

Jan–Mar/2009

The Seagull

PASSION, DREAMS, AND DESIRE COLLIDE AT A LAKE

On the Loeb Stage, January 10 – February 1

Endgame

EXISTENTIAL VAUDEVILLE

On the Loeb Stage, February 14 – March 15

DEAR FRIENDS,

Welcome to winter at the A.R.T. This season we explore two classics – Chekhov’s *The Seagull* and Beckett’s *Endgame*. Both plays were groundbreaking in their own time, and both still stand as masterpieces of twentieth-century drama.

The Seagull was Anton Chekhov’s first major success as a playwright and introduced Russian audiences to a new style of theatre: realism. The subject of the play is partly the theatre itself; it dramatizes the entangled lives of two actresses, the seasoned Arkadina (played by Karen MacDonald) and the ingénue Nina, and their complex relationships with Arkadina’s son Treplev, himself an experimental playwright.

Our *Seagull* is being staged by János Szász, the Hungarian director whose emotionally lush and visually spectacular productions for the A.R.T. have included *Mother Courage*, *Marat/Sade*, *Desire Under the Elms*, and his unforgettable *Uncle Vanya*. His *Seagull* promises similar thrills and will remind us that beneath the realistic surface of Chekhov’s play lies a haunting beauty and poetry waiting to be released.

Samuel Beckett’s *Endgame* is one of the most beautiful, enigmatic, and absurdly funny plays in the canon. It is built as a kind of riddle, in which many meanings can be found – or, Beckett would probably prefer to say, *no* meaning.

The play is set in a single spare room and has only four characters: Hamm, blind and confined to a wheelchair; Clov, Hamm’s servant, who is mysteriously unable to sit down; and Hamm’s two ancient parents, Nagg and Nell, who are living out their final days in two trashcans.

Endgame owes as much to vaudeville and the *commedia dell’arte* as it does to existential philosophy, and it can be downright hilarious in the right hands. The humor of Beckett’s text will be perfectly served by comic geniuses of our resident acting company – Will LeBow, Karen MacDonald, Tommy Derrah, and Remo Airaldi.

The production will be directed by Marcus Stern, who has a gift for stunning stage pictures and whose recent shows at the A.R.T. have included *Donnie Darko* and *The Onion Cellar*. The combination of Marcus, our Company actors, and Beckett’s great text will make this a truly memorable *Endgame*. And in good time; the play hasn’t been staged at the A.R.T. since 1984.

Together *The Seagull* and *Endgame* offer you two great plays, two visionary directors, and leading roles for a group of outstanding actors. I hope you have a wonderful time.

Best wishes,



Gideon Lester, *Director, 08/09 Season*

Symbolism, Me

IS THE SEAGULL TRAGEDY OR FARCE?

by Paul Stacey

AS THE SEAGULL opens, the audience hears hammers pounding away. Workmen are busy erecting a small stage on a country estate in Russia. Full of anticipation, Konstantin awaits the first performance of the drama he has written for his beloved Nina. He also hopes to impress his mother with his artistic genius. This play-within-a-play, and the characters’ reactions to it, propels *The Seagull* and ushered in a new era of theatre.

Konstantin’s play flaunts all the motifs of *fin-de-siècle* Symbolism, a literary movement initiated by French poet and critic Baudelaire. Renouncing direct statement, Symbolism used metaphors to suggest an ideal world. Mallarmé and Maeterlinck launched Symbolism in the theatre, replacing plots with mysterious atmospheres. A reaction against Realism, Symbolism turned its back on the traditions of the past. As Konstantin says, “We need new

Melodrama, and Love

forms, and if we can't have them, then we're better off with no theatre at all."

While Chekhov might agree with Konstantin's sentiment, how we should respond to his Symbolist stage poem is not clear. One could scorn the play, as Konstantin's audience does. His mother Arkadina, the tempestuous actress of Russian melodramas, derides it as decadent; Trigorin, her lover, is perplexed; even Nina protests that there are no real characters. Given the importance of the Symbolist movement, however, to dismiss the play as juvenile doodling might be unfair.

One sees the influence of Symbolism in Chekhov's mature work from the central motif of the seagull to the prominence of the cherry orchard. After completing *The Cherry Orchard*, Chekhov conceived of a play he did not have time to write about arctic explorers with a ghost and a ship crushed by polar

THE SEAGULL AT A GLANCE

Written by Anton Chekhov
Translated by Paul Schmidt
Directed by János Szász
Set Design Riccardo Hernandez
Costume Design David Zinn
Lighting Design Christopher Akerlind
Sound Design David Remedios

Cast

Irina Nikolayevna Arkadina Karen MacDonald
Konstantin Gavrilovich Treplev Mickey Solis
Pyotr Nikolayevich Sorin Jeremy Geidt
Nina Mikhailovna Zarechnaya Molly Ward
Ilya Afanasyevich Shamrayev Remo Airaldi
Paulina Andreyevna Cheryl D. Singleton
Masha Nina Kassa
Boris Alexeyevich Trigorin Brian Dykstra
Yevgeny Sergeyevich Dorn Thomas Derrah
Semyon Semyonovich Medvedenko Shawn Cody
Yakov Dan Pecci

Synopsis

Irina Nikolaevna Arkadina, a famous but aging actress, arrives at her brother's country estate with her lover, the prominent writer Trigorin. Her son Konstantin is infatuated with Nina, the beautiful girl next door and also an aspiring actress. He has written and staged a symbolist drama with Nina in the lead role. When his mother ridicules his avant-garde endeavor, Konstantin storms off in a rage. Trigorin, meanwhile, is intrigued by Nina. Before long, she falls in love with Trigorin and eventually follows him back to Moscow, where they have a disastrous affair. Years later, Nina returns to the estate to see Konstantin one last time.



