

MEDIA RELEASE

THE
COURT
THEATRE

25th January 2019

For immediate release

Elling

Written by Simon Bent

Based on the novel by Ingvar Ambjørnsen

Directed by Lara Macgregor

23 February – 16 March 2019

The Court Theatre's mainstage

Show Sponsor: The Court Supporters

Short show description:

Elling follows two middle-aged misfits (played by Mark Hadlow and Ross Gumbley) who have been given a final ultimatum: make it work living together in a state sponsored apartment in Oslo or return to the institution where they met – this time for good. *Elling* is quirky, magical and hilarious.

COMEDY DUO REUNITE ON STAGE AT THE COURT THEATRE

IN-BRIEF:

After more than nine years since their last performance together, comedy double act Mark Hadlow and Ross Gumbley will be reuniting on stage this February in quirky comedy *Elling*.

Following two middle-aged misfits trying to make it work as mismatched flatmates, these real-life friends will be playing an odd-couple of epic proportions in this Norwegian play directed by Lara Macgregor.

Hadlow's *Elling* is a neurotic budding poet, while Gumbley's *Kjell* is a career virgin who wants nothing more than to have sex. The pair become fast friends in a mental institute, before being thrown into the outside world with only each other to rely on.

Hadlow, one of New Zealand's most prominent actors, is thrilled to be reuniting with his old friend in this unconventional comedy.

"You know, Ross and I... It's a marriage, really," he laughs. "It's wonderful to work with someone you completely trust without any hesitation."

Rounding out the cast are Bruce Phillips, Gregory Cooper and Luanne Gordon, last seen together in Roger Hall's *Easy Money*.

As for whether Hadlow and Gumbley are truly an odd-couple in real life, well...

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The Court Theatre

PO Box 268

Christchurch 8140

New Zealand

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“With the odd-couple, of course, there's one straight one and one really odd one. Mark and I are still trying to work out which of us is the oddest!” Gumbley laughs.

Elling will be running at The Court Theatre from the 23 February – 16 March 2019.

IN-DEPTH:

After more than nine years since their last performance together, comedy double act Mark Hadlow and Ross Gumbley will be reuniting on stage this February in quirky comedy *Elling*.

Following two middle-aged misfits trying to make it work as mismatched flatmates, these real-life friends will be playing an odd-couple of epic proportions in this Norwegian play.

Hadlow's *Elling* is a neurotic budding poet, while Gumbley's Kjell is a career virgin and gentle giant who wants nothing more than to have sex. The pair become fast friends in a mental institute, before being thrown into the outside world with only each other to rely on.

Speaking about the story, director Lara Macgregor says, “the appeal of *Elling* comes from seeing two human beings who are struggling with mental health issues try to survive in a 'normal living environment' – and how that challenge brings them together to create a wonderful friendship.”

Elling is reuniting more than just Hadlow and Gumbley, with Macgregor re-joining her old friends to direct this production. She previously shared the stage with the pair in their last outing together, 2010's *Gods of Carnage*.

“This is actually the first time I've directed either of them. Mark and I have been directed together by Ross a lot - and have actually played husband and wife three times!”

Gumbley, who is also The Court's Artistic Director, has a milestone of his own in this production. *Elling* marks his first on-stage performance in almost a decade.

“Mark and I had been looking for a play that could reunite us on stage and when I saw *Elling* in Australia in 2009, I thought ‘I've never seen a role absolutely *begging* for Mark Hadlow to play it’.”

Hadlow, one of New Zealand's most prominent actors (perhaps best known for his role as Dori in *The Hobbit*) is thrilled to be reuniting with his old friend and former co-star in this unconventional comedy.

“I'm delighted to be working with Ross again! We go right back to *Flatmates Wanted* in the 1980s, so it's been over 30 years that we've known each other. It's wonderful to be able to work with someone who you completely trust without any hesitation. You know, Ross and I... It's a marriage, really,” he laughs.

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Rounding out the cast are veteran performers Bruce Phillips, Gregory Cooper and Luanne Gordon, last seen together in Roger Hall's *Easy Money*, playing a range of characters that interact with Elling and Kjell.

For Gumbley, the play is a fantastic, funny comedy with a poignant message that shouldn't be missed.

"*Elling* is lyrical, touching, funny and honest - but also raises questions about the issues of under-funding mental health, which is particularly relevant for a New Zealand audience. It's a comedy, but a comedy that has incredible heart and asks some serious questions."

Hadlow agrees, saying, "If we can produce even ten percent of what the play is capable of, then I reckon it's going to alter some views and maybe even make some changes - which is what theatre should be doing. Theatre should make us think; make us emotional and make us care about things that are important in our society."

As for whether Hadlow and Gumbley are truly an odd-couple in real life, well...

"With the odd-couple, of course, there's one straight one and one really odd one. Mark and I are still trying to work out which of us is the oddest!" Gumbley laughs.

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Cast

Elling	Mark Hadlow
Kjell Bjarne	Ross Gumbley
Alfons Jorgensen	Bruce Phillips
Frank Alsi/Poet	Gregory Cooper
Reidun Norsletten/Gunn/Johanne/Poet	Luanne Gordon

Creatives

Director	Lara Macgregor
Set Designer	Mark McEntyre
Costume Designer	Hayley Douglas
Lighting Designer	Joe Hayes
Sound Designer	Matt Short
Stage Manager	Jo Bunce

Ticket Prices

Adult	\$55.00 - \$63.00
Senior 65yrs+	\$48.00 - \$56.00
Supporter	\$46.00 - \$54.00
Group 6+	\$48.00 - \$53.00

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Child (U18) \$26.00 - \$30.00
30 Below (limited numbers per performance) \$30.00

Show Times

- Monday & Thursday 6.30pm
- Tue/Wed/Fri/Sat 7.30pm
- Forum 6:30pm Monday 25th February
Discuss the play with cast and creative team after the performance
- Matinee 2:00pm Saturday 9th March

Bookings: phone 03 963 0870 or visit www.courttheatre.org.nz

Images can be found at The Court Theatre's [Media Centre](#)

**For more information or to arrange an interview please contact:
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samantha.mcconnell@courttheatre.org.nz**

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