

state ed

Beckett Triptych

by Samuel Beckett



DURATION APPROX: *2 hours & 10 mins (including interval)*

SUITABLE FOR *Years 9 - 12*

DWS performance followed by a 20 - 30 min Q&A session

**STATE SA
THEATRE
COMPANY**

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PLAYWRIGHT

SAMUEL BECKETT (1906-1989)

Samuel Beckett is widely recognised as one of the most influential writers of the 20th Century. Renowned as a novelist, playwright and theatre director, Beckett was hailed as a genius.

Beckett was born on April 13, 1906, in Dublin, Ireland. As a child; Beckett experienced severe depression, often keeping him confined to bed. Referring to his childhood, he once remarked, *"I had little talent for happiness."*

In his 20s Beckett travelled through Britain, France and Germany, before settling in Paris in 1937; where he met Suzanne Dechevaux-Dumesnil, who would eventually become his wife.

During World War II, he stayed in Paris and fought in the French resistance movement until he and Suzanne fled to safety in 1942.

Strongly influenced in his earlier writing by his friend and mentor James Joyce, in the years following the Second World War Beckett's work offered a blackly humorous, tragicomic outlook on human nature.

Beckett's plays do not rely on plot, time, characterisations or place references. Instead, he focuses on essential elements of the human condition in dark humorous ways. This style of writing has been called *'Theatre of the Absurd,'* with plays focusing on human despair and the will to survive in a hopeless world that offers no help of understanding.

Beckett's first triumph came in 1953 with *Waiting for Godot* performed at Theatre de Babylone. The play's success saw it performed throughout Europe and North America and gave Beckett international fame and financial security. Three other full-length plays, *Endgame* (1955–1957), *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958), and *Happy Days* (1961), were all written during the post-war period and make up a body of work that has inspired theatre-makers of every generation since.

His work has been described in the following way: *"Language is useless, for he creates a mythical universe peopled by lonely creatures who struggle vainly to express the un-expressible. His characters exist in a terrible dreamlike vacuum, overcome by an overwhelming sense of bewilderment and grief. Grotesquely attempting some form of communication, then crawling on, endlessly."*

Beckett continued to write throughout the 1970s and 80s and was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1969. By the late 1980s, Samuel Beckett was in failing health and had moved to a nursing home. His wife, Suzanne, died in July 1989 and he followed in December 1989 from respiratory problems. The two were interred together in a simple granite gravestone following Beckett's last directive, *"It should be any colour, so long as it's grey."*

Highly successful and influential in his own lifetime, Beckett's plays continue to be widely performed by theatre companies around the world.

BECKETT'S WRITING CAREER

Beckett's writing career is divided into three periods: his early works up until the end of World War II in 1945; his middle period until the early 1960s; and his late period until his death in 1989.

His early works were strongly influenced by his friend James Joyce, whom he assisted with research. After World War II, Beckett returned to his family home in Dublin for a visit, where he realised that he would remain in the shadow of Joyce. This prompted him to change direction in his writing style, *"I realised that Joyce had gone as far as one could in the direction of knowing more, being in control of one's material. I realised that my own way was in impoverishment, in lack of knowledge and taking away, in subtracting rather than in adding."*

Beckett's work began to focus on poverty, failure, exile and loss. *Waiting for Godot*, a play in which nothing happens, is an example of this work. His plays deal with despair and the will to survive in spite of that despair. *"Nothing is funnier than unhappiness, I grant you that... Yes, yes, it's the most comical thing in the world. And we laugh, we laugh, with a will, in the beginning. But it's always the same thing. Yes, it's like the funny story we have heard too often, we still find it funny, but we don't laugh anymore."* – The character of Nell (*Endgame*)

He also wrote three novels, *Molloy* (1951), *Malone Dies* (1951) and *The Unnamable* (1953). Like his plays, these novels are pessimistic, but through them all, the will to live seems to win out in the end. The last line of the novel, *The Unnamable* sums this up saying; *"I can't go on, I'll go on."*

In his later years, Beckett gradually stripped back every element in his writing to the point where his plays became a radically simple and essential form of theatre, with some pieces lasting only a matter of minutes and one play featuring only the actor's mouth! *Eh Joe*, written for television in 1963, and *Footfalls* (1975) are from this period, simple pieces, yet containing a world of human experience.

Beckett continued the theme of memory and its effect on the confined self in his prose pieces, *Fizzles*, *Company*, *Ill Seen Ill Said* and *Worstward Ho*. His final poem *What is the Word* grapples with the inability to find the words to express oneself.

FOOTFALLS

"We realise, perhaps only after the play has ended, that we may have been watching a ghost telling a tale of a ghost (herself), who fails to be observed by someone else (her fictional alter ego) because she in turn is not really there ... even the mother's voice may simply be a voice in the mind of a ghost."

*- James Knowlson and John Pilling *Frescoes of the Skull**

SYNOPSIS

A woman, May, is seen on stage as she paces back and forth across the same strip of floor. She talks and another woman, her mother, is heard answering her. The second woman is never seen, only heard.

As May's feet pace their endless circuit of the same strip of floor, the mother's voice talks. May is continually revolving something in her mind, rehashing something that happened, or didn't happen, years before.

Does May's mother actually exist or is she a figment of May's imagination? Does May exist? In the same way that May is trapped in a moment in time, replaying that moment over and over as she paces, *Footfalls* appears to be trapped somewhere between dreaming and waking.



DIRECTOR

GEORDIE BROOKMAN

Geordie is the Artistic Director of State Theatre Company. Since graduating from Flinders University Drama Centre in 2001 Geordie has directed work around Australia, the UK and Asia. His State Theatre Company directing credits include *Kryptonite* (Sydney Theatre Company & State Theatre Company), *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Little Bird*, *The Seagull*, *Maggie Stone*, *Hedda Gabler*, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, *Speaking In Tongues*, *romeo&juliet*, *Ghosts*, *Attempts on Her Life*, *The Dumb Waiter*, *Ruby Moon* and *Hot Fudge*, *Toy Symphony* (Queensland Theatre Company & State Theatre Company), *Knives In Hens* (Malthouse & State Theatre Company). Other directing credits include *Spring Awakening: The Musical* (Sydney Theatre Company), *Baghdad Wedding* (Belvoir), *Metro Street* (Arts Asia Pacific, Power Arts, Daegu International Musicals Festival and State Theatre Company), *The City and Tender* (nowyesnow), *Marathon*, *Morph*, *Disco Pigs* and *The Return* (Fresh Track), *Tiny Dynamite* (Griffin), *Macbeth* and *The Laramie Project* (AC Arts).



His productions have won or been nominated for Helpmann, Green Room, Sydney Critics Circle, Adelaide Critics Circle and Curtain Call awards.

He has also worked as a producer, dramaturg, teacher, event director and curator for organisations including the Adelaide Festival, The National Play Festival, University of Wollongong, Australian Theatre for Young People, Australian Fashion Week and Queensland Theatre Company.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Beckett, as an artist and a person, was equally influenced by other great thinkers and artists; his family and personal history. Written in 1975, as he approached his 70th birthday, *Footfalls* is infused with memories from Beckett's childhood, flashes of T.S. Elliot's beautiful *Burnt Norton* and his fascination with C.G. Jung's theories about 'birth trauma'.

At its essence though, *Footfalls* was Beckett's attempt to, 'dramatise deterioration with visual and aural *diminuendo*'. It explores whether we can ever truly be in the present or if we are, in fact, always the sum total of layers of partially redrawn memory.

The piece sees Beckett operating at his most pure and most theatrically demanding, just as he floats out tendrils of narrative he pulls them from our grasp. May's shrouded figure exists in a place between two planes of being, the past and the present, waking and dreaming and life and death. Beckett asks us what trace of our existence truly remains? A faint 'retinal ghosting'? A pathway traced on a surface? Our place in the memories of those close to us? Or simply a footfall fading away to nothing...

QUESTIONS FOR THE DIRECTOR

1. What was your main reasoning behind programming three of Beckett's shorter plays?

It's rare that we are provided with the right context to look at Beckett's shorter works. I thought the Adelaide Festival and the particular venue set up, with the workshop and rehearsal space, provided that context. For many people, Beckett simply means *Waiting For Godot* and he is so, so much more than that.

2. Although there is only one person onstage in *Footfalls*, there is a recorded voice throughout.

a) Was there a conscious decision to use a recorded voice as opposed to a live voice – and if so, what was the reasoning?

It's been done in many different ways in different productions. My primary reasoning came from wanting the particular combination that Sandy Gore's voice would provide with Pamela Rabe's. Jason Sweeney, the Sound Designer, was also interested in making it feel as if the Mother's voice could also progress from specifically located with May to becoming a voice inside all of our heads. The best way to achieve this was through sound design and pre-recorded vocals.

b) What is your process of rehearsing this voice along with the actor?

Essentially, we rehearse like any normal play. Sandy is with us through the entire rehearsal process and then, as we are about to start tech week, will record a final draft that will be worked into the sound design.

3. The pacing of May is critical and has been exactly described by Beckett; (*The walking should be like a metronome one length must be measured in exactly nine seconds. And these stretches of walking are 'the centre of the play'; everything else is secondary.*) What does this mean to you and how do you work on this in rehearsal?

In many ways Beckett defies concrete notions of meaning - it's part of what I love about him. Beckett was obsessed with the combining of form and content (this same obsession can be seen in some contemporary writers like Martin Crimp and Sarah Kane). The idea that the way that something happens, is as important as what actually happens. I think the pacing encapsulates the play's central thematic thrust. The rest I'll leave for the audience to interpret how they like!

4. What are the essential themes that stand out to you in this piece?

The relationship between parent and child. Memory vs. the present. The haunting effect of trauma.

5. Pamela Rabe is a highly respected Australian actress. What are her strengths as a performer and how has it been working with her on this piece?