Cartoon in a Russian magazine of *The Seagull* being shot down by critics.

ice onstage. These fragments suggest that Chekhov was moving toward Symbolist drama, as did Ibsen and Strindberg in their final plays: the three great pillars of Realism were all pushing against its limits.

For the past hundred years critics have argued about the value of Konstantin's play. Most believe that Chekhov was mocking the Symbolist movement. Others suggest that the play is a significant contribution to modern playwriting. Considering that Chekhov admired Symbolism yet mocked it through Konstantin's audience, perhaps his attitude toward the movement was ambivalent. Thus the play-within-a-play might be seen as both an homage to and a parody of a literary movement that had transformed European culture.

This paradox in Chekhov's work goes a long way toward explaining how revolutionary *The Seagull* is. Could Chekhov be parodying himself in Konstantin? Just as Konstantin attempts to discover new forms in the theatre, so too was Chekhov searching for a new style in *The Seagull*. Chekhov used many of the conventions of Russian melodrama that had preceded him, mocking them yet milking them. He admitted in a letter to his friend Suvorin that he had written a play that went "contrary to all the rules of dramatic art."

The majority of popular dramas – melodramas – were constructed around a number of clichés, usually love triangles. Chekhov does the same in the first act of *The Seagull* by establishing four different but intertwined love triangles. Critics often attack Chekhov for the melodramatic nature of such a device. This, however, is his point. In creating so many love triangles, the playwright highlights their absurdity and at the same time their irresistible appeal. The audience never tires of sexual imbroglios.

A similar device is used to mock the notion of the hero – integral to any well-made melodrama. Chekhov takes the focus off a single protagonist and makes it difficult to empathize fully with one person. He mocks the characters we try to sympathize with by emphasizing their shortcomings: Konstantin for his artistic pretences, Nina for her blind pursuit of a man she takes for a genius, and Arkadina for the acting tradition she defends. Chekhov elicits contradictory emotions from the audience.

Although Chekhov used stock characters from melodrama, he made them infinitely more complex. He proudly proclaimed that he had refused to introduce "a single villain nor an angel"; he "accused nobody, justified nobody." On the surface Konstantin is the angst-ridden artist, but his anger is deep-rooted. His jealousy toward the more successful Trigorin and his insecurities about his mother's liaison with a younger man are deeply touching. All of Chekhov's characters have specific gravity: no stereotypes, no villains, no heroes. Every character is flawed.

Finally, when Konstantin succumbs to the tell-tale sign of melodrama – suicide – this gesture occurs offstage. Depriving the audience of the pleasure of this obligatory scene was seen as heresy on Chekhov's part – to have a suicide but not let the

audience see it! Chekhov emerges as a writer full of irony – at once willing to mock yet exploit the traditions of melodrama.

The fundamental changes that Chekhov brought to modern drama did not go unnoticed in his time. Chekhov understood the paradoxical nature of art; the discovery of radical new forms comes at the risk of alienating the audience. Just as Konstantin's avant-garde play is a failure that pushes him further from his mother, so too the first performance of *The Seagull* at the Alexandrinski Theatre in St. Petersburg in 1896 was a catastrophe that forced Chekhov into isolation.

Accounts of the opening night differ, but everyone agrees it was disastrous. The actors were ill-prepared. Lines were forgotten, mistakes made. This, however, is only half the story. Actors and directors were not accustomed to Chekhov's innovative method of writing. Thus his play was misunderstood and treated in the same way as any other melodrama. The audience was unforgiving; shouting harsh comments, they threw objects at the actors. The play ran for just three performances. Chekhov, like Konstantin, was devastated; he snuck out halfway through. He vowed never to write again for the stage.



Anton and Olga on their honeymoon in 1901.

Right: Josh Stamell, Emily Alpern, Sheila Carrasco, and Renzo Ampuero in *The Discreet Charm of Monsieur Jourdain*.

Fortunately Nemirovich-Danchenko, the co-Artistic Director of the newly formed Moscow Art Theatre, begged Chekhov to reconsider. He wrote a number of times pleading to have *The Seagull* performed in his theatre's inaugural season. Nemirovich-Danchenko understood the complexities of the piece, just as his colleague Stanislavski knew how to bring it to life with new acting and staging techniques. Chekhov eventually agreed, and the play was performed once again in 1898. In the right hands the play triumphed as impressively in Moscow as it had failed in St. Petersburg. Its success has become mythically enshrined with the formation of the Moscow Art Theatre, perhaps the most famous stage in the world.

