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#### PSU THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS

NDGAME AND HIO IMPROMPTU

BY SAMUEL BECKETT

DIRECTED BY JOHN GREEN

October 31 7:30 p.m.

November 1 November 2 7:30 p.m.

November 3 2 p.m.

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Presented and produced by the John F. Kennedy Center for the

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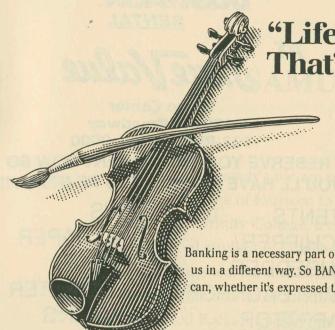
This production is entered in the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KC/ACTF). The aims of this national theater education program are to identify and promote quality in college-level theater production. To this end, each production entered is eligible for a response by a regional KC/ACTF representative, and certain students are selected to participate in KC/ACTF programs involving awards, scholarships, and special grants for actors, playwrights, designers, and critics at both the regional and national levels. Productions entered on the

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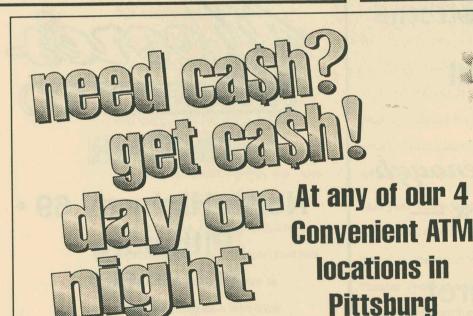
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#### SAMUEL BECKETT

1906-1989

The facts of Beckett's life are spare: Born in Dublin in 1906, he was sent away at the age of fourteen to an Irish boarding school, and from there went on to Trinity College, Dublin, where he proved himself an exceptional student of French and Italian. In 1928, he went to Paris as an exchange teacher and there became acquainted with the most famous Irish author of his day, James Joyce, whose radically new fiction stimulated Beckett to experiment with avant warde methods of poetry and fiction writing. He returned briefly to Dublin to serve as a lecturer in French and to receive his master's degree in 1931 for a study of Marcel Proust, but by the mid-1930s he was on the move again in France and Germany, supporting himself at odd jobs, while he continued to write fiction and poetry. In a blackly humorous incident, a drunken Beckett was stabbed one day in a Paris street by a pimp named Prudent; the young pianist who nursed Beckett back to health later became his wife. When World War II began he worked for the French resistance movement in the village of Roussillon in southern France. Beckett's file in the British Special Operations Executive (SOE), which ran the Resistance cell, described him as "six foot. Well built but stoops. Dark hair, fresh complexion. Very silent." His work for the French Resistance earned him a Croix de Guerre. Shortly after the end of the war, having taken up permanent residence in Paris, he wrote his first play, Waiting for Godot. When it was produced in 1953, it quickly turned into an international sensation. Notoriously closemouthed and jealous of his privacy, Beckett won the Nobel Prize in 1969 and with typical generosity gave most of the prize money to other writers splurging only on a telephone with a light instead of a bell, to spare himself noise. He died alone in a French nursing home.

#### "ME...TO PLAY"

In Waiting for Godot, two of the characters are roped to one another, and though everyone can walk they frequently fall down. In Endgame (1957), Nagg and Nell are confined to trashcans, Hamm is confined to a wheelchair, and Clov, the only mobile character, hobbles around the stage. In Happy Days, Winnie is buried up to her waist in a mound of sand, and by Act 2 the mound has reached her neck. A lonely old man named Krapp relives a long-lost love in Krapps Last Tape (1958). In Play(1964), all three characters are immobilized in urns and speak only when a light shines upon them. In Not I (1972), the only visible action is the mouth of a woman speaking. And Ohio Impromptu is only 200 words long but is as eloquent as any 1,200 page novel. Even language disappears in Beckett's shorter pieces. Act Without Words 1 (1957) and ll (1960) are mime pieces, and Breath (1970) lasts for one minute of cries and breaths. By reducing drama and life to bare essentials Beckett revolutionized everybody's idea of what a play is. His influence has been enormous, not only on the work of contemporary playwrights, directors and designers, but also in the fields of music, literature, art and even television situation comedy (think of the basic structure of Seinfeld).

Lyrical, wise, fierce and compassionate, Beckett can be bleak, but he is also funny and humane. The playwright and critic David Ives recently summed up his impression of viewing Beckett's plays in the following terms: "if you're as blue as most mortals, his world can make your own life look like Disneyland at Christmas - and provide one of the most bracing nights you'll ever have in the theatre."