I think Pamela is one of the best actors in the country. She has an extraordinary combination of strength, intelligence and fierce will that make her a real force onstage. Being in a rehearsal room with her and Sandy (another of our greats) is an honour.

ACTOR PROFILE

PAMELA RABE - MAY

Pamela has enjoyed a richly varied career on stage and screen, in Australia and around the world. She has appeared in over 90 theatre productions. For State Theatre Company of South Australia Pamela has performed in: *The Stronger*, *Miss Julie* and *The Rover*. Adelaide audiences may also remember her performances in *Lost in Yonkers*, *A Room of One's Own* and as the Wicked Witch of the West in *The Wizard of Oz*. Most recent theatre credits include *The Glass Menagerie* (Belvoir); *The Cherry Orchard*, *Hamlet*, *His Girl Friday*, *Boston Marriage*, *God Of Carnage*, *Things We Do For Love*, *Dinner* (MTC); *Do Not Go Gentle* (45 Downstairs); *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, *The Cherry Orchard* (STC); *Woman-Bomb* (Malthouse). As one of the founding members of Sydney Theatre Company's Actors Company, Pamela appeared in 10 productions, including Barry Kosky's *The Lost Echo*, as Richard III in Benedict Andrews' *The War Of The Roses*, as Nola Boyle in *The Season at Sarsaparilla*, and as Courage in *Mother Courage And Her Children*. She has directed plays: *Jumpy*, *Solomon and Marion*, *Elling* (MTC); *In The Next Room, or The Vibrator Play*, *Elling*, *The Serpent's Teeth - Citizens* (STC); *Porn.Cake* (Malthouse). Theatre awards include: 2012 Helpmann Award for Best Female Actor in a Musical for *Grey Gardens*, 8 Melbourne Green Room Awards including, most recently, Outstanding Female Actor awards for *The Season at Sarsaparilla* and *Dinner*. She has won numerous best actress awards (including an AFI) for her performance in the feature film *The Well*. She is currently appearing as Governor Joan Ferguson in the television series *Wentworth*.



SANDY GORE – THE VOICE



A NIDA graduate, Sandy is a well-known face on the Australian stage and screen.

Her television credits include: *Rake*, *Grass Roots* (Series 1 & 2), *Brides of Christ*, *Farscape*, *Murder Call*, *Prisoner*, *A Country Practice*, *Newly Weds* and *Rafferty's Rules*. Film appearances: *Now Add Honey*, Baz Luhrmann's *Australia*, *Evil Angels*, *Lorenzo's Oil*, *Undercover* and *Paws*.

On stage, Sandy has in excess of forty-five leading credits to her name. Sandy recently appeared in the Malthouse Theatre/STC premiere co-production of *Calpurnia Descending*. She was part of the cast of STC's touring production of *Uncle Vanya*, seen at The Kennedy Center of Performing Arts in Washington DC and the Lincoln Center in New York. Other STC work includes *Under Milk Wood*, *Love Lies Bleeding*, *Scenes from a Separation*, *Morning Sacrifice*, *Amy's View*, *Medea*, *Les Parents Terrible*, *Gift of the Gorgon* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. Additional stage credits include: *Parramatta Girls* for Riverside Theatre, *Small and Tired* for Belvoir Street Theatre, *As You Like it*, *The Rivals*, *Electra*, *The Alchemist*, *Pygmalion*, *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* and *Uncle Vanya* for the Melbourne Theatre Company, *The Taming of the Shrew* for Bell Shakespeare, *Wit*, *Retreat from Moscow* and *Becky Shaw* for Ensemble Theatre.

She is most proud of creating roles in new Australian plays, including David Williamson's *Jugglers Three* and *Sons of Cain*, Ray Lawler's *Kid Stakes* and *Other Times*, Alex Buzo's *Makassar Reef*, *Rooted* and *Big River* and Nick Enright's *Daylight Saving* and *Chasing the Dragon*.

ANALYSIS

Footfalls is a play in four parts, each opening with the sound of a bell. The play is very structured with the timing and pace being critical; *'The walking should be like a metronome'*, Beckett instructed.

May, a woman in her forties, paces back and forth, using only nine steps in total. She is outside her mother's room. Her mother, who is only ever heard in the play, is ninety years old and in poor health. Part of the mystery of the play is whether the mother is real or a creation of May's mind.

May speaks to her mother:

M: *Mother*. [Pause. No louder.] *Mother*.

[Pause]

V: *Yes, May*.

M: *Were you asleep?*

V: *Deep asleep*. [Pause] *I heard you in my deep sleep*. [Pause]

There is no sleep so deep that I would not hear you there. [Pause. M resumes pacing. Four lengths. After first length, synchronous with steps.] *One two three four five six seven eight nine wheel one two three four five six seven eight nine wheel*.

As May paces she hugs herself, her arms crossed, with the hands clasping her shoulders in front. May's posture gives the feeling that she is isolated. May is a shadow of her former self, with a ghostly pallor, and wearing tattered nightwear. Her posture May sinks lower during the play. May's journey has been described by Jonathan Kalb and Billie Whitelaw: *"May gets lower and lower and lower until it's like a little pile of ashes on the floor at the end, and the light comes up and she's gone."*

In the second part, the mother tells the audience that May begun her obsessive pacing in girlhood. Originally the hall was carpeted, but May asked her mother to have it taken up, saying she needed *"to hear the feet, however faint they fall; the motion alone is not enough."*

The third part parallels Part II, this time with May speaking of her mother and her life. She talks as though it were the life of someone else and even refers to a person called "Amy," which is an anagram of May.

In the final section there is no one on stage. The bell chimes; the lights come up and then fade out. *"The final ten seconds with 'No trace of May', is a crucial reminder that May was always 'not there' or only there as a trace."*



THEMES

MENTAL STATE

Beckett shows in *Footfalls* that one's mental age cannot always be equated with one's physical age. He shows May, a woman who appears prematurely old, as we watch her continually revolve everything in her mind; the frustration of birth, language and self, and the inability to comprehend these factors in her life. She seems to suffer from this eternal questioning, which provides her no viable answers, which has perhaps accelerated the ageing process.

As the play progresses, May begins to stoop lower and lower, demonstrating this fatigue in a physical manifestation. Therefore, despite being in her forties, she has the characteristics of an elderly woman, with grey hair and worn clothing adding to her ageing ghost-like persona.

We also come to understand that she is agoraphobic and has not having been outside since childhood. As a result, she has retreated into the confines of her mind. This isolation over so many years and her inability to connect with the outside world is represented by the nine steps along the corridor that she consistently takes.

MOTHER

Throughout the piece, May calls to her mother, perhaps searching for her state of being, but her mother cannot provide sufficient answers to May's questions. The mother, on the other hand, bears witness to her daughter's inexhaustible pacing.

It is never clear whether May or her mother actually exist. Some feel that May's mother is a figment of May's imagination and that is why we only hear her and don't see her. In this way, they are the same person. The dialogue from May's mother is an echo from the past and you are left with the feeling that the same conversation is being constantly replayed they never stop their storytelling.

Others feel that May is trapped in purgatory, constantly repeating issues from the past, unable to move onto the next world.

Another theory is that apart from the agoraphobia which incarcerates her, May has adopted the role of caring for her dying mother. This role reversal has contributed to her becoming old before her time, with the mental strain of nursing a dying parent producing a detrimental effect on her mind. Her inability to sleep is perhaps due to the fact that she was denied a peaceful childhood, remaining alert in her daily routine of 'preserving' her mother. There are nine questions she directs to her mother that illustrate this responsibility;

Straighten your pillows? [pause] Change your drawsheets? [Pause] Pass you the bed pan? [Pause] The warming-pan? [Pause] Dress your sores? [Pause] Sponge you down? [Pause] Moisten your poor lips? [Pause] Pray with you? [Pause] For you?[Pause] Again.

Beckett has written some similarities to his own mother in *Footfalls*. Beckett's mother was also called May and had difficulty sleeping through the night and often paced the floor. She too wanted to hear her footsteps as she paced.

GHOST

May is often compared to a ghost, performing the repetitive act of walking; or an energy that remains in purgatory, oblivious to the world of the living. She is dressed to represent this ghost-like state, with the long garments covering her feet and the dim lighting giving her a sullen ghostly appearance.

The metaphor of a ghost does not necessarily mean that May is dead and living in purgatory. A ghost is often described when someone is; *"A mere shadow or semblance; a trace: eg. He's a ghost of his former self."*

She is undoubtedly a walking shadow, condemned to linger physically until she solves her mental dilemma, remaining isolated and absent from reality. She may or may not be a ghost, but she is certainly haunted by the past.

In every scene but the fourth the mother asks May or May asks herself, *"Will you never have done revolving it all?"* Suggesting that this will continue for some time to come.

SELF

May exists primarily in her mind; unable to make sense of external reality. Trapped in her own thoughts, her solitary pacing is symptomatic of the need to assert control over her existence. The soothing rhythm of the pacing gives her control over this physical activity.

In the last section when the lights fade up there is no trace of May. This conveys Beckett's belief that 'it all' is essentially futile and that, ultimately, one's existence is meaningless. Maybe May has recognised the futility of existence? Maybe then, her footfalls will be forever silenced?

FOOTFALLS

The pacing throughout the production calls for nine audible steps, starting on the right foot and being regulated like a metronome. The pacing demonstrates the cyclical nature of her existence and the never-ending repetition of her memory.

As May paces her mother says;

I say the floor here, now bare, this strip of floor, once was carpeted, a deep pile. Till one night, while still little more than a child, she called her mother and said, Mother, this is not enough. The mother: Not enough? May – the child's given name – May: Not enough. The mother: What do you mean, May, not enough, what can you possibly mean, May, not enough? May: I mean, Mother, that I must hear the feet, however faint they fall. The mother: The motion alone is not enough? May: No, Mother, the motion alone is not enough, I must hear the feet, however faint they fall.

