

Theatre USA

Presents

***Waiting for
Godot***

An absurdist play by

Samuel Beckett

February 20 - 24

Theatre USA is proud to present this classic of the modern theatre. One of the most famous and well known of the absurdist plays, *Waiting for Godot* has roused audiences to demonstrations of enthusiasm and anger. "Moving, often funny, grotesquely beautiful and utterly absorbing." "At once pathetic and hilarious." "Brilliant, bitter comedy. It is a portrait of the dogged resilience of a man's spirit in the face of little hope."

Waiting for Godot is the story of two dilapidated bums who fill their days as painlessly as they can. They wait for Godot, a personage who will explain their interminable insignificance, or put an end to it. They are resourceful, with quarrels and their dependence on each other, as children are. They pass the time "which would have passed anyway." A brutal man of means comes by, leading a weakling slave who does his bidding like a mechanical doll. Later, he returns, blind, and his slave is mute, but the relationship is unchanged. Every day a child comes from the unknown Godot, and evasively puts the big arrival off until tomorrow.

--Dramatists Play Service
Catalog of Plays, 2002.



Model for Waiting for Godot by Scenic Designer Bonnie Woolley

Understanding Absurdism About Playwright Samuel Beckett

The name *theatre of the absurd* applies to a grouping of plays that can be shown to share certain common structures and styles and to be tied together by a common philosophical thread: the theory of the absurd as formulated by French essayist and playwright Albert Camus. Camus likened the human condition to that of the mythological Corinthian king Sisyphus, who, because of his cruelty, was condemned forever to roll a stone up a hill in Hades only to have it roll back down again upon nearing the top. Camus saw the modern individual as similarly engaged in an eternally futile task, the absurdity of searching for some meaning or purpose or order in human life. To Camus, the immutable irrationality of the universe is what makes this task

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Although Samuel Barclay Beckett (1906-1989) is best known for his play, *Waiting for Godot*, he was in fact a well-rounded man of letters who, in addition to his works for the stage, wrote radio plays, novels, poetry and a biography/analytical study of Proust. A native Irishman, Beckett wrote in both French and English. After he graduated from Trinity College in Dublin, he moved to Paris to study and begin work on his first "book," a long poem called "Whoroscope," about the philosopher Rene Descartes, for which he won a prize of ten pounds. He also became friends with fellow Irish expatriate James Joyce, and is rumored to have had a relationship with the older writer's psychologically disturbed daughter Lucia. After several years of study and

writing in Paris, he returned to Trinity to complete a Master's degree and work as a lecturer. During this period, he completed his study of Marcel Proust, but eventually became disenchanted with academia, gave up his lecturing post and returned to Europe, leading a somewhat nomadic life that no doubt eventually influenced *Godot*.

Finally settling in Paris around 1937, Beckett spent the war years working with the French Resistance until, in 1942, he and his French-born paramour escaped to the Unoccupied Zone (Beckett would later be awarded the Croix de Guerre for his efforts). After the Germans were ousted from the City of Lights in 1945, Beckett returned and resumed his writing career. *En Attendant Godot*, written in French in 1948, was only one of a slew of novels, plays, short

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Artist Spotlight
Costume Designer
Margarette Joyner

Margarette Joyner, Costume Designer for *Waiting for Godot*, is a junior, nontraditional B.F.A. student. That means she's already accomplished a lot in her life. She started her academic career at Miami Dade Community College as a Journalism Major "more than a few years ago". She has a grown daughter of whom she's very proud. And she's an ex-marine. Not your traditional B. F. A student.

Her answer to how she got here starts with, "By the grace of God". Her first theatrical experience came when working as secretary at the African American Cultural Arts Center in Miami. She was cast in the lead after reluctantly auditioning for a play they were producing, *Zooman & the Sign*. She was hooked. Since she had been sewing since the age of 14, soon she was not only the secretary/registrar for the Cultural Arts Center but also the costumer for the 'M' Ensemble Theatre Company based there. While there she created costumes for *Ceremonies in Dark Old Men*, *The Colored Museum*, *Living Fat*, and her favorite, Fat Waller's *Ain't Misbehavin*.

