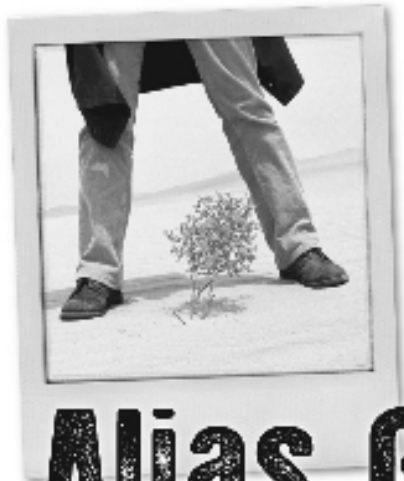


TARRAGON THEATRE



Alias Godot

Written by Brendan Gall
Directed by Richard Rose

STUDY GUIDE

Starring: Paul Braunstein, David Ferry, Tony Nappo, Alon Nashman,
Geoffrey Pounsett

Set and Costume Design by Teresa Przybylski

Lighting Design by Rebecca Picherack

Stage Managed by Diane Konkin

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Tarragon Theatre

Alias Godot Study Guide

Tarragon's Education and Outreach department supports and fosters a strong relationship between, teachers, students and professional theatre artists. As such, if there is further information that you would like about the production or more ideas about pre-show and post-show activities, please don't hesitate to contact us.

We are very pleased to be presenting the North American premiere of Brendan Gall's *Alias Godot*. This play was developed as part of our Playwright's Unit in 2006 and also had its first production in Italian at the Festival Intercity in Florence, Italy which is part of Teatro Della Limonaia.

Alias Godot is a re-visioning of Samuel Beckett's classic play *Waiting for Godot*. The play is extremely funny and relevant addressing in sly and unexpected ways current issues around the distrust of strangers, terrorism and security, wrapped up in a classic play about existentialism.

In this study guide you will gain a further understanding of what has gone into creating this production, as well as information and questions to apply to discussions and activities with your class.

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Alias Godot

Written by Brendan Gall
Directed by Richard Rose

There are people waiting for me. They'll be wondering where I am.

After a harrowing night on the beat, veteran detective Vincent (**David Ferry**) and his rookie partner Edward (**Paul Braunstein**) find themselves holed up in a dank New York City precinct with a baffling suspect – a foreigner named Godot (**Alon Nashman**). Godot had the misfortune to stumble upon a secret meeting between the crooked Vincent and his elusive contact, Jimmy Nicknames, in a dark and lonely alley. It was a serious misstep on his part, and Vincent – always the type of guy to look out for number one – makes no bones about the fact that since Godot saw something he shouldn't have seen, he will have to be eliminated:

VINCENT: Alright, dumbshow's over, pal. Anything profound you wanna say, make me question my resolve?

(Godot says nothing. Vincent clucks his teeth and shoves the bowler down onto Godot's head, then pushes his gun down into it.)

*EDWARD: VINCE, NO!
GODOT: I was told I had the right to remain silent.*

Horrified, Vincent realizes his partner has slipped up and accidentally arrested Godot, which means he and Edward are going to have to keep Godot safe – at least for the time being. As they wait for the events of the previous night to play out, they set to work interrogating Godot to figure out exactly what he knows about their little rendezvous in the alley. But their clumsy questions are no match for Godot, whose disarming honesty, blather about a mysterious package, and vexing preoccupation with a pressing appointment completely derail the detectives.

*EDWARD: We have to keep him. . . 'til we figure things out. . .
GODOT: Am I correct in thinking that could be some time?
VINCENT: Why, you got somewhere you need to be?
GODOT: As a matter of fact I do.
VINCENT: Oh yeah, where's that?
GODOT: France, actually.*

Enter Rocko (**Tony Nappo**) and his browbeaten administrative assistant Linus (**Geoffrey Pounsett**) of the Domestic Terrorism Unit. These earnest defenders of democracy are alerted by a bug that a flagged word – France – was just uttered in the suffocating little room, and arrive to investigate the imminent threat to national security. Thanks to an uncharacteristic brainwave on the part of Edward, he and Vincent manage to prevent Rocko from taking Godot into custody, keeping him in their care until they can discover exactly what he knows about their dirty dealings. What they do learn, however, is that Jimmy Nicknames has disappeared. Vincent is concerned. So is Edward, who *steps out for a moment* in order to do something useful. Godot, in the meantime, ruminates on his lost package and his quest to deliver it:

GODOT: It is of the utmost importance that I deliver that package to its proper recipients.