Beckett said that the footsteps should be emphasized, *"The play originated in his mind with the idea of pacing and the text only built up around this picture."* May's footsteps need to stand out above everything else happening in the play.

Also for reference, the numeral nine has often been associated with death. Eg. There are nine circles in Dante's version of Hell.

DESIGN ELEMENTS

SET DESIGN

Typically with his plays, Beckett was very specific about the set; with the corridor being parallel to the front of the stage, a metre across with nine length steps. Pacing is to begin with right foot and that the steps need to be a clearly audible, in a rhythmic tread. The lighting is to be dim, strongest at floor level, less on body and least on the head. The voice of the woman and her mother are to be low and slow throughout.

In this version, Director Geordie Brookman says that; *"It feels like a ghost story with the woman stuck in purgatory."* In consultation with the Designer, Ailsa Paterson, to achieve this, they wanted to create a sense of claustrophobia and encase the audience - extending the sound of the voice around the audience. To help keep the voices consistent, one is a recording and the other voice is mic'd.

Also helping to create the feeling of claustrophobia is having the space become completely black, so that the audiences' auditory awareness comes into focus on the voices and footsteps onstage. The audience are forced to listen as their other senses have been dulled.

Geordie and Ailsa also wanted the corridor to float mysteriously off the floor. The platform that the corridor sits on is made of scaffolding, 300 mm off the ground, with worn floorboards representing May's walking over many years.

COSTUME

The costume is a gown like a wedding gown or Victorian tea gown. It feels antique and timeless, but will have a skeletal spidery net look. It will be in a grey, toneless shade, giving a washed out, soulless feel and Pamela will have white long flowing hair. Beckett describes the costume as, *"Being the costume of a ghost. You feel cold. The whole time."*



EH JOE

“One striving to see one striving not to be seen...
It has his passion to kill the voices which he cannot kill.”
- Beckett

SYNOPSIS

Eh Joe written for television in 1965 follows an ageing man named Joe who is endlessly forced to confront his past. Joe sits in the secure solitude of his bedroom. But his locked door cannot block out the insistent woman's voice that enters his mind, forcing him to face up to his past and the lovers he has failed or driven to destruction. Tormented by his inner demons, he is made to relive everything he has tried to forget.

DIRECTOR

COREY McMAHON

Corey is a director, producer and dramaturg. He trained as an actor at the Flinders Drama Centre, graduating in 2006. He subsequently completed his Master of Creative Arts in Directing, also at the Drama Centre.

In 2008 he formed the award-winning independent theatre ensemble five.point.one. For five.point.one, Corey's directing credits include *Osama the Hero* (Dennis Kelly), *The Under Room* (Edward Bond), *The Share* (Daniel Keene), *The Eisteddfod* (Lally Katz), and *That Face* (Polly Stenham).

His recent directing credits include the 2014 State Theatre Company Umbrella production of *Between Two Waves* by Ian Meadows, *Thieves* by Kathryn Ash for the 2014 National Play Festival and the world premiere of *Music* by Jane Bodie for Griffin Theatre Company (Independent). In 2013, he was the director of the world premiere of *Rust and Bone* by Caleb Lewis for Griffin Theatre Company (and 2011 National Play Festival) and was dramaturg on *The Real World*, by Melissa Reeves (2011 National Play Festival). In 2011 Corey was both director and dramaturg on *Little Borders*, by Phillip Kavanagh (in association with Flinders University). *Little Borders* was subsequently selected for Playwriting Australia's 2011 National Script Workshop and won the Patrick White Award in the same year.

As assistant director his credits include *Ghosts* by Henrik Ibsen, adapted by Nicki Bloom (director: Geordie Brookman, STCSA), *Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat* by Mark Ravenhill (director: Roxana Silbert, Paines Plough UK) and *Holding the Man* by Tommy Murphy (director: Rosalba Clemente, STCSA). Corey has worked for State Theatre Company of S.A., Paines Plough (UK), The Bush Theatre (UK) and has taught and directed acting students in numerous productions at Flinders University Drama Centre and Adelaide College of the Arts and University of Wollongong.

In 2009 he was awarded 'Emerging Artist of the Year' by the Adelaide Critics' Circle for his work for five.point.one. His production of *The Share* won 'Best Drama (Professional)' at the 2010 Adelaide



Theatre Guide Awards, and he was also nominated for 'Best Individual Achievement' for his direction of *The Share* by the Adelaide Critics' Circle. In 2014 *Between Two Waves* was nominated for 'Best Ensemble' by the Adelaide Critics' Circle.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

In his book *Theatre of the Absurd*, Martin Esslin writes of *Eh Joe*, "*To be alive is to be aware of oneself, to be aware of oneself is to hear one's thoughts, that endless, restless stream of words*". We all have a voice that we hear inside our head. That voice is the voice of our conscience and our constant companion. It exercises great power over our actions and our emotions. The voice is at once separate from us but also a part of us. It is our moral compass. It is present but also memory.

This was the entry point for me when considering the role of Voice in *Eh Joe*. On one level, she is that inner voice that we are all familiar with. But Joe's idea of Hell is his own mind. He has successfully silenced the voices in his head, except for one. Voice is the one Joe cannot kill. She torments him. She holds him to account. Tortures him. She is everything Joe wishes to escape about himself. But Joe created Voice. He is his own captor and he must face himself.

Eh Joe was written for television. Beckett recognized television as the only medium powerful enough to step inside the mind of his protagonist. *Eh Joe* cannot be performed or presented any other way. It relies absolutely on the camera's ability to psychologically penetrate Joe. Yet despite this exploitation of technology, the play is also part-mime, with Joe frantically searching his room, desperate to make sure he is alone. It is precisely for this reason that its translation to the stage works so well. Beckett has written a work that can be viewed initially as stage play. He then challenges our relationship to the play (and to Joe) by using the camera to delve into the mind of his character. Jack MacGowran, the actor who Beckett wrote *Eh Joe* for, described the play as like "*photographing the mind*", a summation that captures perfectly the power of *Eh Joe* and Beckett's uncompromising psychological interrogation of a man who craves to be free of himself and all that he has done.



QUESTIONS FOR THE DIRECTOR

1. What is the attraction for you as a Director to the piece *Eh Joe*?

The main attraction for me is Beckett's use of the camera as a tool to step inside the mind of his character. It amazes me that a man usually known for his poetry and his writing for the theatre would take a medium such as television, still in its infancy, and exploit its power in a way not seen before.

Also, the work Paul Blackwell and I have undertaken in constructing a history and psychology for Joe has been incredibly rewarding. Joe does not speak at all, but Paul and I have developed a psychological 'map' that has helped Paul navigate his way through the play so that he is responding to everything the Voice says. There is never a moment in the play where Paul isn't thinking in response to what is being said. So from a process point of view, it has been an exciting and rewarding thing to undertake.

The other main attraction has been exploring the effect of the Voice on both Joe and the audience. Beckett had previously written for radio and stage, but this was his first piece for television. The absence of a tangible figure to represent Voice activates our imagination in much the same way as listening to a radio drama. The power of Beckett's sparse language is amplified as our ears tune in to the Voice and her words. This in turn engages our imagination as we seek to fill out the images Beckett's words create.

2. This piece was originally intended for television. How have you adapted this to stage?

As is required with all of Beckett's work, we have been very faithful to the script and what the playwright has written. In fact, the play doesn't work unless it is performed using a camera and a screen. So the fundamental formal requirements of the play remain. That said, the opening section of the play is a physical telling of the story; a silent show where Joe wordlessly moves around his room, searching for the person behind the voice. This presented us with an opportunity to split the play into two mediums: a theatrical, physical telling of the story (viewed by the audience in a traditional performer/audience relationship) followed by the camera slowly stalking Joe as the Voice interrogates him. The power of the camera, as it moves closer and closer to Joe means that the opening, theatrical chapter is starkly contrasted by a penetrating psychological interrogation in the second.

What was important to the design team and myself, was that we found a design concept that remained true to the dramaturgical demands of the play but also kept the audience's point of focus always with Joe and the room he sits in, and not split between a stage and separate screen. So our design brings those two frames of view together into one space. This decision ensures the impact of the camera stepping inside Joe's mind does not dissipate. The tension between Joe and the Voice never drops away by having to look away at a separate screen.

3. What challenges in the design did you encounter and how were they overcome?

As mentioned above, Set and Costume Designer Ailsa Patterson, AV & Lighting Designer, Chris Petridis and I were keen to ensure the audience's point of focus was not split between stage and screen. We wanted to keep everything located within the one frame. So our challenge was finding a design concept that combined the stage and screen and allowed the audience to still see Joe on stage as the image on the screen became the dominant visual element in the play. Once we had arrived at an idea, Ailsa built a model box and a screen that sat over the front of it and we then tested how it would read by projecting an image onto the front of the set.

4. What are the challenges of directing a one-man show?

Working one-on-one with an actor is an intimate process and one that requires absolute trust and respect. *Eh Joe* is a very demanding play. Despite there being no dialogue for Paul, he is acting his socks off and it is a very taxing play to explore and perform. So a big part of my job has been creating space for Paul to explore and test ideas, and for him to feel comfortable with each stage of the play by not rushing

him through it. Because of the intensity and intimacy of the process, we have rehearsed for shorter days. Rather than working a full day, we have rehearsed for five hours each day. That is probably the maximum amount of time to create work and be productive.

Working on a one-person show concentrates your focus. The actor and director carry a greater level of responsibility. There are no other actors to share that load. So it is important that you both absolutely trust each other and come together for the good of the play. I have been blessed with the opportunity to work with Paul Blackwell who is such a generous actor and one who has placed his trust in the vision the creative team has for the play.