The Seagull, like Konstantin's play, is about the pursuit of new forms – forms that expand the boundaries of what theatre can do. It waits to be seen how János Szász, a visionary director known for dusting off classics, can extend for us what Chekhov and Stanislavski did for their audience

Paul Stacey is a first-year dramaturgy student at the A.R.T./MXAT Institute for Advanced Theatre Training.



From the MXAT with Love

A second-year dramaturgy student longs for Moscow

by Sean Bartley

"If only we could go back to Moscow!"

Chekhov's *Three Sisters* wailed this lament at the dawn of the twentieth century. One hundred years later, the second-year actors and dramaturgs from the A.R.T./MXAT Institute at Harvard share the sentiment. This summer we returned from three months in the hallowed halls of the Moscow Art Theatre.

Coming from the commercialized American stage, we students were overwhelmed by Moscow's theatre culture. Hundreds of subsidized theatres produce work on a gigantic scale; the Moscow Art Theatre alone has a full-time company of one hundred actors. The American acting students, raised on a tradition of psychological analysis, proceeded to sweat their way through a crash-course in the physical Russian technique.

Students not only take lessons but also bring our own production to share with Russian audiences. This year it was *The Discreet Charm of Monsieur Jourdain*. Dimitri Troyanovsky's (another Institute graduate) freewheeling version of Molière's *The Bourgeois Gentleman* played a sold-out run at the Moscow Art Theatre School, and was the first American production invited to Moscow's Your Chance Festival.

It is particularly meaningful for me to be back in Cambridge now, working on *The Seagull* – a play that received its first successful production in the MXAT building where I experienced such an important part of my theatre training last spring.

Sean Bartley is a second-year dramaturgy student at the A.R.T./MXAT Institute for Advanced Theatre Training.

Cambridge to Moscow to Cambridge to the world...and back!

by Kati Mitchell

There's nothing more exciting than watching your students grow and become successful in their field. So it's always a joyful event to welcome our Institute graduates back to Cambridge to play on the A.R.T. stage. Mickey Solis (2005) returns to play Konstantin and Molly Ward (2004) is his beloved Nina. Mickey played Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet* and Eben in Szász's *Desire Under the Elms*, and since his graduation has appeared in several regional theatres. Molly was seen as Benvolio in *Romeo and Juliet* during her second year, and she has previously returned to the A.R.T. to play Masha in *Three Sisters* on the Loeb Stage and at the Edinburgh Festival. She has worked at Barrington Stage, Provincetown Theatre, The Denver Center, Bard SummerScape, and Hartford Stage.

Current Institute students are also part of *The Seagull* company: Nina Kassa as Masha and Shawn Cody as Medvedenko. The company also includes Harvard undergraduate Dan Pecci, playing the role of Yakov.

Kati Mitchell is the A.R.T.'s Director of Press and Public Relations.

ON OUR INSTITUTE STAGE

Aloha, Say the Pretty Girls

by Naomi Iizuka, directed by Lindsay Albaugh
February 6–8 and 12–14, 2009, at 7:30 p.m.
Zero Arrow Theatre

Winner of the prestigious 1999 Whiting Writers' Award, *Aloha, Say the Pretty Girls* is a hilarious romp that follows young Generation X-ers in their quest for love and identity. Strangers, friends, lovers, and acquaintances travel the globe from Alaska to Hawaii and from New York City to Inner Borneo in this wild comedy. Presented by the A.R.T./MXAT Institute for Advanced Theatre Training.

**Tickets: \$10 for the general public;
\$5 for students and seniors;
free to A.R.T. season ticket holders.**

No More No Man's Land

SZÁSZ ELIMINATES THE DIVIDE BETWEEN THE ACTORS AND THE AUDIENCE

by Ryan McKittrick



Director János Szász.

WHEN HE WAS visiting Moscow many years ago, Hungarian director János Szász saw a stage adaptation of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* that changed his life. At the begin-

ning of the production, director Yüri Lyubimov made the entire audience enter the theatre through a single door near the stage. To get to their seats, they had to walk right past the corpses of Alyona and Lizaveta – the two women Raskolnikov murders at the beginning of Dostoevsky's criminal thriller. "You could barely make it to your seat," Szász remembers, "without getting blood on your shoes. It was a very important moment in my life. Lyubimov made us active witnesses, bringing us right into the production as soon as we entered the theatre."

Throughout his career as one of Eastern Europe's leading theatre artists, Szász has made it his goal to eliminate what he describes as the "no man's land" – the divide between the actors and the audience. All of the productions that he has staged at the A.R.T. over the past eight years have drawn audiences into the playing space in a variety of ways, making them part of the event rather than just spectators observing from a distance.

Szász made his directorial debut at the A.R.T. in 2001 with his monumental staging of Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children*. Like all of his work, the production was visually, aurally, and emotionally stunning, combining

rigorous, athletic movement with bold sound and lighting designs. In the middle of the set, a train track extended out from the stage, over the orchestra pit, and directly through the first section of seats. The actors brushed up against the audience as they entered, exited, fought, screamed, sang, and marched on the track and through the aisles of the auditorium.