VINCENT: Why, what's in it?

(Godot strains to remember.)

GODOT: I can't remember right now.

VINCENT: Yeah, that sounds like a real emergency.

Unfortunately for Vincent, he'll have a real emergency on his hands soon enough: his mixed-up partner Edward returns the following morning with Jimmy Nicknames' bloody cellphone in his pocket, and the key to a train-station locker where he claims to have hidden a certain package he found in a blood-stained alley.

The ***Alias Godot*** Study Guide was written and contributed to by:

Andrew Lamb, Director of Education and Outreach

Amanda Kennedy, Marketing and Outreach Associate

Andrea Romaldi, Literary Manager

David Ferry, Actor

Theresa Przybylski, Costume & Set Design

Cylla von Tiedemann, Photography

Sebastian Marziali, Education and Outreach Co-op Student

About The Playwright and Director

Brendan Gall



Alias Godot marks Brendan's playwriting debut here at Tarragon, where he is also a current playwright-in-residence. An earlier version of ***Alias Godot*** was translated, produced, and subsequently remounted in Florence, Italy by Teatro Della Limonaia. Brendan is an associate artist with UnSpun Theatre, where he has collaborated on the collective creations *Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump*, *Don't Wake Me*, and his own play, *Panhandled*. He is artistic director of Single Threat, where he has produced his play *A Quiet Place* (in association with the Toronto Fringe and Next Stage festivals), and workshopped the first act of his adaptation of *The Seagull* at the Factory LabCab Festival. Brendan has collaborated on Small Wooden Shoe's *I Keep Dropping Sh*t* and is currently collaborating on their *Dedicated to the Revolutions* project. He has contributed pieces to Convergence Theatre's Toronto Fringe Hits *AutoShow* and *The Gladstone Variations*, the latter of which will be remounted this summer. Brendan's screenplay, *Dakota*, was produced by El Duo Motion Pictures and is being distributed by Mongrel Media. He is also an actor.

Richard Rose

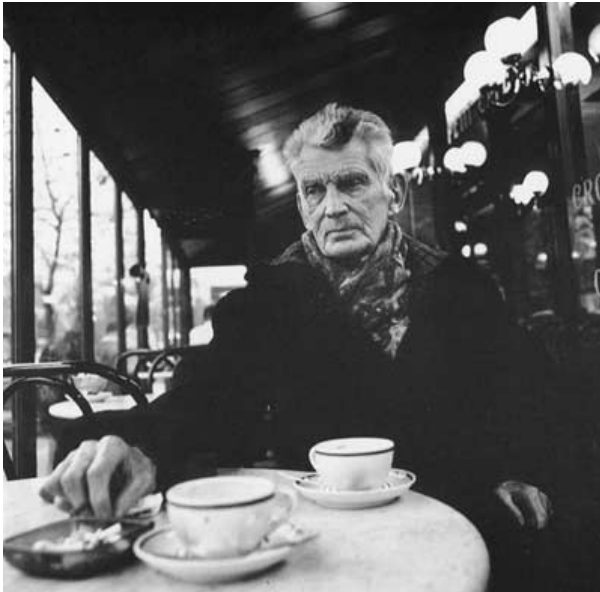


Richard Rose is the Artistic Director of Tarragon Theatre. Prior to joining the Tarragon in 2002, Richard was Founding Artistic Director at Necessary Angel (a position he held from 1978 – 2002), Associate Director for Canadian Stage Company, Director of the Stratford Festival Young Company and spent ten seasons directing at the Stratford Festival.