5. What are the essential themes that stand out to you in this piece?

This is a play that explores themes such as honesty, personal responsibility, memory and the guilt we experience in regards to our actions. The play is about a man who is running from himself and the lengths he goes to, to block out the ghosts of his past.

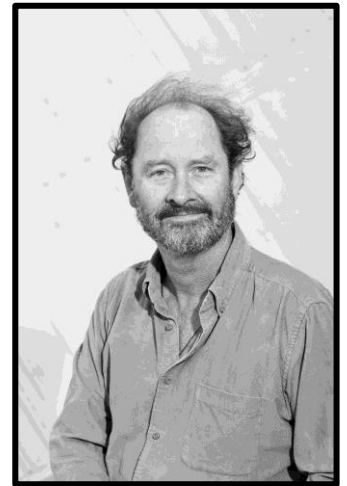
ACTOR PROFILE

Paul Blackwell

In a career spanning thirty years, Paul has worked widely across the industry in theatre, film, television and radio. He is perhaps best known on the stage having worked for all the major theatre companies and in children's theatre as well as for Opera Australia and the symphony orchestras in Adelaide and Hobart.

Recent appearances for State Theatre Company include the title role in State Theatre Company *Vere (Faith)*, a co-production with Sydney Theatre Company, and *Babyteeth*.

For Brink Productions and English Touring Theatre, he appeared in *Thursday*. Other highlights include Brink's award winning production of Andrew Bovell's *When the Rain Stops Falling* and their 2009 season of Moliere's *The Hypochondriac*.



Paul has appeared in numerous State Theatre Company productions over the years. Highlights include *Waiting for Godot*, *The Cripple of Inishmaan*, *Scapin*, *Night Letters*, *Dealers Choice* and *Venetian Twins*.

For Sydney Theatre Company, he appeared in *Tartuffe*, *The Government Inspector*, *The Ham Funeral* and *The Trackers of Oxyhrinchus*. For Belvoir, credits include *Antigone*, *Ubu*, *The Underpants*, *Picasso at the Lapin Agile*, *The Frogs* and *The Popular Mechanicals* and *Pop Mecs 2, On Parliament Hill*. His Windmill credits include *The Composer Is Dead*, a co-pro with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra and in *The Clockwork Forest* (Windmill Theatre/ Brink Productions). For Patch Theatre Company he was a co-creator on the award winning *Mr McGee and the Biting Flea*, *Who Sank the Boat?* and *The Happiest Show on Earth*.

Film credits include *Red Dog*, *Dr Plonk*, *Candy*, *December Boys*, *The Quiet Room* and the upcoming *Charlie's Country* and *The Boy Castaways*.

ANALYSIS

Eh Joe was written in 1965 and filmed in the BBC studios in London in early 1966. This production dramatizes the process of listening, conveying the interweaving of the conscious and unconscious mind.

Joe sits alone in his room, paranoid that there is someone else there. He continually checks the doors, windows and under the bed for someone else. A voice starts to talk to Joe. It is unclear if she is a specific woman, or the voice of many. The voice wants to know if Joe has checked everything. She asks why he is sitting there with the light on. She reminds him of what he said before he bundled her out the door. She speaks to him, tortures him, and interrogates him about his failed relationships.

Joe wants to quell the voices in his head, believing it to be the voice of 'God' that he can't quash. The voice says, *"No one can see you now... No one can get at you now."* The threat to Joe is internal rather than external.

The voice reminds Joe of the young, slim, pale girl, *'the green one'* who he bundled out the door and apparently committed suicide after an unhappy affair with him. She provides a detailed account of the suicide;

"Sitting on the edge of her bed in her lavender slip....Gets up in the end and slips out as she is...Down the garden and under the viaduct...Sees from the seaweed the tide is flowing...Goes on down to the edge and lies down with her face in the wash...Cut a long story short doesn't work...Gets up sopping wet and back up to the house...Gets out the Gillette....Back down the garden and under the viaduct...Takes the blade from the holder and lies down at the edge of her side...Cut another long story short doesn't work either...You know how she always dreaded pain...Tears a strip from the slip and ties it round the scratch...Gets up in the end and back up to the house...Slip clinging the way wet silk will....Gets the tablets and back down the garden and under the viaduct...Takes a few on the way... ..Stands a bit looking at the beaten sliver...Then starts along the edge to a place further down near the Rock...Imagine what in her mind to make her do that...Imagine. Trailing her feet in the water like a child...Take a few more on the way...Will I go on, Joe?...Eh Joe?...Lies down in the end with her face a few feet from the tide."

There is also a fixed position camera that follows Joe's silent figure. The camera portrays nine movements and works in conjunction with the voice. The camera moves four inches closer each time and by the end of the play, the camera is literally staring him in the eyes.

Joe seems to dismiss the voice by the end, the fading image and voice disappearing, suggesting that Joe has achieved some victory in controlling this voice.

CHARACTERS

JOE

Joe is a man in his late fifties. He is a lonely old man, affected by the choices he has made. The character of Joe is stuck. He sits motionless on his bed for most of the play. Somewhat like a child, he checks for monsters, methodically going through his room;

1. *Joe seen from behind sitting on edge of bed, intent pose, getting up, going to window, opening window, looking out, closing window, drawing curtain, standing intent.*
2. *Joe going from window to door, opening door, looking out, closing door, locking door, drawing hanging before door, standing intent.*
3. *Joe going from door to cupboard, opening cupboard, looking in, closing cupboard, locking cupboard, drawing hanging before cupboard, standing intent.*
4. *Going from cupboard to bed, kneeling down looking under bed, getting up, sitting down on edge of bed as when discovered, beginning to relax.*
5. *Joe seen from front sitting on edge of bed, relaxed, eyes closed. Hold, then dolly slowly to close-up of face. First word of text stops the movement.*

As he does so the camera follows him.

Joe doesn't speak in the play, but his conscience, through the Voice speaks. As she talks about his life the voice engages his imagination to fill in the details of his life and in particular, the young girl's desperation, "*Imagine what in her mind to make her do that...Imagine.*" He tries to stifle the voice. Does Joe feel guilty or regret that choices that he's made?

He is obviously haunted by something, but by the end he manages to controls the inner voice, being left alone.

VOICE

A female voice from Joe's memory utters nine short speeches that annihilate every trace of hope and beauty in Joe's past. Beckett specifies that the voice should be; *Low, distinct, remote, little colour, absolutely steady rhythm, slightly slower than normal. Between phrases a beat of one second at least. Between paragraphs about seven, i.e. three before camera starts to advance and four for advance before it is stopped, the voice resuming.*"

One actress explains that the voice needs to be concentrated on timing, rhythm and the musicality of the text. Another explanation is that the text was delivered as a drop of water literally dripping into Joe's head.

The tone is accusatory, mocking Joe's paranoia and deriding him for his inability to stop her attacking, judging and torturing him. She reminds him that he once loved her voice and welcomed her company. The voice also seems jealous of the other woman. The voice taunts him about taking advantage of people, how she found a better life, God and heaven. She talks about a summer they were together when he complimented her on her elocution, now as she tried to repress him she is gaining a slow monotonous drone.

This is not the first voice that has come to him. His father's voice came to him before Joe found a way to stop him talking; then came his mother's voice and then others who loved him. All of these other voices he's managed to stop. The voice asks if there's anyone left who might love him.

CAMERA

The play is written so that there is a single tenacious camera that virtually assaults Joe. Beckett directs the camera:

Joe's opening movements followed by camera at constant remove, Joe full length in frame throughout. No need to record room as whole. After this opening pursuit, between first and final close-up of face, camera has nine slight moves in towards face, say four inches each time. Each move is stopped by voice resuming, never camera move and voice together. This would give position of camera when dolly stopped by first word of text as one yard from maximum close-up of face. Camera does not move between paragraphs till clear that pause (say three seconds) longer than between phrases. Then four inches in say four seconds when movement stopped by voice resuming.

The camera acts as a visual representation of the voice. Their trajectory is similar, moving from a distance into close up. As the camera moves in the voice becomes more specific and when the camera is up against his face, the voice describes the girl's suicide in detail.

Although the camera appears to work with the voice, they do not move together. In this sense, the camera acts like an eye that wishes to make its presence felt. The camera is a visual witness to Joe's torment and a physical manifestation of the voice's assault on Joe, and is almost like Joe's conscience moving in on him.



THEMES

GUILT

The Voice inside Joe's head acts as his accuser and as instrument of his punishment. It forces him into self-analysis and to confront the unpleasantness of his personality. The voice recalls stories of past loves. We learn that Joe heard his father's voice for years until he realised that he could stop the words. We don't know why Joe's mother or father trouble him after their deaths, but disapproving or disappointed parents are plentiful throughout Beckett's work.

The voice tells details of the girl's suicide, he uses his imagination to fill in the details of her death. It is possible that his mistreatment of her left her with such low self-esteem that she was incapable of going on? Whether or not he shows regret is unclear. Here Beckett also touches on religious guilt, portraying Joe as a Catholic and his responsibility for the girl's suicide, which as a Catholic, is a mortal sin.

SELF & THE INTERNAL VOICE

The production of *Eh Joe* portrays the landscape of Joe's internal mind. The voice is not the voice of memory, but that of imagination and embellishment of memory. This voice invades Joe's room, even after he carefully locks all entrances and seals all cracks. Although the voices may be viewed as schizophrenia, the question is whether Joe controls the voice, or does it control him? If he is hearing it involuntarily, then he is perhaps mentally unstable, or if Joe controls these voices, is it for his own pleasure, creating company for himself to block out that he is alone? Without the voice, does he have nothing? Would the prospect of having nothing leave him with more pain? What happens when the voice disappears?

The dialogue between the self and the other is ongoing and has been with Joe some time. Through this confrontation of self, he is cross-examining his life. Joe is existing between the boundaries of the sane and the insane and we are witnessing him trying to control his mind in order to make his reality manageable.