John Green

#### **ENDGAME**

Beckett originally wrote the play in French. *Fin de Partie* premiered in Paris at the Studio Des Champs-Elysees in 1957. He immediately translated it for its first English language performance at the Royal Court Theatre in London on April 3, 1957.

Endgame has repeatedly tempted critics to define its meaning, partly because it so insistently appears to deny itself significance - Hamm, for example, says "We're not beginning to . . . to . . . mean something? and Clov replies, "Mean something! You and I, mean something!" - and partly because it implicitly alludes to so many interpretative contexts. The chess metaphor of the title is echoed in the physical actions of Hamm, the king who can move only in limited ways, and Clov his guardian knight. Allusions to Shakespeare abound throughout the play: Hamm's name could be a shortened form of Hamlet; he sees himself as a deposed king, like Lear and Richard II; he parodies Richard Ill's final words when he calls out "My kingdom for a nightman"; and he directly quotes Prospero, "Our revels now are ended," and then throws away his gaff, much as Prospero breaks his magic wand at the end of The Tempest. If Hamm is a contemporary Prospero, then it is possible to see Clov (the cloven-hoofed) as a combination of the characters Ariel and Caliban. In addition to Shakespeare, Endgame is littered with references to the poetry of T.S. Eliot, and appears to be structured on the ideas of the Greek philosopher Zeno of Citium. The founder of Stoicism, Zeno taught that there is no such thing as chance, and that the course of nature is rigidly determined by natural laws. Everything that happens has happened before, and will happen again, not once, but countless times. The theatrical metaphor running throughout the play provides another interpretative context. The first

words spoken by Hamm (the ham actor) for example, or his and Clov's continual need to directly address or refer to the audience they instinctively know is watching them. Hamm speaks of the "dialogue," worries that the small boy may provide an "underplot." grumbles when Clov reacts to "an aside," and announces, "I'm warming up for my last soliloquy." Clov starts to leave the stage with the line, "This is what we call making an exit." Nell seems to have the final word on the play's theatrical meaning when she says, "Nothing is funnier than unhappiness, I grant you that."

John Green

This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but a whimper

T.S. Eliot: The Hollow Men

All of old. Nothing else is ever.

Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter.

Try again. Fail again. Fail better.

Samuel Beckett: Worstwood Ho

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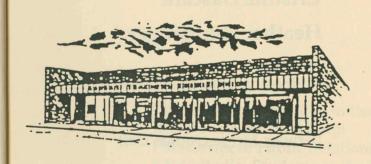
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#### **ENDGAME**

Cast

Hamm

**Paul Huybrechts** 

Clov

Seth Golay

Nagg

Brian Walrod

Nell

Elaina Allison

Music

Arvo Part:

Miserere (1990) . . . opening
Berliner Messe (1990) . . extracts

15 minute intermission

#### OHIO IMPROMPTU

Cast

Reader/Listener

Cristina Dascalu

Reader/Listener

Heather Huntsinger

Music

John Tavener:

Thrinos for solo cello (1990)

Arvo Part:

Berliner Messe (Agnus Dei)

Zbigniew Preisner:

Quartet in 4 Movements (1995)

The roles of Reader/Listener are alternated each performance

The curtain call will be taken by both casts at the end of

Ohio Impromptu

Director John Green

Designer Barry Bengtsen

Production Assistants Brad Henderson

Lael Meats

Technical Crew Ed Corbitt

Seth Golay Matt Hinton Lisa Simpson Scott Simpson

Sound recording KRPS Studios

Publicity coordinator Chiung-Chen Huang

Publicity design Paulina Elrod

**Paul Huybrechts** 

Publicity photographs John Anderson

House Manager Dana Riffel

The director would like to thank the following groups and individuals for their help:

PSU Office of Public Relations, PSU Printing Services, KRPS Radio, Students in the Technical Production class, Department of Communication Advertising & PR Club, CAPS3 TV, The Staff of Memorial Auditorium, Gil Cooper, Cathy Coomer, Bob Larson, Carol MacKay, Loraine Sims, Wei-Yin Tsou, Fr. Pat York, Chad Armstrong, Misty Beck.

#### OHIO IMPROMPTU

Beckett wrote this dramaticule in 1981 in response to a commission from the theatre department at Ohio State University, where it was first performed that same year.

#### The text...

Little is left to tell.