The following season, Szász teamed up with set designer Riccardo Hernandez, marking the beginning of one of the most successful artistic partnerships in contemporary theatre. Their production of *Marat/ Sade* turned the theatre into a massive madhouse, surrounded on three sides by the audience. The set featured a huge metal cage that was pushed and pulled by the inmates of the Charenton Asylum back and forth from the upstage wall right up to the first row of seats, bringing them face-

to-face with the audience.

Szász and Hernandez's next collaboration, a production of Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*, completely transformed the A.R.T.'s Loeb Drama Center. The centerpiece of the design was an enormous wooden roof that extended out from the stage to the middle of auditorium, situating the audience inside the dank barroom where Szász set his production. While audience members entered the theatre, the smell of cooking onions wafted through the air and the sound of water dripping from a leaky ceiling echoed in metal buckets. As

the performance began, the traditional divisions between the auditorium and the stage disappeared, and the theatre became one big room shared by the actors and the audience.

For their most recent A.R.T. production, *Desire Under The Elms*, Szász and Hernandez took inspiration from Eugene O'Neill's frequent references to the rocky New England soil. They covered the entire stage floor with stones and dirt, creating a barren landscape that extended all the way up to the first rows of seats and through the aisles leading to the lobby doors. Everyone in the audience had to walk through the dirt to get to their seats, entering the world of the play even before the performance began.

As they prepare for their production of *The Seagull*, Szász and Hernandez have been thinking about the play-within-the-


While audience members entered the theatre, the smell of cooking onions wafted through the air and the sound of dripping water... echoed in metal buckets.

play, Treplev's experimental drama that looks two thousand years into the future. Their design for the production suggests an abandoned theatre that hasn't been used for thousands of years, filled with debris, puddles of water, threadbare theatre seats, and chandeliers – an image perhaps from the world of Treplev's play. Like all of Szász's productions, *The Seagull* will draw the audience into the performance, seating us alongside Chekhov's characters for the premiere of Treplev's visionary drama.

Ryan McKittrick is the A.R.T.'s Associate Dramaturg.



János Szász's productions (photos by Richard Feldman):
Large Photo: Will LeBow, Thomas Derrah, and inmates in Marat/Sade. Inset, top to bottom: Riccardo Hernandez's set model for The Seagull; Shawtane Bowen, Mickey Solís, and Peter Cambor in a scene from Desire Under the Elms; a scene from Mother Courage; Linda Powell, Phoebe Jonas, and Thomas Derrah in Uncle Vanya.



Beckett,
Endgame,
Mortality, and
Laughter

by Whitney Eggers



Frances Cuka as Nell and Richard Goolden as Nagg in the first English-language production in 1958.

“THE TROUBLE WITH tragedy,” Samuel Beckett grouched, “is the fuss it makes about life and death and other tuppenny aches.”

Endgame is a funny play. From Wilde and Shaw through Synge and O’Casey to Beckett and McDonagh, Irish playwrights wring laughter from pain, a lesson learned from the savage wit of Dublin’s Jonathan Swift. Irish playwrights make the world laugh, but the laughter comes from sorrow.

Hugh Kenner dubbed Beckett a “stoic comedian.” So how does a stoic comedian write a funny play about the end of the world? By turning “tupenny aches” into vaudeville shtick, or to be more precise, Irish music hall. These variety entertainments, popular in Beckett’s youth, included singers, acrobats, and comics. Music hall comedians – often a straight man and sidekick in a master-man relationship – told jokes and stories, performed slapstick, and engaged in cross-talk – rapid, nonsense patter. In *Endgame*, this master-servant duo becomes Hamm and Clov, an absurd couple who pass the time telling stories, exchanging digs, and fumbling with props.

Endgame is rich with the physical comedy of music hall. Clov exits and

enters constantly to retrieve ladders, telescopes, and toy dogs. Hamm shrieks about the positioning of his chair: “Is that my place?... Am I right in the center?... Put me right in the center!” Nagg and Nell pop out of trash cans and, sexually deprived, strain to kiss each other. Clov dumps powder down his pants to kill a flea.


Beckett also revels in the verbal comedy of music hall. Even the names of his main characters are a joke: Hamm is the raconteur who “hams” up his stories, and everyone knows you can’t serve ham without clove. A bickering father-and-son duo, Hamm and Nagg delight in music hall storytelling. Hamm tells an ever-evolving story of Christmas past, punctuated by his own critique: “Nicely put, that,” “A bit feeble, that.” Nagg tells a joke about the tailor who takes three months to make one pair of pants. Clov and Hamm, the music hall straight man and sidekick, engage in bizarre cross-talk concerning the weather, Hamm’s story, and their health while dishing out gags that mock the conventions of the theatre – “What is there to keep me here?” “The dialogue.” Confronted with the absurdity of their situation, Beckett’s

characters clown around, waiting for the end of the game: death.

Beckett’s genius lay in fusing existential themes with music hall comedy. The Theatre of the Absurd was born from the ashes of World War II. The playwrights of the Absurd saw the collapse of the world they had known: within six years, 72 million people had been killed, Europe lay in ruins, and the atom bomb announced doomsday.