The camera accentuates the dramatic engagement of Joe's thoughts. It follows him from the beginning, where Joe believes he is alone and then into the inner workings of Joe's mind. We watch his mental anguish unfold. However, Joe's facial expression remains practically motionless, due to the fact that the drama is taking place behind the exterior, inside his mind.

DESIGN

Eh Joe is Beckett's first play for television. Due to this, the piece will be presented in a tele-visual way, with a large scrim over the front of the stage. The room needs to contain Joe, giving a feeling of Joe being trapped in his own mind. A floor camera will project long shots onto a scrim, originally helping the audience explore the space, but as the play continues the camera stalks Joe getting closer and closer to him, with his image on the screen getting bigger.

The room is in perspective with a raked floor, slightly off scale with the door at the back smaller. Each of the windows, door and wardrobe door are covered with a curtain. The flooring is raised 300mm.

The whole room is de-saturated of colour, giving it a film grey look and feel. The lighting will create a shadowy effect and an almost distorted 3D effect in the projected image.

COSTUME

Joe will be in a robe and pyjamas and carpet slippers. Whilst the colours are drab and worn, there is a slight hint of green in the gown, referring to the girl in green.



KRAPP'S LAST TAPE

SYNOPSIS

Krapp, an elderly man, is surrounded by darkness in his room a single light illuminates his only significant possession, an old reel-to-reel tape recorder. It is his birthday and, as is his annual ritual, he records recollections of the year while also cackling over his old tapes from previous birthdays. The vaudeville of an old man's memories increasingly becomes a confessional that reveals a life of missed opportunities, as Krapp's nostalgic laughter turns into heavy silence.

DIRECTOR

NESCHA JELK

Nescha is the Resident Director at State Theatre Company. She graduated from the Flinders Drama Centre directing course in 2010 with First Class Honours and a University Medal. In 2010 she won Helpmann Academy's Bendigo and Adelaide Bank Award for being a top graduate from their partner schools.

For State Theatre Company, Nescha has directed *Othello*, *Jesikah* and *Random*. Other directing credits include *Alice and Peter Grow Up* (Milk Theatre Collective), *Hamlet* (The Actor's Folio), and *Sepia* (RiAus) which was awarded the 2012 Adelaide Fringe Tour Ready Award.

Nescha has worked extensively as an assistant director for numerous companies including State Theatre Company, Eleventh Hour, Brink Productions, Belvoir, Bell Shakespeare Company and Sydney Theatre Company. Most recently she assistant directed *Masquerade* (STCSA/Griffin Theatre Company) which premiered in the 2015 Sydney Festival and will feature in Adelaide's Come Out Festival in May.



DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Krapp's Last Tape shows us a man who struggles between the conflicting forces of attempted order and inevitable chaos. He has tried to control various aspects of his life; his diet, isolating light from darkness, denying himself intimacy, cheating mortality by recording his life, and to separate the 'grains from husks' of his memories. This drive to control, isolate, segment and separate his internal and external world is deeply instilled in Krapp's psyche. It is a compulsive obsession to be the author of his own identity. What we see, however, is that at sixty-nine years of age, the mess, confusion and detritus of his life haunt him. The disintegrating, lonely, constipated Krapp remains at the mercy of his emotional and physical desires and burning to be gone.

What is particularly fascinating is that *Krapp's Last Tape* was written by a man who, to this day, beyond death, exercises strict control over his work. Furthermore, Beckett—who was so private that he never attended the opening nights of his own plays, has infused *Krapp's Last Tape* with intensely personal experiences from his own life.

Besides the heartbreaking and unsettling imagery and language that Beckett provides for us, when facing this play I am left with endless questions. Questions about Beckett's own attitude to the choices

he made in life, about the romantic notions our society has about the austere life of an artist, about my own attempts to order my life, about how much I am actually living (rather than working), about the phenomena of social media and online self-reinvention, about humanity's urge to clinically control our bodies and our world and about what makes living worthwhile.

QUESTIONS FOR THE DIRECTOR

1. What is the attraction for you as a Director to the piece *Krapp's Last Tape*?

I was eager to direct a play by Samuel Beckett. I studied Beckett in high school and at university, but until now, have never had the opportunity to work on one of his plays. Stylistically and tonally his work is very different to anything else I have previously directed. His text also demands a high level of detail, which I love. Furthermore, I think *Krapp's Last Tape* contains one of Beckett's most beautiful pieces of text, Krapp's memories of the girl on the punt. It is such a pleasure to be able to work on a masterpiece such as this.

2. What are the challenges of directing a one-man-show?

Monitoring the energy levels of the actor. Usually actors will have a few hours during the day in which the director is working on scenes that they are not in, so they can do some of their own work or take a bit of a break. So I need to make sure that I don't exhaust Peter too much and that I give him space to do his own work.

3. What challenges in the design did you encounter and how were they overcome?

Geordie and I really wanted to transform the sense of the size of the stage between *Footfalls* and *Krapp's Last Tape*, which are both being performed in the workshop. Beckett specifies that *Krapp's Last Tape* should be set in a small den, so this meant that I had to create a small, intimate space for Krapp out of a very large space. Using the idea of Krapp being haunted by the detritus of his life, we have used large, towering piles of old furniture and books to make the space around his desk feel smaller.

4. What are the essential themes that stand out to you in this piece?

For me, the biggest theme in this play is the tension around Krapp and humanity's desire for control and order in a world of inevitable chaos.

Women, eyes, black and white imagery, light vs. darkness, technology vs. mortal body and solitude are also fundamental themes in the work. There is so much to unearth in this play.

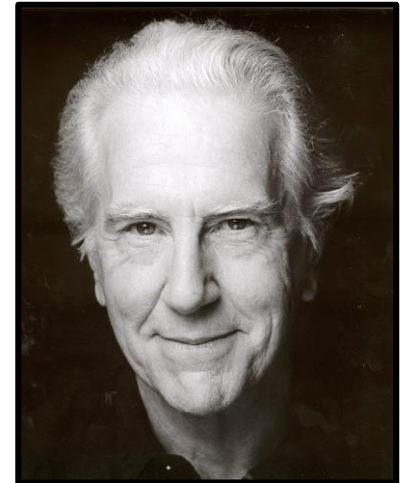
5. What are Peter Carroll's strengths as a performer and how has it been working with him?

It has been such a joy to work with Peter Carroll. He is highly intelligent, funny, gracious and a wonderful collaborator. I have learnt so much from working with him. Peter is a big reader and loves literature so he really understands how to embody the poetry in Beckett's text. He also has a wealth of experience so we've been having wonderful conversations about theatre, philosophy and history. It has definitely been a true privilege to work with him.

ACTOR PROFILE

PETER CARROLL

A veteran of the Australian stage, Peter has enjoyed a richly varied, 40-year career during which he has appeared in over 100 productions. He started out as a member of the original Nimrod Theatre and has since performed for all the state theatre companies, including The Actors Company at Sydney Theatre Company. For State Theatre Company of South Australia *A Hard God* and *Twelfth Night*. Other theatre credits include *A Christmas Carol*, *Oedipus Rex*, *Old Man*, *The Book of Everything - New York Tour* and *Sydney Season*, *Happy Days*, *Hamlet*, *The Blind Giant is Dancing*, *The Tempest*, *The Chairs* and *Stuff Happens* (Belvoir), *Night On Bald Mountain*, *Happy Days* (Malthouse Theatre), *The Crucible*, *Gallipoli*, *The War of The Roses*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Season at The Sarsaparilla*, *Serpents Teeth*, *The Art of War*, *The Bourgeois Gentleman*, *The Lost Echo*, *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *Victory and The Cherry Orchard* (Sydney Theatre Company). Peter also has extensive credits in musical theatre including *Sweeney Todd*, *Into the Woods* (MTC), *Les Miserables* (Cameron McIntosh) *Evita* (Adelaide Festival Centre), *Pirates of Penzance* (Opera Australia), *Crazy For You*, *Doctor Zhivago* (Gordon Frost), *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* (TML Enterprises). Peter received the Inaugural Award for Lifetime Achievement from MEAA in 2009.



ANALYSIS

Krapp's Last Tape was written in 1958. The play is built upon a monologue, however it relies on the dichotomy of light and dark, movement and stillness, past and present, silence and utterance and a will to die and a will to survive.

Set in Krapp's den, the play begins with a mime accompanied by a repertoire of amplified sound effects; keys jingle, corks pop, drawers spring, hands rub, feet shuffles, a ledger thumps on a table. Krapp, a 69 year old failed writer heaves a heavy sigh, stumbles, and breathes with difficulty as he moves about this deliberately circumscribed space.

Pierre Chabert who played Krapp under Beckett's direction says, "*How can a play which is based on the act of listening be made to work in the theatre? Listening is here communicated by the look. It is literally the eye which is listening.*"

He has an annual ritual of making a recording on his birthday about his year. He records them and catalogues them. He has documented his life over time. This obsessive compulsive behaviour is a constant desire to control his life, including the amount he drinks and chastising himself when he eats bananas. He begins to listen to the tape he made when he was 39. The recording recounts his experience with a young woman, whom he ended his relationship with in order to be a writer. Also on this recording is a younger Krapp, around 20, who he bitterly laughs at, "*Hard to believe I was ever that young whelp. The voice! Jesus! And the aspirations!...And the resolutions!*"

As he listens to the recording, he edits his own story, skipping over parts of the recording and providing commentary on what is heard. The recording he makes tonight, however, will be his last tape. Krapp stares motionless before him as "*The tape runs on in silence.*" Who will listen to all those reels when he is gone?

CHARACTER

Krapp is an aged, sordid, alcoholic, clownish and decrepit man. He is a writer and a recluse. He dresses in rags and lives alone in his den. He lives in the present and in his past, as he has recorded his life in intervals on tape.