She came to Mobile to help a friend and decided to stay. She started her career at USA last January. Costume Design faculty member Rebecca Britton found out she knew how to sew and recruited Margarette as a paid Costume Shop assistant. Britton quickly realized she'd found a gem. After working with her on *Dancing at Lughnassa* and *Romeo & Juliet* as a stitcher and draper she encouraged her to interview for a Costume position with one of the professional companies attending the Southeastern Theatre Conference in Mobile.

The result? Margarette was hired as a Cutter/ Draper with the Lost Colony working with New York Designers William Ivy Long and Carl Curnutt and director Terrence Mann. "I was a little intimidated at first but Rebecca told me I'd discover I knew more than I thought I did. Fortunately she was right." A successful summer has led to an invitation back, maybe as Shop Manager. "We're in negotiations." An additional perk from the summer was a relationship with Mrs. Andy Griffith who needed someone to build an evening dress for a special event. That worked out so well Mrs. Griffith had her make another one this past Fall.

She plans to graduate in December 2004. After that she's thinking of heading to California and breaking into film. Also a delightful performer and singer, Margarette received an Irene Ryan nomination for her performance as Mama Mallard in *Eager Beaver Builds A Damn*.

Margarette's advise to anyone going into theatre as a career? "Make sure you like it. It's a lot of hard work but the end result is worth it."

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absurd. On the one hand, human beings yearn for a "lost" unity and lasting truth; on the other hand, the world can only be seen as irrecoverably fragmented—chaotic, permanently unorganized, and permanently unorganizable.

The plays that constitute the theatre of the absurd are obsessed with the futility of all action and the pointlessness of all direction. These themes are developed theatrically through a deliberate and self-conscious flaunting of the "absurd"—in the sense of the ridiculous. Going beyond the use of symbols and

the fantasy and poetry of other nonrealists, the absurdists have distinguished themselves by creating clocks that clang incessantly, characters that eat pap in ashcans, corpses that grow by the minute, and personal interactions that are belligerently noncredible.

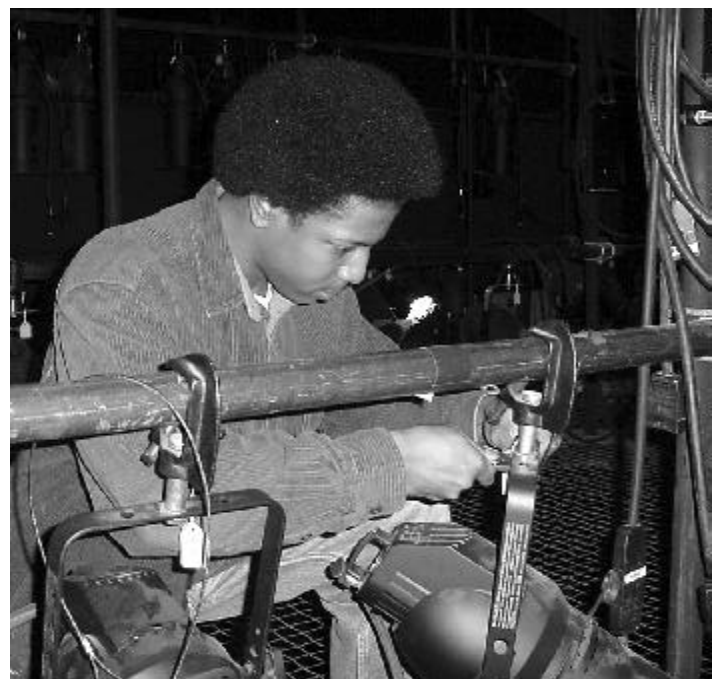
Samuel Beckett, poet, playwright, and novelist, is perhaps the foremost explorer of human futility in Western literature. Beckett eschews realism, romanticism, and rationalism to create works that are relentlessly unenlightening, that are indeed committed to a final obscurity. "Art has nothing to do with clarity, does not dabble in the clear, and does not make clear," argues Beckett in one of his earliest works, and his theatre is based on the thesis that man is and will remain ignorant regarding all matters of importance.

—Cohen, Robert. *Theatre*. Third Ed. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1981, p. 254-55.