He has directed plays across Canada, the United States, and in London's West End in styles ranging from the environmental to the classical. Richard is well known for developing new work – including four plays that won the Governor General's Award and nine other nominated plays. He is a four-time Dora award winner for direction and production and has had numerous nominations.

Samuel Beckett – Absurd Dramatist and Novelist

Samuel Beckett



Samuel Beckett was born on Good Friday, April 13, 1906, near Dublin, Ireland.

In 1928, Samuel Beckett moved from Ireland to Paris, and the city quickly won his heart. Shortly after he arrived, a mutual friend introduced him to James Joyce, and Beckett quickly became an apostle of the older writer. After writing a study of Proust, however, Beckett came to the conclusion that habit and routine were the "cancer of time", so he gave up his post at Trinity College and set out on a nomadic journey across Europe.

Beckett made his way through Ireland, France, England, and Germany, all the while writing poems and stories and doing odd jobs to get by.

Beckett finally settled down in Paris in 1937. Shortly thereafter, he was stabbed in the street by a man who had approached him asking for money. He would learn later, in the hospital, that he had a perforated lung. After his recovery, he went to visit his assailant in prison. When asked why he had attacked Beckett, the prisoner replied "Je ne sais pas, Monsieur".

During World War II, Beckett stayed in Paris--even after it had become occupied by the Germans. He joined the underground movement and fought for the resistance until 1942 when several members of his group were arrested and he was forced to flee with his French-born wife to the unoccupied zone. In 1945, after it had been liberated from the Germans, he returned to Paris and began his most prolific period as a writer. In the five years that followed, he wrote *Eleutheria*, *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame*, the novels *Malloy*, *Malone Dies*, *The Unnamable*, and *Mercier et Camier*, two books of short stories, and a book of criticism.

Beckett was the first of the absurdist writers to win international fame. His works have been translated into over twenty languages. In 1969 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. He continued to write until his death in 1989, but the task grew more and more difficult with each work until, in the end, he said that each word seemed to him "an unnecessary stain on silence and nothingness."

Interview with Brendan Gall, Playwright

What inspired you to write this play?

If you look at some of my other writing, I seem to have a preoccupation with people being trapped, or feeling trapped, or trapping themselves, and that's certainly a part of it. Although truthfully, it really grew out of me asking myself, "What if Godot actually had a really good excuse?"

How did Tarragon's Playwright's Unit aid in the development of the piece?

I have a lot of trouble writing without hard-and-fast deadlines, and the unit certainly gave me those. The first draft was written in about a week and a half, after several months of dedicated procrastinating. And that 2006 Playwrights Unit was an alarmingly talented room of people. In

the first place, it made me want to write a great play, to feel like I deserved to be in that room with those people. And when Hannah Moscovitch, Greg Nelson, Tara Beagan, Bea Pizano, and Jonathan Garfinkel all sit around a table and talk about your play, they're going to make it better – they just are. Throw Richard and Andy and Joanna Falck into the equation – the thing practically writes itself. I count myself extremely lucky to have been a part of that room.

How has the piece evolved throughout its development process/ What has changed?

It's gotten better. And it's no longer in Italian. Also I removed the car-chase and the part where the giant chandelier falls. Now a helicopter flies in and rescues them. Although that may change in rehearsal.

What is the underlying message you are trying to reveal with this piece?

I like George Orwell's answer to that question (or Eudora Welty's, or Anne Carson's, or Joan Didion's, depending on who you ask): I write to find out what I think. I wear that quote like a Kevlar vest sometimes. I don't consider myself a "message playwright." I write from character and situation. If an idea occurs to me, I trust it's because I have something to say with it. But if I start to think too consciously about message and theme, I get crushed. The messages worm their way in on their own. Or they don't. It feels dangerous to talk about them too much.

Why did you write in the Absurdist style?