Krapp has pursued the life of the mind, separating the 'grain' from the 'husks', but this has brought him minimal success and, more importantly, little satisfaction. In fact, his very denial of love has brutally defined his present condition.

We see Krapp at 69, the recorded Krapp at 39 who occupies most of the play. This Krapp recalls his mother's death, the epiphanies of artistic/intellectual insight, and the woman in the boat. We also hear a younger Krapp around 29 who swears off excessive drink and sex, and mentions his father's death. The young Krapp pays tribute to Bianca's eyes, as he admits that his only sustaining memory from a miserable year and then finally an even younger Krapp, who is only referred to briefly, who the elder Krapp sneers at.

THEMES

OPPOSITES

Black and white, light and darkness, movement and stillness, past and present, silence and utterance and a will to die and a will to survive. Beckett writes many references to the black and white contrasting imagery.

Examples of this include; the play taking place in the mindscape of conscious and unconscious thought; Krapp moving on and off the stage in between light and shadow. Also, significant moments of his past are defined in shadows and light: the 'dark nurse' dressed in white; the black ball thrown to a white dog; Bianca (Italian for white) whom he lived with on Kedar St (meaning black); the woman in the boat, who sexually and emotionally let him in, her eyes in shadow; the confident writer Krapp at 39, with the "new light above his table."

Beckett also makes associations with warmth and cold. These words and sensory perceptions, like the light and dark, function like musical motifs. Meaning varies with the pitch or timbre in which they are spoken.

It appears that Krapp has rejected the light of the outside world in favour of the darkness of his own interior.

UNFULFILLED DREAMS

Despite the young Krapp's aspirations to give up his nasty obsessions of drinking and eating bananas, at 69 we still see him doing both. Beckett meditates on the uselessness of every goal ever set by Krapp, who has never accomplished anything he hoped to, nor has he ever really tried.

SADNESS/ LONELINESS

The play centres around the sounds of loneliness, with Krapp sighing, fumbling and jingling keys, without the distraction of other sounds. Beckett meticulously details every moment, action and uncomfortable silence, removing any ambiguities in the reader's mental picture of the action.

Despite his intellectual and emotional potential, Krapp has never experienced fulfilment or peace of mind. Without the recordings of his earlier life Krapp would have forgotten most of his life. The voice on tape describes his usual birthday routine. The voice states he would not want the years back, when he

was capable of happiness, *"Not with the fire in me now."*

Elderly Krapp sits in the same room 30 years later, with the fire all but extinguished, and the darkness surrounding him. The dismal reality of his life. Beckett himself says, *"Whichever decision he might have taken, would have failed."* Meaning that with or without the girl Krapp would have failed the same.

LOVE

In Krapp's story, love seems to be against him. The only time that he possibly had love in his life, he gave it up to pursue his writing. Krapp doesn't explain his feelings for the women in his life, or how they affected him; instead he restricts his comments to his memories of their physical features. Krapp's focus on the sensory aspect of his life experiences is a coping mechanism that allows him to avoid facing his emotions.

SELFHOOD

The play is a dialogue between Krapp's past and future selves. As Krapp listens to his recorded diary of his past experiences, he fast forwards, rewinds and edits the past to fit the identity he desires to construct. This fragmentation of his life makes it difficult for Krapp to establish a consistent identity, reducing him to his essential self. Beckett is using Krapp's search for identity to depict the human desire for self-discovery.

Krapp lacks the companionship of a comforting partner but he is surrounded by mirrors in the form of tapes and they represent time, memory, and in general, Krapp's life.

ABSURD CHARACTERISTICS

Many characters in Theatre of the Absurd have some kind of addiction or habit, which serves as a life force that is unpleasant, but keeps them busy and alive. The character of Krapp has an absurd addiction to bananas and alcohol.

BANANA MOTIF

The banana motif is used in a variety of ways; as a representation of unfulfilled goals; for comedy with him slipping on the banana; as an addiction, *"Just eaten I regret to say, three bananas and only with difficulty refrained from a fourth."*

It is also interesting that the expression, 'Going Bananas' implies zaniness and losing control.

COMEDY VS DRAMA

The elder Krapp is portrayed comically, wearing *"rusty black narrow trousers too short for him"* and a *"surprising pair of dirty white boots, size ten at least, very narrow and pointed."* Costume, along with the cracked voice and laborious walk; white face and red nose; and the banana skin, over which he falls, show remnants of a clown. There is a slapstick element in the character, including this slip on the banana skin.

Another example of comedy is his singing. We hear the young Krapp pledges to never sing when he gets old, but the older Krapp sings, *"Now the day is over, Night is drawing nigh, Shadows of the evening, Steal across the sky."* This is also a poignant moment with Beckett using these lyrics to symbolize the end of Krapp's life.

There are many dramatic elements, the biggest being the realisation that Krapp hasn't led a happy life. He had fleeting moments where had he chosen a different path things would be different, *"Past midnight. Never knew such silence."*

DESIGN

SET DESIGN

Beckett has written very specific stage directions. He insists on total control, beginning with almost an entire page of stage, set, and movement directions before Krapp even utters his first line:

Krapp remains a moment motionless, heaves a great sigh, looks at his watch, fumbles in his pockets, takes out an envelope, puts it back, fumbles, takes out a small bunch of keys, raises it to his eyes, chooses a key, gets up and moves to front of table. He stoops, unlocks the first drawer, peers into it, feels about inside it, takes out a reel of tape, peers at it, puts it back, locks drawer, unlocks second drawer, peers into it, feels about inside it, takes out a large banana, peers at it, locks drawer, puts keys back in his pocket. He turns, advances to edge of stage, halts, strokes banana, peels it, drops skin at his feet, puts end of banana in his mouth and remains motionless, staring vacuously before him. Finally he bites off the end, turns aside and begins pacing to and fro at edge of stage, in the light, i.e. not more than four or five paces either way, meditatively eating banana. He treads on skin, slips, nearly falls, recovers himself, stops and peers at skin and finally pushes it, still stopping, with his foot over the edge of the stage into pit. He resumes his pacing, finishes banana, returns to table, sits down, remains a moment motionless, heaves a great sigh, takes keys from his pockets, raises them to his eyes, chooses key, gets up and moves to front of table, unlocks second drawer, takes out a second large banana, peers at it, locks drawer, puts back his keys in his pocket, turns, advances to the edge of stage, halts, strokes banana, peels it, tosses skin into pit, puts an end of banana in his mouth and remains motionless, staring vacuously before him. Finally he has an idea, puts banana in his waistcoat pocket, the end emerging, and goes with all the speed he can muster backstage into darkness. Ten seconds. Loud pop of cork. Fifteen seconds. He comes back into light carrying an old ledge and sits down at table. He lays ledger on table, wipes his mouth, wipes his hands on the front of his waistcoat, brings them smartly together and rubs them.

A late evening in the future. Krapp's den has been designed to have order in a world of chaos. He is a hoarder, but there is a sense of structure. The room is in on a platform of shadowy objects, given it a sense of being on an island. The tapes are highly symbolic, as when Krapp stumbles over them scattered on the floor, he is literally 'treading on his life.' The whole room has an industrial feel with industrial trolleys, a ladder and boxes that he can walk amongst and rifle through boxes.

There will be small pops of yellow throughout the design of mainly brown and grey. Lighting will come through some of the structures. To embrace the heat and isolation of the space there are industrial fans, but still he is sweating and uncomfortable.

COSTUME

Krapp's outfit is worn and dirty, giving the feel that he has worn them for many years and they have shrunk and deteriorated over that time. He has narrow black trousers that are too short, a dirty collarless shirt, a black waistcoat and white dirty boots.



OVERALL

RHYTHM

Beckett puts an emphasis on the rhythmic qualities of his plays. Like a composer, he is conscious of the importance of precisely timed silence. To explain his pauses is practically impossible. He often strips his characters of emotionally padded lines, instead revealing their suffering through rhythmic elements. In his stage directions he clearly states the tempo, rhythm, pitch and timbre of every sound and in *Eh Joe* the movement of the camera and the exact beats between lines. Without addressing these details, the rhythm of the play loses its ability to express the rhythms of the mind.

ISOLATION

Many of Beckett's characters are represented in isolation. In *Eh Joe*, Beckett requires the actor remain practically motionless and stare unblinkingly toward – though not directly at – the camera lens. This gives an even greater feeling of isolation.

Krapp's Last Tape portrays the extreme loneliness and fragmentation of identity which a man devoid of religious, social, or biological purpose will endure.

Footfalls depicts May, alone seeking answers to her eternal questioning. This isolation over so many years is represented in the play by the nine steps in the shape of the infinity sign.

MEMORY

All of these plays deal with memory and the recollection of their haunting pasts. This memory comes from a voice in one's head, the voice of another character, or a recorded voice from the past.

Krapp's Last Tape explores memory in the form of a recording from the past. Although this yearly account of Krapp's life is an account of the year, he edits details that he doesn't want to remember. In *Eh Joe* the voice in his head mocks him and makes him confront ghosts from the past, including his mother and father. *Footfalls* also replays May's memories of the past as she searches for answers for her existence.

All of these plays explore how memory can be different than reality, with embellishments and imagination filling in the details. Beckett is perhaps asking us to acknowledge how we deal with unwanted memories and thoughts and how we suppress our own personal feelings.

One of these examples is Krapp's memory of giving a black ball to a white dog as he awaited the death of his mother. Into this momentary connection, he has a cascade of emotion saying, "*I shall feel it, in my hand, until my dying day. I might have kept it. But I gave it to the dog.*" The older Krapp was unable to remember the moment.