The Cast for
Waiting for Godot

Vladimir:Paul Thomas
Estragon: David Mims
Pozzo:Amanda Murdick
Lucky: Mason Merrill
Youth: Jean Parker



Assistant Lighting Designer Robert Tucker hangs lights for Waiting for Godot

Coming

April 24 - 28

**The Tony Award
Winning Musical**

CABARET

From the Director Lou Courie

Waiting for Godot is about two men with a pointless existence who do nothing with their lives except wait. How's that for entertainment? Yet, the play is funny - at least I hope you find it so. No doubt it forces us to think about the degree to which we are governed by time and subject to forces beyond our control. We know, however, that the playwright's intent was to allow us to laugh along the way on this journey to nowhere. He once suggested that he often thought of Buster Keaton, the great comic and silent film star, as the perfect Estragon. Indeed, the play has had many productions, in Europe and in America, in which trained vaudeville comedians have taken on the main roles.

The play can be disturbing, however, and if one comes to the theatre expecting drawing room comedy, or mindless, frothy escapist entertainment, then one is flat out of luck and perhaps more than a little disappointed. When Bert Lahr played Estragon in a Miami production, he received hate mail from outraged audience members. One read:

Dear Mr. Lahr:

How can a man who has charmed the youth of America as the Lion in *The Wizard of Oz* appear in a play which is obviously communistic, atheistic and existential!

Lahr, however, thought the

play a laugh sensation. You may not find it so, but I do hope you won't dwell on the sadness of the men's plight and will allow yourself to see the love of each for the other and enjoy the small ways in which they amuse themselves.

The characters, Vladimir and Estragon, exist in a timeless environment, and even though there are references in the play that could suggest France, Samuel Beckett, the playwright, has clearly indicated that he means for the place to be non-specific. As a result, I have removed some of the distracting place names. In addition, as you can plainly see, the design elements, especially the set design, emphasize the generic nature of the place. It resembles a country road about as much as Picasso's women resemble females. The design is modern, the costumes are a mixed bag of periods or perhaps of no period, and the lighting often is not naturalistic.

In this production, I have tried to establish that the two men are friends and that they complement one another, one is cerebral, the other passionate, as if they were two halves of the same person and yet individuals. Either way, they do nothing, but wait. They wait for Godot. Is Godot God? I don't know. Beckett himself says that if he had wanted them to wait for God, he would have said so explicitly. But we see in it what we see. I hope you see enough to be glad you came to the theatre.



Costume Rendering by Margarete Joyner
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stories, and other writings Beckett completed during this period.

Although *Godot*, which premiered in January of 1953, was hugely popular, with several hundred performances at Theatre de Babylone in Paris in its initial run, Beckett's place as a master dramatist of the Absurd was really solidified when his other great stage work, *Fin de Partie*, or *Endgame*, premiered at the Royal Court in London in 1957 in French. Like *Godot*, the philosophical themes, unrealistic settings, and dream-like language of *Endgame* continued Beckett's exploration of what it

means to be human, to exist.

He had perhaps reached the culmination of his search as a playwright for the meaning of human existence that had begun with his book on Descartes, the philosopher who said "I think, therefore, I am."

Beckett's fame continued to spread. In 1969 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. He continued writing, translating his own plays and producing new works, like 1967's television drama *Eh Joe*, albeit less prolifically and with some degree of personal distaste for the task. A solitary man, Beckett became a celebrity of the dramatic arts and of Absurdism in particular, but rarely gave interviews or appeared publicly. His wife and de facto manager, the same woman with whom he fought for the liberation of Paris, died in 1989.

With *Godot*, *Endgame*, and *Happy Days*, among others, Beckett set the standard for the examination of humanity in the theater. His works will forever stand as a milepost for the development of modern drama.

Ticket & Box Office Information

Phone (251) 460-6306

Tickets for Theatre USA Production of *Waiting for Godot*
General Admission \$10.00 Students* \$ 7.00

The Box Office will be open Monday, February, 17 through Friday, February 21 from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm and one hour before each performance at the Laidlaw Performing Arts Center Box Office. Tickets are sold on a first come first served basis. All seats reserved. All sales final. No refunds or exchanges.

* Student tickets available for all students with valid ID. One ticket per ID.



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**The Department of Dramatic Arts
Theatre USA**

Presents

Samuel Beckett's

Waiting for Godot

**Thursday, Friday, Saturday, February 20 - 22
and Monday, February 24 @ 8:00 pm
Sunday, February 23 @ 2:00 pm**

**Laidlaw Performing Arts Center
on the University of South Alabama Campus**