“Nothing is funnier than unhappiness, I grant you that.”
—Samuel Beckett

Theodor Adorno writes, “After the Second World War, everything... was destroyed, even the survivors cannot survive.” The result of this catastrophe, writes George Steiner, is the death of tragedy: “Compared with the realities of war and oppression that surround us, the gravest imaginings of the poets are diminished to a scale of private or artificial terror.”



Beckett
infuses his
comic quartet
with the energy
of farce.

Beckett's work after World War II bears the mark of his experience in the French Resistance. For two years, Beckett translated and compiled intercepted messages before his cell was betrayed to the Germans. He escaped to Rousillon in the south of France, where he lived in exile for three years. During that time he resumed his clandestine activity by setting up contacts between Resistance workers and picking up, hiding, and delivering ammunition for the destruction of railroad lines. Beckett carried out most of this work at night, which meant he spent his days waiting in uncertain safety, vacillating between boredom and anxiety – feelings that permeate both

Endgame and *Waiting for Godot*.

Beckett returned from Rousillon in 1945, and over the next decade he, along with playwrights Ionesco and Genet, began to explore the world the War had created. Looking back on their work, Martin Esslin coined the term “Theatre of the Absurd” and defined it as a movement that “strives to express its sense of the senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational.” Playwrights of the Absurd did not write plays that simply ruminate on the irrational; their plays *embody* it.

Endgame perfects this unity of form and content: four survivors of an unknown catastrophe – a man who can't sit down, a

man who can't stand up, and two amputees in trash cans – perform an endless cycle of meaningless rituals as they await the end.

Although staring into the void may sound bleak, the writers of the Absurd always saw their world with a dark sense of humor. Of the senselessness of life, Ionesco wrote, “The unendurable admits of no solution, and only the unendurable is profoundly tragic, profoundly comic and essentially theatrical.”

Beckett too sees the world through the bifocals of tragicomedy: in his novel *Watt* he writes, “The mirthless laugh... is the laugh of laughs, the *risus purus*, the laugh laughing at the laugh, the saluting of the highest joke, in a word, the laugh that

laughs – silence please – at that which is unhappy.” In his dramatic works, Beckett pursued this “pure laughter”; writing to a friend, he spoke of “somehow finding a method by which we can represent this mocking attitude towards the word through words.” Music hall had shown Beckett the way; he infuses his comic quartet with the energy of farce. In the midst of gloom, his characters are irrepressible.

Given the physicality and timing Beckett requires, stand-up comedians and comic actors have taken to his plays. In the original, French production of *Waiting for Godot*, cabaret comedian Lucien Raimbourg took the role of Vladimir; in the first American version, Bert Lahr played Estragon; and Bill Irwin and Nathan Lane have been announced as the next Didi and Gogo on Broadway.

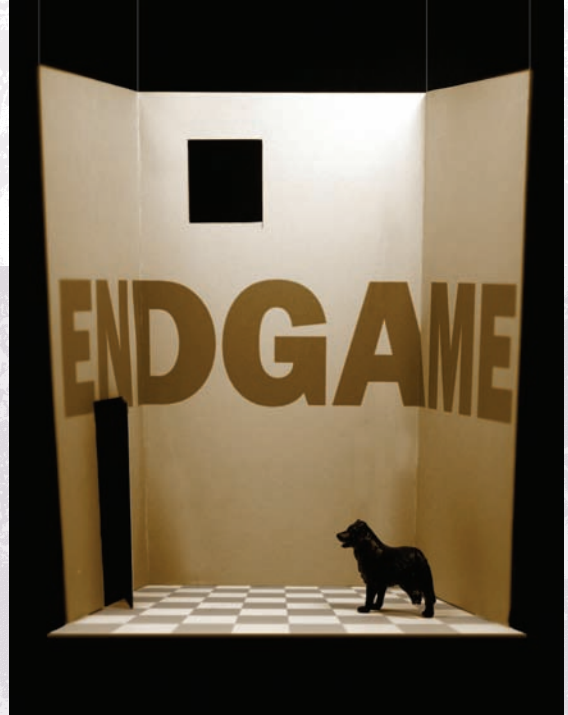
With this tradition, it's only fitting that Will LeBow, Tommy Derrah, Remo Airaldi, and Karen MacDonald – four brilliant comic actors – should tackle it. LeBow, who started his career in the comic theatre, and Derrah, lauded by Robert Brustein for his “flair for cranky fulminations,” take on Hamm and Clov. Airaldi, whose gift for physical comedy enthralled audiences in last summer's *Cardenio*, and MacDonald, who began her career in the musical and improvisational theatre, will climb into trash bins to play Nagg and Nell.

Despite its place as a masterpiece of Theatre of the Absurd and arguably Beckett's greatest play, *Endgame* remains a rarely-produced classic. With a cast of ferocious comic talent under the direction of Marcus Stern, a new generation will experience the tragedy and, yes, comedy of Beckett's play. Confronted with tragedy, Hamm asks, “Don't we laugh?”