RELIGION

Beckett is an agnostic and said, "*Even if God were to exist, he would make no difference: he would be as lonely and as enslaved, and as isolate as man is, in a cold, silent, indifferent universe.*"

Many of Beckett's characters are searching for God. In his characters' isolation they are continually challenging their own needs and aspirations and continually waiting for something, some person or situation to come and change things. "*Dramatists such as Beckett are indeed chiefly concerned with expressing a sense of wonder, of incomprehension, and at times of despair, at the lack of cohesion and meaning that they find in the world.*" – Esslin (1965)

Waiting for Godot is an example of one of his plays where a man waits and hopes for something to give a meaning to his life. *Eh Joe*, *Footfalls* and *Krapp's Last Tape* also have this sense of struggling for meaning.

Krapp an atheist, listens to his younger self describe the spiritual revelation he experienced during a fierce storm. Krapp comments, "*Just been listening to that stupid bastard I took myself for thirty years ago, hard to believe I was ever as bad as that.*"

Krapp has searched for meaning over many years, but there is nothing in which he truly believes. Instead he structures his life as a series of meticulous routines; he times his pleasures (drinking and reading), he literally measures every step and even assumes a "listening posture" in playing the tapes.

In *Eh Joe*, Joe is a deeply religious man and the torment and guilt he experiences is driven, in part, by the teachings and moral code set down by the Catholic Church. Knowing the Catholic Church views suicide as a mortal sin, Beckett questions how Joe feels if he thought he might be even indirectly responsible for the young girl's suicide? Voice reminds Joe that once he has silenced the voices in his head, he will then have to be answerable to his God.

THE COLOUR GREEN

The woman in the green coat on the train platform is common to *Krapp's Last Tape* and *Eh Joe*, and is a recurring image suggesting the importance of this particular woman autobiographically in Beckett's life, and then repetitively as a motif in his work. The only colour described in the three pieces, other than black and white, is green. Green monster eyes and the green coat are mentioned.



DESIGNER

SET & COSTUME DESIGNER

AILSAL PATERSON

Ailsa completed the Bachelor of Dramatic Art in Design (NIDA) in 2003.

Set and Costume Design credits for State Theatre Company include *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Hedda Gabler* (Associate Set Design), *In the Next Room or The Vibrator Play*, *War Mother*, *The Ham Funeral*, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)*, *The Price* and *The Cripple of Inishmaan*. Costume Design credits include; *Little Bird*, *The Seagull* and *Three Sisters*.

Other theatre design credits include *Cranky Bear* (Patch), *Mouse, Bird and Sausage* (Costume Design, Slingsby), *Other Desert Cities*, *Seminar* and *Skylight* (Ensemble), *You, Me and the Bloody Sea* (Adelaide Cabaret Festival 2013), *Ode to Nonsense* (Costume Design, Slingsby/State Opera of SA), *Shining City* (Griffin Theatre Company), *Hansel and Gretel* and *La Sonnambula* (Pacific Opera), *Faustus* and *Madame Melville* (BSharp), *Vampirella*, *The Internationalist* and *Bone* (Darlinghurst Theatre), *A Couple of Blaguards* (Seymour Centre/Comedy Theatre), *Shifted* (Sydney Dance Company) and *Debris* (Old Fitz /Melbourne Fringe). Ailsa worked in costume on *The Straits* (ABC), *LAID* (ABC), *Underbelly — A Tale of Two Cities*, *Underbelly — The Golden Mile*, *Blue Water High*, *The Last Confession of Alexander Pearce*, *Ten Empty*, *The Boy from Oz Arena Spectacular*, *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* The Musical and *High School Musical*.



Ailsa received the 2011 Mike Walsh Fellowship.

QUESTIONS FOR THE DESIGNER

1. How difficult is it to design three different spaces given the limitations of the theatres?

It is certainly a challenge to design three plays over two non-theatre venues, and still to create an immersive, cohesive experience for the audience. The two venues (the Scenic workshop and the Rehearsal Room) needed to be transformed into functioning theatre spaces. In addition to this, in collaboration with the three directors, we were keen to create a sense of different scale and space between the two pieces in the Scenic Workshop, *Footfalls* and *Krapp's Last Tape*.

The venues required the installation of seating banks to house a specified number of audience members, rigging points for lights and audio equipment, safety exits and signage to address the fire safety and evacuation requirements, plans for audience movement between the two venues and from the foyer, masking and blacking out to create darkness for effective lighting and projection, and ventilation. In essence, the design brief requires me to first create the venue, and then design the worlds to be housed within.

2. What do you feel is the underlying theme of each play?

Krapp's Last Tape is described as being set in a 'late evening in the future.' He is seated at a desk under the intense glare of an overhead examination light. In the cavernous space of our Scenic Workshop I

have designed an isolated island for Krapp's desk. He is elevated on a platform to emphasize his separation from the world surrounding him. This world is made up of shadowy towers of objects; the accumulation of a lifetime's baggage. The strong themes of the pieces are the contrast between dark and light, and the inability of man to have absolute control of himself and his environment.

Footfalls is also taking place in the Scenic workshop. In this piece May walks up and down a single channel of worn floorboards, accompanied by manifestations of memory and imagination. The design for this play focusses on an illuminated strip, floating in a claustrophobic womb of blackness. I have really tried to shut the space down for this play, using black wool masking, so that there is a surprising contrast in scale when the audience returns for Krapp's. Thematically, this is a piece which reflects on the notion of existing physically without really living.

The third play *Eh Joe* takes place in the Rehearsal Room. This piece is interesting as it was originally written for television and uses projection as an additional layer to scrutinize the mind of the sole character, Joe. In this instance the design is a very simple room in forced perspective. All surfaces have a film grain look and the architecture is stark and stylized. There is a sense of entrapment and bleakness. We watch the action through a double screen of scrim material, onto which is projected the scripted footage of Joe's environment and then close-ups of his face. Again this is a character that is haunted by voices, possibly of his own imagining. The theme of duality, of warring with self, is as present here as it is in both *Krapp's Last Tape* and *Footfalls*.

3. Beckett is very specific about the costume and set design. How do you stay true to this?

The Beckett estate dictates that all stage directions and instructions within the scripts for his plays must be adhered to strictly, without omission or addition. In our three pieces, many elements of the set and costumes are carefully described, and I have followed these directions faithfully. We have followed the specific instructions very carefully. However, I have tried to make the design my own in the following ways;

Krapp's Last Tape: I have contrasted the stark, bare 'island' of Krapp's desk and platform with a surrounding environment, both separate and yet impossible to entirely disappear. It is a shadowy presence, ominous at times, comforting at times – a landscape of his mind and a physical reminder that a life's work cannot be ordered onto a set number of tapes, there is always 'stuff' to deal with, stuff that cannot be controlled. It is the remnants that endure when the husk is separated from the grain.

Footfalls: While sticking very precisely to the dictated length and width of the walkway, the weathering of the floorboards will be very beautifully stylised by our Scenic Artist to enhance the de-saturated colour palette. In addition to this, the careful use of black masking to really restrict the impression of the size of the space and the suffocating darkness is a very important part of the design, even if it is not consciously noticed by audience members. Atmosphere is as important as visual elements in these pieces.

Eh Joe: I feel that I have really been able to stylize the *Eh Joe* environment in my own way. It is adhering exactly to the textual requirements, but in the placement of the projection screens and the use of perspective and raked surfaces I have been able to skew the impression of the room.

4. All the shows are de-saturated of colour, except for some slight greens. What is the meaning behind this colour?

The clear memory association of this colour is something we wanted to hint at in the design world, so we see some slight green undertones to Joe's costume, and the quality of light at times will reflect this.

5. How do you work with the Lighting & Sound Designers to create the world that Beckett wants for these pieces? Eg. What is the process/discussions

The interaction with the Sound and Lighting designers begins very early in the process and is essential to create a cohesive dramatic world. Initially the Lighting and Sound Designers meet with the Directors to discuss any initial thoughts and requirements. They are then part of many subsequent design meetings, both to keep abreast of the developing design, but also to integrate their elements into the design as it proceeds. There is much discussion about the world we are creating, and how we all combine to best establish it.

6. To get the camera movement in *Eh Joe* there would need to be some specific design elements to help accommodate this, what have they been?

The camera movement is all important in *Eh Joe*. The exact framing is carefully described in the script, and it has been an essential part of the design process. The considerations have been the depth of field and appropriate angle of the camera, in addition to facilitating the initial tracking action of the camera. I have worked very closely with our Lighting and Projection Designer, Chris, to ensure that the appropriate technology is integrated to achieve the effect we are after. It was also important for us to minimize the visual impact of the camera itself, so to house it discreetly in the set, so that the actor and the projected image are the focus for the audience.

7. Are there any challenges in the physical-ness of the costuming? Eg. In *Footfalls* the actor walks for the whole play, but becomes more burdened as the play continues. Are there any accommodations that have needed to be made in order to make the actor more comfortable?

The costume designs for the three pieces are all linked in colour palette and in the stylisation of age and wear. There were also some particular considerations in terms of physical requirements for each piece. For *Footfalls*, the sound of each step is a very important element of the play, and something we have experimented with during the rehearsal process. We are trialing various options for footwear, including shoes with sandpaper attached to the bottom, strips of textured fabric binding the feet, Velcro, grit in the varnish on the platform and gaffa tape. In addition to the footwear, the robe worn by May is very long and trained, hiding the feet entirely. It requires careful adjustment so that Pamela can pace and turn effectively. It is important that her movement is not restricted in any way by the garment.

For *Eh Joe*, because the stage floor is steeply raked, it is important to provide the appropriate footwear for Paul to move naturally in this somewhat awkward space. Thus the slip-on slippers in the original design have been replaced by closed-in slippers in the same fabric.

8. What role does a Designer play in the finding props for a show?

The Designer is responsible for the look of all props in the show; however there is a head of props that is in charge of sourcing and manufacturing the required items. It is up to the designer to decide, in collaboration with the director and actors, what the props will look like, and to provide reference material and building specifications for the props being manufactured. I tend to assist with the sourcing of props, whether online or in shops, as there can be an extensive list and the more input from the designer, the easier it is for the props master.

