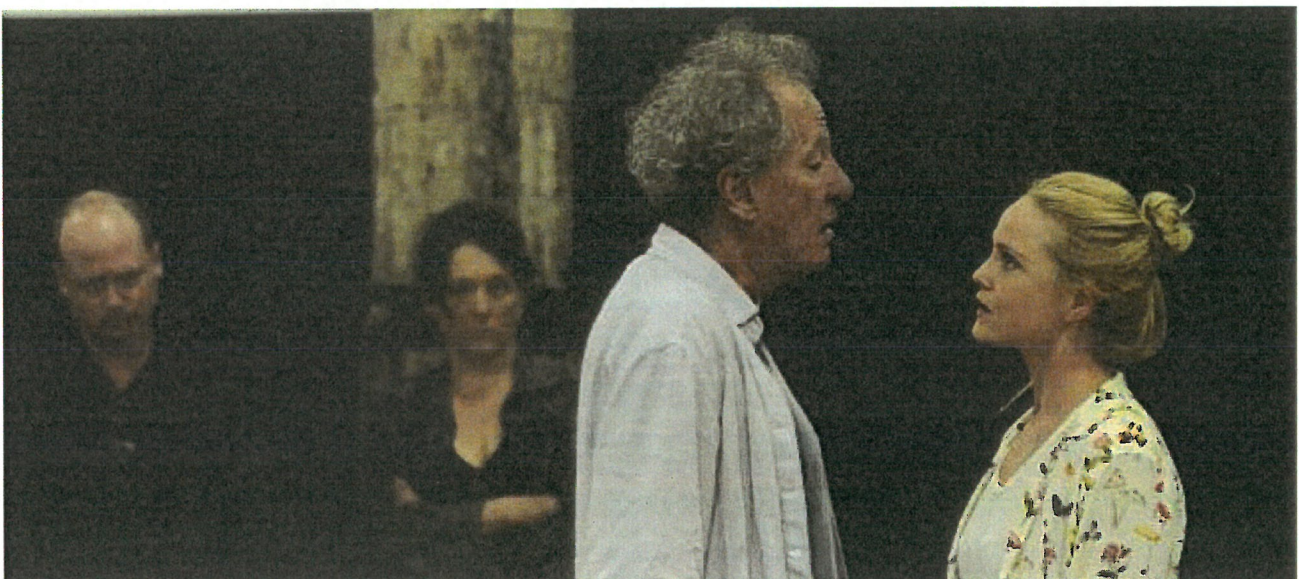
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📷 Geoffrey Rush and Eryn Jean Norvill in rehearsal for STC's King Lear.

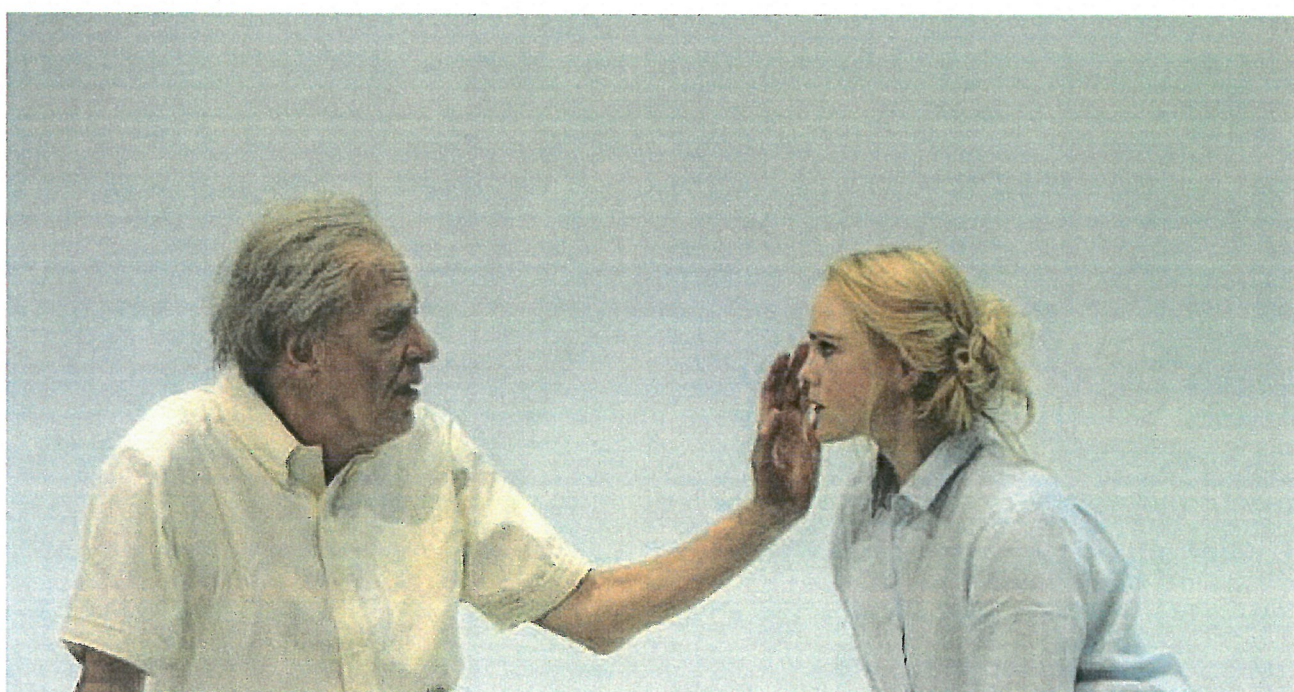