Whitney Eggers is a first-year dramaturgy student at the A.R.T./MXAT Institute for Advanced Theatre Training.



Director Marcus Stern.



ENDGAME AT A GLANCE

Written by *Samuel Beckett*

Directed by *Marcus Stern*

Set Design *Andromache Chalfant*

Costume Design *Clint Ramos*

Lighting Design *Scott Zielinski*

Sound Design *David Remedios*

Cast

Hamm *Will LeBow*

Clov *Thomas Derrah*

Nagg *Remo Airaldi*

Nell *Karen MacDonald*

Synopsis

Four characters who may be the last survivors in the world wake up to another day. Hamm, blind and unable to stand, barks orders to his servant Clov, who is unable to sit. Hamm's parents, Nagg and Nell, are confined to two ashbins. While the parents reminisce about better times, Hamm and Clov pass the time with their comic bickering and daily routines. At first, the day seems like any other, but the characters soon sense that change is on the horizon. Clov must decide whether to stay with his master or take his chances venturing into the world outside.

Setting the Stage for *Endgame*

FIFTY YEARS OF APOCALYPTIC AMBIENCE

by Heidi Nelson



New York

Saskia Noordhegt as Nell, Tom Costello as Nagg, Gerry Bamman as Hamm. Directed by Andre Gregory.

WHAT DO SAMUEL Beckett's stage directions "bare interior" and "grey light" bring to mind? Although his description for the set of *Endgame* is meticulous, designers and directors have created inventive environments for Beckett's bleak sonata. Since its premiere as *Fin de Partie* at the Royal Court Theatre in London, *Endgame* has played out in a giant cage, a shallow lake, and a subway tunnel.

The playing space for the 1973 Manhattan Project's production consisted of a metal floor and chicken wire. The wire trapped the players and put the spectators into four cube-shaped cages. Nagg and Nell squatted in a laundry hamper and a refrigerator box instead of Beckett's "two ashbins." Designed by Jerry Rojo, the set drew a mixed reaction from *New*

York Times critic Walter Kerr, who argued that the wire, scrim, and glaring white light made it hard to see all the action. Otherwise, Kerr wrote that Rojo's environment emphasized the author's themes. What better way to highlight helplessness and despair than by imprisoning both actors and audience?

A decade later, Marcel Delval flooded the spacious Théâtre Varia in Brussels for his production. The first two rows of the theatre and the stage sat in one-and-a-half feet of water. The rest of the set included an enormous garbage bin for Nagg and Nell and a chair on a floating platform for Hamm. As Clov sloshed through the water, the actors' voices bounced around the concrete walls; the randomly echoed syllables mocked their absurd conversation.

Light and shadow cast eerie reflections on the rippling surface. Like Rojo's cages, the stagnant pool accentuated the four characters' captivity. Not only are they snared in a depressing room, they are also threatened by putrid water, slowly rising to engulf them. This design reinforced the play's sense of damp, dark rot.

The set of Joanne Akalaitis' 1984 production at the A.R.T. provoked a squabble between theatre and playwright. With designer Douglas Stein, Akalaitis created a bombed-out subway tunnel, littered with metal beams and charred subway cars. Although he did not attend the production, Beckett castigated the set as a distortion of his stage directions, and his publisher tried to get a legal injunction to stop the production.

Double level audience seating encircling *Endgame* performance space. Rendering by Jerry Rojo.



Brussels

John Dobrfynine as Clov and Claude Etienne as Hamm. Directed by Marcel Delval.



A.R.T.

Ben Halley Jr. as Hamm and John Bottoms as Clov. Directed by Joanne Akalaitis.

An out-of-court settlement required the A.R.T. to include a program insert. Beckett wrote a statement disavowing the production as a travesty of his play. Robert Brustein countered with a defense of artistic interpretation.

Some understood Akalaitis' set to be New York after a nuclear holocaust, a situation that conjures both familiarity and distance: New York is a known place, while a post-nuclear world is an unknowable future. Suggesting no time period and no country, Beckett puts Hamm, Clov, Nagg, and Nell in an abstract, absurd world without reason or escape. Zealots of following Beckett's stage directions strictly maintain that placing *Endgame* in a recognizable city reduces its impact; they claim that by removing the action from a

timeless space, Akalaitis stripped the play of its existential desolation.

Ironically, Akalaitis' production proved textually more faithful than many incarnations that escaped Beckett's wrath. During the Manhattan Project's *Endgame*, for instance, director André Gregory had his actors embellish their lines with noises and songs. When Akalaitis rehearsed, on the other hand, she requested that her assistant director shout "pause" for each one indicated in the script to ensure that the actors observed the rhythms of the dialogue. Why Akalaitis' setting incited more ire from Beckett than Gregory's mucking about with the dialogue remains unclear.

For the A.R.T.'s upcoming production, designer Andromache Chalfant's challenge

was to create an original set that both serves the needs of *Endgame's* imaginative director, Marcus Stern, and stays within Samuel Beckett's parameters. What Stern finds most remarkable about the play is the vitality of Beckett's language and characters, so he and Chalfant worked to make the human story more accessible within Beckett's abstract framework. Rather than being hindered by the play's requirements, Stern and Chalfant saw them as an exciting prospect, realizing that within great limits lie great possibilities.