9. What are the other challenges you've faced with designing this play?

The initial challenges involved in the design of this sort of production revolve around the transformation of work spaces into public performance venues with the capabilities of a theatre. Controlling light and sound in a venue that isn't designed to be blacked out is a difficult process. There are also many safety requirements in terms of audience exits, width of access routes, temperature control, fire precautions, disabled access etc. These challenges are the more purely practical ones. The creative design challenges involved are finding a way to tie together the three productions so that the overall experience is a cohesive one, and negotiating the restrictions and stipulations of the Beckett estate while still making the production dynamic, original and inventive.

INTERESTING READING

ABSURD THEATRE

Theatre of the Absurd refers to particular plays written by European and American playwrights of the post-Second World War period who shared the view of many existential philosophers - that life is meaningless, communication impossible, society robotic and inhuman. These playwrights could not express these views within the framework of traditional theatre and therefore they needed new modes of expression, new venues, new dramatic structures and new stage imagery, and thus Theatre of the Absurd was born.

Two people in particular played key roles in the development of Theatre of the Absurd. In his 1942 essay *The Myth of Sisyphus*,* French philosopher Albert Camus defined the human situation as meaningless and absurd: and Hungarian-born British writer Martin Esslin coined the phrase Theatre of the Absurd in his 1961 book of the same title, in which he comments on this disorienting post-war drama. At first, most audiences were opposed to this style of theatre because they didn't understand it. However, as the movement gained intellectual currency and momentum, more and more theatre-goers began to enjoy the experience of this challenging drama being performed in church basements and other unconventional venues.

Samuel Beckett (1906–1989) was the first to gain international fame as an absurdist playwright, with his play *Waiting for Godot*. Beckett's plays are characteristic of the post-war 1950s, a time when people still felt the threat of war and their own powerless to understand or control the world they lived in. Unlike the existential philosophers, the playwrights of Theatre of the Absurd did not try to resolve the issues around the absurdity of the human condition, but rather alluded to the greatest question: why are we all here?

Unable to answer the question, many Absurdist plays are circular: meaning they end where they started, with no apparent resolution, no happy ending, and no definite call to action. Language is devalued, communication is non-literal and action and images prevail. By choosing to depart from traditional dramatic conventions, the absurdist portrayed on the stage the chaos and despair they experienced in the world.

* According to Greek mythology, Sisyphus was condemned to push a heavy stone up a steep hill; but before he reached the top the stone always rolled down, and he had to begin all over again.

Other great playwrights who contributed to Theatre of the Absurd:

- Edward Albee (1928)
The Zoo Story (1958), *The Sandbox* (1960), *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962), *The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?* (2002)
- Eugene Ionesco (1912–1994)
The Bald Soprano (1949), *The Lesson* (1950), *The Chairs* (1952), *The Killer* (1959), *Exit the King* (1962), *Hunger and Thirst* (1966), *Macbett* (1972), *The Man with the Suitcases* (1975)

- Jean Genet (1910–1986)
The Maids (1947), *Deathwatch* (1949), *The Balcony* (1956), *The Blacks* (1959), *The Screens* (1961)
- Arthur Adamov (1908–1971)
The Invasion (1950), *Parody* (1952), *All Against All* (1953), *Paolo Paoli* (1957), *Spring '71* (1960).

Playwrights who continued the tradition after 1960:

- Fernando Arrabal in Spain
- Tom Stoppard in England
- Gunter Grass and Peter Weiss in Germany
- Israel Horovitz and Sam Shepard in the USA
- Vaclav Havel in the Czech Republic

Characteristics of Theatre of the Absurd

- Situations and characters' emotional states may be represented through poetic metaphor (dreamlike, fantastical or nightmarish images).
- The notion of realism is rejected: situations and characters are not 'realistic' and characters are often placed in unreal situations.
- Set and costumes may not reflect an outward reality.
- Dialogue is often nonsensical, clichéd or gibberish.
- Communication is fractured.
- There is usually an emphasis on 'theatricality' as opposed to realism.
- Absurdist playwrights often use dark comedy for satiric effect.
- Characters exist in a bubble without the possibility of communication.
- Characters may be one-dimensional, with no clear motivation or purpose.
- Characters may be symbolic of universal situations.
- Behaviour and situations may not follow the rules of logic.
- Structure may be circular, without a precise resolution.
- Action may be minimal.
- Setting of the play may be in one locale.
- Often characters perceive a threat from the 'outside', leading to a sense of powerlessness.

Themes of Theatre of the Absurd

- Isolation of human existence in a world without God
- Lack of communication between individuals
- Dehumanisation in a commercial world
- Social disparity
- Life without purpose or examination
- Loneliness
- Class difference/the haves and have nots
- Loneliness
- Fear of the disenfranchised

BURNT NORTON

Director Geordie Brookman says that Beckett had an interest in this poem as a springboard for some of his writing, particularly in *Footfalls*.

Burnt Norton is the first poem in T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*. He created it while working on his play *Murder in the Cathedral* and was published in 1936. The central discussion within the poem is on the nature of time and salvation. Eliot emphasises the need of the individual to focus on the present

moment and to know that there is a universal order. By understanding the nature of time and the order of the universe, mankind is able to recognise God and seek redemption.

T.S.Eliot paraphrases Ecclesiastes 1.9 & 3.15 and repeats the word 'time.

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable

CARL GUSTAV JUNG

CARL GUSTAV JUNG (1875-1961)

Was a Swiss psychiatrist and psychotherapist who founded analytical psychology. He proposed and developed the concepts of the collective unconscious, archetypes and extraversion and introversion.

According to Jung, *"Aspects of consciousness can become almost independent personalities and might even 'become visible or audible. They appear as visions; they speak in voices which are like the voices of definite people.'"*

Beckett uses Jung's theory of internal personalities which often manifest as voices, particularly in *Eh Joe*. The Voice in *Eh Joe* is the opposite of Joe's masculine, lecherous, dishonest and religious self: feminine, constant, secure and irreligious. The voice is a distillation of all the previous voices, pointing an accusing finger at him on behalf of her and all the others. In doing so 'he finds that hell is not only other people but himself.

BIRTH TRAUMA

Jung noted that all births are traumatic and disorienting. Some births are notably more difficult than others, and some people are more vulnerable to its impact. Jungian analyst Edward Edinger suggests that early trauma may fracture the fragile ego and affect the child's relationship with its mother and with its relationship to the Self.

In the 1930s C.G. Jun gave a lecture in London telling of a female patient whom he was treating. He wasn't able to help her saying, *"This girl wasn't living. She existed but didn't actually live."* He said the trauma of birth had left her with a gap in the emotional history of the patient or that the person concerned did not really exist in terms of having a full consciousness.

Beckett recognized his own womb fixation, arguing that his own behaviour, from staying in bed to paying frequent visits to his mother, were all aspects of his own improper birth. May in *Footfalls* has been described as remaining in the 'Imaginary', or 'womb', that is also her tomb. In fact an earlier draft of *Footfalls*, had the voice say *"My voice is in her mind"*, suggesting that the mother is part of May's imaginings.

In the play, the mother stops herself mid-sentence; *'In the old home, the same where she — (pause)'* and then continues *"The same where she began"*. Beckett explains that she was going to say born, but it is wrong, she hasn't been born. She just began. She was never born.

In *Krapp's Last Tape* the "retrospectives" occur on Krapp's birth-day and recalls the womb-tomb theme; the pain of the birth thrust out of silence and water. Krapp's very appearance and behaviour in many ways is like an overgrown child.

ESSAY QUESTIONS

ENGLISH QUESTIONS

1. The three characters in these pieces seem to be living a life with no purpose. Why do you think the writer does this?
2. The plays are all cyclical in nature. Discuss.
3. In *Footfalls*, people often believe that May is a ghost, either literally, or living in a ghost-like state. Giving examples, explain what you think she represents.
4. Thinking about the voice in *Eh Joe*, what do you think happens to Joe once the voice has disappeared?
5. Why do you think Beckett calls it *Krapp's Last Tape*? Explain.
6. Discuss whether you think Krapp's life would have changed with different choices. Might he have chosen differently as a younger man? Or is there a "message" for the audience that extends beyond Krapp's understanding?
7. Discuss why Beckett set *Krapp's Last Tape* in the future?
8. Why does Krapp count his steps? Explain using examples from the text.
9. Thematically, what are the links between the three plays? Explain.

DRAMA QUESTIONS

1. Choosing 3 -4 characteristics of Absurd Theatre, dissect the three shows and comment on how these characteristics are used.
2. How is the cyclical nature of these plays highlighted in the design elements?
3. Discuss how the lighting and projection (*Eh Joe*) works to enhance the mood in the three plays.
4. How has the design elements highlighted the theme of memory? Explain.
5. Discuss the tools used to reflect the tele-visual aspect of *Eh Joe* and how well they work in the representation of this play.
6. How is music used throughout the three plays and how does it convey themes of memory and isolation?
7. Discuss the differences in the direction of the three plays; particularly focusing on the silent moments where visual and sounds are the most important.
8. Explore the element of green in the three Beckett plays. How could this be used in the design whilst adhering to Beckett's stage & costume directions?

DESIGN

Carefully read the stage directions for *Krapp's Last Tape*. Adhering to Beckett's directions, design your own space for this play.

PERFORMANCE

Read the opening directions for actors in either *Krapp's Last Tape* or *Eh Joe* and perform this sequence. How difficult is it to adhere to the strict guidelines, including timing?

	production elements	performance elements
strengths		
impact on audiences		
weaknesses		

design role	technique	What did this contribute to the performance?
lighting	<i>one</i>	
	<i>two</i>	
	<i>three</i>	
music	<i>one</i>	
	<i>two</i>	
	<i>three</i>	

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