

Uncle Vanya, Zombies and Other Undead Tales

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If a zombie appears in the first act, brains will be sucked out by the third.

As our theater critic John Freedman notes in his review in this paper today, playwright Anton Chekhov and zombies are not complete strangers.

Way before the ARTO theater took on "Ivanov," the Kennedy Theatre at the University of Hawaii staged "Uncle Vanya and Zombies," which is set in a post-apocalyptic television studio after a disaster on a nuclear submarine in Pearl Harbor. The studio is hosting "Theatre Masterpieces and Zombies" performed by survivors as they avoid being eaten by the undead.

Uncle Vanya and Zombies

A review in the Honolulu Pulse website praised the actors for their impressive performance "since each are basically performing the actual Chekhov play while being chased around the stage."

It also warned that "squeamish Chekhov purists with no sense of humor may be a little dismayed at what's become of their beloved source material."

Also in 2012, Sarah Wayne Callies, who starred in the most famous zombie show in the world — "The Walking Dead" — gave a thirty minute lecture at the University of Hawaii on "Chekhov and Zombies: A Match Made in Heaven." She based her Chekhov zombie theory on the Stanislavsky method and Chekhov's "The Cherry Orchard," the Honolulu Pulse reported.

Walking Dead actress Sarah Wayne Callies on "Chekhov and Zombies; A Match Made in Heaven."

Mixing the classics and the undead goes back further. The most famous literary brain mash is in the 2009 book "Pride and Prejudice and Zombies: The Classic Regency Romance — Now with Ultraviolent Zombie Mayhem" by Seth Grahame-Smith.

That starts with a subtle altering of Austen's immortal first line: "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a zombie in possession of brains must be in want of more brains."

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