In a last attempt to obtain relief he moved from where they had been so long alone together to a single room on the far bank. From its single window he could see the downstream extremity of the Isle of Swans. Relief he had hoped would flow from unfamiliarity. Unfamiliar room. Unfamiliar scene. Out to where nothing ever shared. Back to where nothing ever shared. From this he had once half hoped some measure of relief might flow. Day after day he could be seen slowly pacing the islet. Hour after hour. In his long black coat no matter what the weather and old world Latin Quarter hat. At the tip he would always pause to dwell on the receding stream. How in joyous eddies its two arms conflowed and flowed united on. Then turn and his slow steps retrace. In his dreams he had been warned against this change. Seen the dear face and heard the unspoken words, Stay where we were so long alone together, my shade will comfort you. Could he not now turn back? Acknowledge his error and return to where they were once so long alone together. Alone together so much shared. No. What he had done alone could not be undone. Nothing he had ever done alone could ever be undone. By him alone. In this extremity his old terror of night laid hold on him again. After so long a lapse that as if never been. White nights now again his portion. As when his heart was young. No sleep no braving sleep till dawn of day. Little is left to

tell. One night as he sat trembling head in hands from head to foot a man appeared to him and said, I have been sent by - and here he named the dear name - to comfort you. Then drawing a worn volume from the pocket of his long black coat he sat and read till dawn. Then disappeared without a word. Some time later he appeared again at the same hour with the same volume and this time without preamble sat and read it through again the long night through. Then disappeared without a word. So from time to time unheralded he would appear to read the sad tale through again and the long night away. Then disappear without a word. With never a word exchanged they grew to be as one. Till the night came at last when having closed the book and dawn at hand he did not disappear but sat on without a word. Finally he said, I have had word from - and here he named the dear name that I shall not come again. I saw the dear face and heard the unspoken words, No need to go to him again, even were it in your power. So the sad tale a last time told they sat on as though turned to stone. Through the single window dawn shed no light. From the street no sound of reawakening. Or was it that buried in who knows what thoughts they paid no heed? To light of day. To sound of reawakening. What thoughts who knows. Thoughts, no, not thoughts. Profounds of mind. Buried in who knows what profounds of mind. Of mindlessness. Whither no light can reach. No sound. So sat on as though turned to stone. The sad tale a last time told. Nothing is left to tell.

SAMUEL BECKETT

#### **DIRECTOR'S NOTES**

#### ENDGAME ...

The idea of portraying Hamm as a Priest (specifically a Cardinal) originally sprang from . . .

- 1. My encounter with the paintings of the English artist Francis Bacon. Between 1961 and 1971 Bacon painted a series of "screaming" Popes (one of them is featured on the program cover) partly inspired by Velazquez's painting of Pope Innocent X. In creating these disturbing images Bacon secularizes his pope and strips him of the gilding of history. This is not a blasphemous gesture, but rather a ruthless operation of truth . . . beneath the pope is a man.
- 2. In sacred medieval drama the role of the priest was central and he was often called *tragicus noster* "our tragic actor."
- 3. "He (Beckett) would have made a marvellous Pope. True, he was raised as a Protestant, and did not believe in God. But these incidentals apart, he had all the qualities a great pontiff needs cast-iron integrity, boundless generosity, saintly self-denial. He hated the body and its pleasures as intensely as the most austere desert Father. His art pursued a spiritual ideal that demanded the renunciation of virtually all recognisable human qualities. His wit would have been a wow on papal walkabouts. Once, when a bystander asked him if he minded that she had named her dog after him, he riposted, "Don't worry about me. What about the dog?" His morose insistence on human futility links him with a certain kind of religious fanatic. So does his fixation about textual purity. He defended the integrity of his own plays as if

they were holy writ. Not a syllable must be changed; even the stage directions had to be obeyed to the letter. Furious on hearing that a Dutch company planned staging *Waiting for Godot* with an all-female cast, he took them to court. When that failed, he imposed a total ban on productions of his work in Holland. He had a puritanical contempt for luxury and display. Fame appalled him because it made solitude more difficult."

John Carey: Looking deep into the soul of Sam (1996)

#### OHIO IMPROMPTU...

I spent the summer of '95 working on theatre projects in England and Slovenia. The war in Bosnia was at its height and the media coverage of it had reached saturation point. Amongst all the images one stands out in horrifying detail - a photograph of a young woman who had hanged herself. It was reproduced in color on the front page of an English newspaper. The woman was smartly dressed and beneath her swaying body a group of refugees walked calmly by, scarcely giving her a second glance. It was the apparent ordinariness of the situation that shocked me. In Slovenia I was only ever forty miles from the war zone. On the surface the country was a picture of peace and tranquility, but everyone I met had either directly helped refugees fleeing across the border, or had a relative trapped in Bosnia.

Ohio Impromtu is my testament to the sad tales so often told that summer.

John Green



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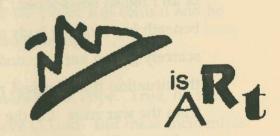
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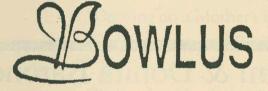
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