Heidi Nelson is a second-year dramaturgy student at the A.R.T./MXAT Institute for Advanced Theatre Training.

CURTAIN TIMES

7:30 p.m. Tue, Wed, Thu, Sun eves
 8:00 p.m. Fri & Sat evenings
 2:00 p.m. Sat & Sun matinees

PERFORMANCE STAGES

LOEB DRAMA CENTER
 64 Brattle Street, Cambridge

ZERO ARROW THEATRE
 Mass. Ave. at Arrow St., Cambridge

SINGLE TICKET PRICES

LOEB STAGE	A	B
Fri/Sat evenings	\$79	\$56
All other perfs	\$68	\$39

ZERO ARROW THEATRE

Fri/Sat evenings \$52
 All other perfs \$39

HOT DATES

\$25 for selected performances, side and rear seating. See calendar.

DISCOUNT TIX

STUDENT PASS

For full-time students, \$60 buys five tickets good for any combination of plays. That's only \$12 a seat!

STUDENT SINGLE TIX

\$25 in advance with ID, \$15 on day of show with ID. Based on availability.

50 @ \$15 @ NOON

\$15 tickets on sale at noon on the day of performance. In-person only, based on availability.

BOX OFFICE HOURS

LOEB DRAMA CENTER
 Tue–Sun: noon–5 p.m.; Monday: closed
 Performance days: open until curtain

ZERO ARROW THEATRE

Opens one hour before curtain.

EXCHANGES

Ticket exchanges are FREE for series ticket holders. Single-ticket buyers can exchange for a fee of \$10.

PRE-PLAY DISCUSSIONS

Held one hour before 7:30 curtain. See calendar for details.

PLAYBACK

Post-show discussions after all Saturday matinees. Free, open to the public.

DISCOUNT PARKING

LOEB DRAMA CENTER
 Stamp your ticket at the reception desk for a discount at the University Place Garage or Charles Hotel Garages.

ZERO ARROW THEATRE

\$10 parking with permit at the Harvard University lot at 1033 Mass Ave. (entrance on Ellery St.). For permits, visit amrep.org/venues/arrow/#harvard.

GRAFTON STREET PUB & GRILL

1230 Mass Ave.
graftonstreetcambridge.com
 Free valet parking with \$60 purchase.

INN AT HARVARD

1201 Mass Ave. / theinnatharvard.com
 Free parking with \$35 prix fixe dinner.

DINING DISCOUNTS
 for season ticket holders only

Call for reservations and present your A.R.T. ID and ticket stub. Offers change; please verify. Info at amrep.org/restaurants.

CAFE OF INDIA

52A Brattle St. / cafeofindia.com
 5% discount on bill, including alcohol.

CHEZ HENRI

1 Shepard St. / chezhenri.com
 Buy one dessert, get one free.

CRAIGIE STREET BISTROT

5 Craigie Cir. / craigiestreetbistrot.com
 3-course pre-show prix fixe for \$38.

FINALE

30 Dunster St. / finaledesserts.com
 Buy a plated dessert and receive 50% off another of equal or lesser value.
 617.441.9797 / finaledesserts.com

GRAFTON STREET PUB & GRILL

See *Parking*, above

GRENDSEL'S DEN

89 Winthrop St. / grendelsden.com
 25% discount (food only).

HARVEST

44 Brattle St. / harvestcambridge.com
 15% off on the day of a performance (excl. alcohol, tax, gratuity, gift cards)

HENRIETTA'S TABLE

1 Bennett St. / henriettastable.com
 10% discount.

INN AT HARVARD

See *Parking*, above

OM RESTAURANT | LOUNGE

92 Winthrop St. / omrestaurant.com
 Free dessert with any full dinner.

RED HOUSE RESTAURANT

98 Winthrop St. / theredhouse.com
 15% off (excl. alcohol, tax, gratuity)

RIALTO

1 Bennett St. / rialto-restaurant.com
 Pre-show 3-course \$45 prix fixe.

SANDRINE'S

8 Holyoke St. / sandrines.com
 20% off (excl. alcohol and prix fixe).

SUMMER SHACK

149 Alewife Brook Pkwy
summershackrestaurant.com
 10% discount on food (valid Sun–Thu evenings; Fri & Sat until 5 p.m. only)