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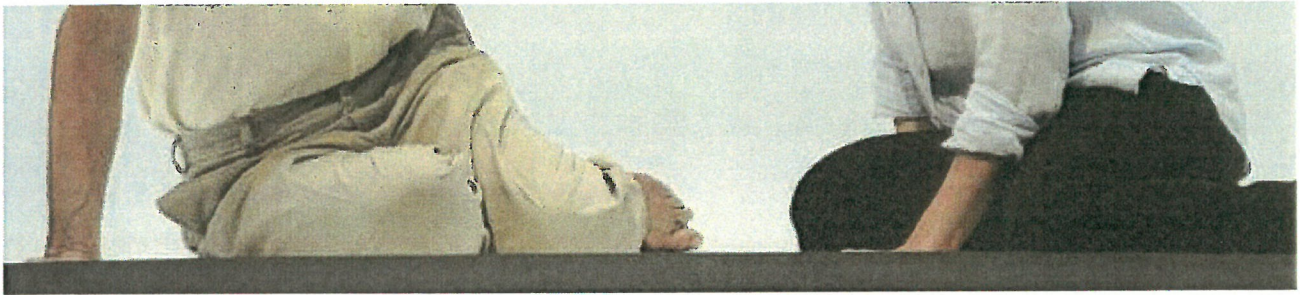
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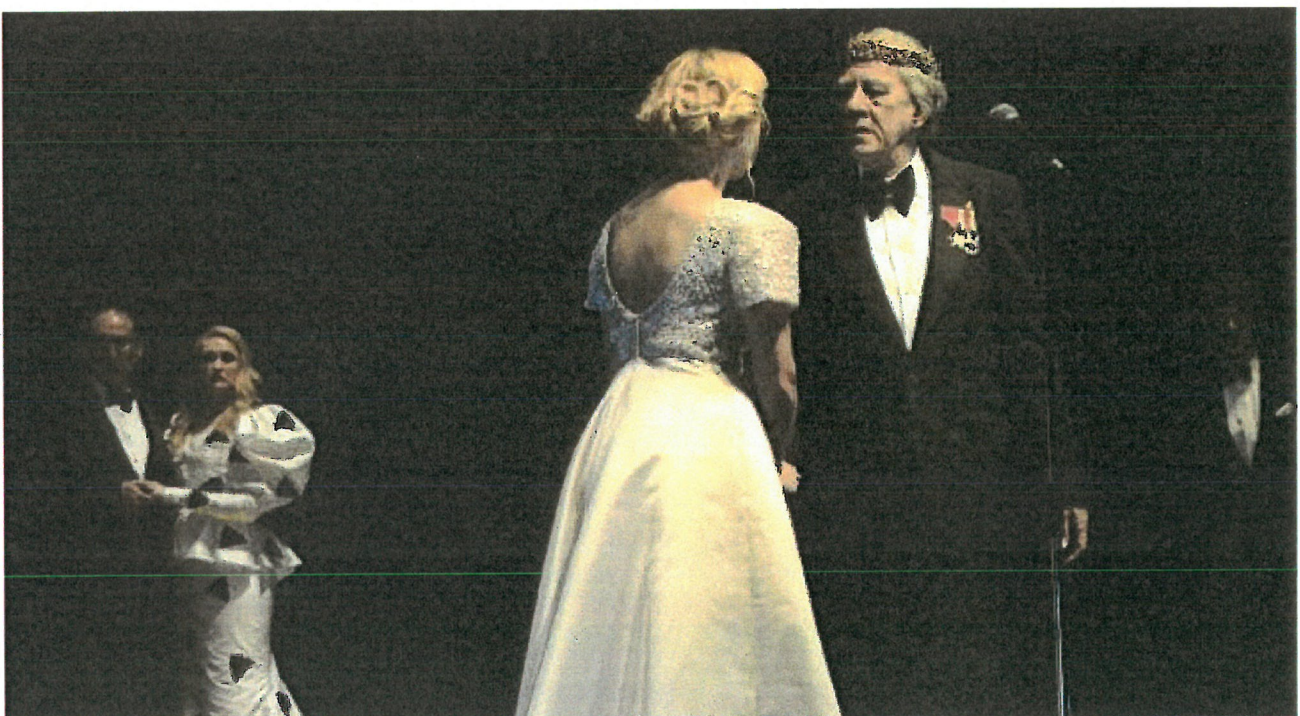
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