UPPER CRUST PIZZERIA

49b Brattle / theuppercrustpizzeria.com
 15% off with ticket stub

UPSTAIRS ON THE SQUARE

91 Winthrop / upstairsonthesquare.com
 Dinner in the Monday Club (\$35) or Soiree Room (Tue–Sat, \$45).

ZOE'S

1105 Mass Ave. / zoescambridge.com
 10% discount on bill.

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
						JAN 10 HOT SEA ●
11 HOT SEA ○	12	13 HOT SEA ●	14 SEA ●	15 SEA ●u	16 HOT SEA ●	17 SEA ○t ●
18 HOT SEA ○ ●	19	20 SEA ●	21 SEA ●	22 SEA ●	23 SEA ●o,t	24 SEA ○c,t ●
25 SEA ○ ●p	26	27 SEA ●	28 SEA ●p	29 SEA ○ ●p	30 SEA ●	31 SEA ○t ●
FEB 1 SEA ○						14 HOT END ●
15 END ○	16	17 HOT END ●	18 END ●	19 END ●u	20 HOT END ●	21 END ○t ●
22 HOT END ○ ●	23	24 END ●	25 END ●	26 END ●	27 END ●o,t	28 END ○c,t ●
MAR 1 END ○ ●p	2	3	4 END ○ ●p	5 END ○ ●p	6 END ●	7 END ○t ●
8 END ○	9	10 END ●	11 END ●	12 END ●	13 END ●	14 END ○t ●
15 END ○ ●						28 HOT BAR ●
29 BAR ○	30	31 HOT BAR ●	APR. 1 BAR ●	2 BAR ●u	3 HOT BAR ●	4 BAR ○t ●
5 HOT BAR ○ ●	6	7	8 BAR ●	9 BAR ●	10 BAR ●o,t	11 BAR ○t ●
12 BAR ○ ●	13	14	15	16 BAR ●	17 BAR ●	18 BAR ○t ●
19 BAR ○ ●	20	21 BAR ●	22 BAR ●			MAY 9 HOT ROM ●
10 ROM ○	11	12 HOT ROM ●	13 ROM ●	14 ROM ●u	15 HOT ROM ●	16 ROM ○t ●
17 HOT ROM ○ ●	18	19 ROM ●	20 ROM ●	21 ROM ●	22 ROM ●o,t	23 ROM ○c,t ●
24 ROM ○ ●p	25	26 ROM ●	27 ROM ●p	28 ROM ●p	29 ROM ●	30 ROM ○t ●
31 ROM ○ ●						

Dates and times subject to change. Please see amrep.org/calendar for the most up-to-date calendar.

- SEA The Seagull
- END Endgame
- BAR Trojan Barbie
- ROM Romance
- Daytime show (2 p.m. unless otherwise marked)
- Evening show (Fri & Sat 8 p.m., Sun–Thu 7:30 p.m. unless marked)
- p Preplay discussion
- t Talkback discussion
- c Childcare series
- o Out at A.R.T.
- u Under 35 night
- m 10 a.m. matinee
- HOT Hot Dates: limited \$25 tickets available at rear and sides of the theatre.

In Memoriam



Catherine “Kitty” Atwater Galbraith, for 68 years the wife of Ambassador John Kenneth Galbraith and a long-time resident of Cambridge, died peacefully at Mt. Auburn Hospital on September 30, 2008. The A.R.T. had a long association with the Galbraiths – they were the first unsolicited donors to the Company upon its arrival in Cambridge in 1979 and were among the longest subscribers in our history. This fall Kitty attended the A.R.T.’s season-opening production *Let Me Down Easy* at the Loeb. Her energy, love, and thoughtfulness to friends young and old made her deeply loved by all who knew her. She will be deeply missed and the world is smaller with her passing.



Let your hair down... and pARTY with Artistic Director Diane Paulus!

Join A.R.T.'s friends and supporters – along with company members from the Broadway production of *HAIR* – at A.R.T.'s annual spring pARTY!

Come celebrate Diane Paulus' arrival as the A.R.T.'s third artistic director in its 29-year history. As Diane Paulus shares her exciting vision for the future of the A.R.T., she'll be joined by some old friends – company members of *HAIR*, which she directed at this summer's sold-out revival in Central Park and will take to Broadway this spring.

The pARTY committee, co-chaired by A.R.T. Advisory Board members Page Bingham and Kathy Connor, is busy at work planning an event like no other. Guests will gather at our Zero Arrow Theatre for an evening of great celebration catered by MAX Ultimate Food, the presentation of the Robert Brustein Award, and a performance from *HAIR*.

SAVE THE DATE

Monday, April 27

Zero Arrow Theatre

Sam Waterston, recipient of the Robert Brustein Award, with Robert Brustein at the 2008 pARTY

Make your gift count...twice!

A.R.T. Advisory Board co-chairs Philip Burling and Ted Wendell have stepped forward to inspire giving by offering a dollar-for-dollar match for new or increased gifts to this year's Annual Fund.

Phil and Ted believe that powerful results occur when great theatre is supported. They invite all of you – A.R.T. friends and supporters – to join them in being champions for the A.R.T.

Support the A.R.T.'s Annual Fund – and make your gift count...**twice!**

ONLINE Click "Support Us" at www.amrep.org
PHONE 617.496.2000 x8832
MAIL American Repertory Theatre
 Attn: Development Department
 64 Brattle Street
 Cambridge, MA 02138



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A·R·T·

American Repertory Theatre

64 Brattle Street · Cambridge, MA 02138

Season 08/09

The Seagull January 10 – February 1

Endgame February 14 – March 15

Trojan Barbie March 28 – April 22

Romance May 9–31

Performance Stages

Loeb Drama Center 64 Brattle Street · Harvard Square

Zero Arrow Theatre Mass Ave at Arrow Street · Harvard Square

www.amrep.org 617.547.8300