Is that the style I'm writing in? I don't know. Do you mean absurd in the sense that the play deals with God and our search for meaning, or absurd in the sense that absurd things happen and characters occasionally fall down and things like that? I don't really feel like I'm making decisions when I write. I mean I'm obviously making decisions, but my plays don't manifest themselves to me like big spider webs of possibility, roadmaps with all these diverging routes and forks in the road, and me making decisions about which one to take. I'm lucky if I can find *one* road. It's more like feeling my way along in the dark with a bic lighter; I don't know where I am until I've arrived there. I'm lucky if I can see three feet ahead of me. Okay, I've officially beaten this metaphor to death. Wait: "I'm just happy if I can stay out of the ditch." There.

The drama appears to be surrounding Eddie and Vince, so what is the significance to your title character, Godot?

Some how I feel *Alias Eddie & Vince* might draw smaller crowds. In real life: Godot is what gets

everything going, but he also gets forgotten a lot, which is useful for a number of reasons. Also, what Vincent and Edward judge to be at stake and what is actually at stake are two very different things, so the notion of 'alias,' of something masquerading as one thing but being another, is very central. It could be argued that the play is really called *Vince & Eddie* and it's just hiding under an assumed name.

The script calls for the characters to appear in costumes from various decades. Is there any special meaning to this? Why is it a factor?

I guess I'm playing with cop stereotypes, or archetypes, and the idea of regression, maybe – moving backward when we should be moving forward. Wait, that sounds like a message. You tricked me.

Why are the characters so afraid of the outside world? Is it something that we, in turn, should be afraid of?

I think we *are* afraid of it. And I think we shouldn't be. A few years ago I saw an unattended bag on the streetcar and my heart started to pound in my chest. I had to fight not to get off and run. I hate that I responded that way to a bag; ten years ago that would never have happened. I worry about how afraid we are now. People do stupid things when they're afraid. Every time I look for a garbage can on a subway I then remember they were removed so we couldn't hide bombs in them. That's a ridiculous association to be forced to make. I shouldn't have to think about explosions every time I want to spit my gum out. I can't think of anything more absurd than that.

Oh no. I think I'm a message playwright. Dammit! (*ripping his microphone off and storming away*) This interview is over!

But wait! – Is there a social commentary that you are making with this play?

(*returning and putting his mic back on*) I feel like we may have covered that already. But, it was also suggested to me that I might be making a sly comment on the current state of theatre. And I might be. I certainly like the theory, because it suggests that I'm sly. Alright, *now* this interview is over!

Portrait of a Theatre Artist – David Ferry



DAVID FERRY (actor: Vincent) At Tarragon: *Sticks and Stones; You're Gonna be Alright Jamie Boy; The St. Nicholas Hotel; Handcuffs*. Other theatres: Factory Theatre (*Escape from Happiness; End of Civilization; Adult Entertainment; Hockey Mom, Hockey Dad*, Dora nomination; *Dogpatch*, Dora nomination); Canadian Stage (*Tillsonburg*, Dora nomination). Upcoming: Stratford (*Moby Dick*); Crows Theatre (*Eternal Hydra*). Film and TV: *Across the River in Motor City; Man of the Year; This Hotel; This is Wonderland*. Other: Playwrights Canada Press: editor, *Reaney Days in the West Room: 7 Plays by James Reaney* and *He Speaks; Canajun, Eh?*, an audio collection of Canadian dialects for the actor.

How did you first become interested in acting?

My father and mother were involved in theatre in St. John's and in 1967 the Dominion Drama Festival that year determined that all plays across the country had to be Canadian. The play they the St. John's players were going to do was called Tomorrow Will Be Sunday and was about a very bright 15 year old guy in a very small out-port. They weren't able to find a 15 year old boy, so they convinced me to do it. In that same year RH Thomson, Terry Tweed, Robert Charlevois, Kim McCaw and Jackie Pressly who all went on to professional careers. This really acted as a kick start for new Canadian play in this country.

How did you originally get involved with this project?

Brendan mentioned that he was writing a play when he was in the playwrights unit here at Tarragon in 2006, and that he had me in mind for a role. I was invited to do a reading of an early draft, and around that same time I had been invited to direct a new Canadian play in Italian at *Festival Intercity* in Florence (part of *Teatro Della Limonaia*). Their festival that year was dedicated to Toronto and they wanted me to find a script. After the reading I asked Brendan if I could submit the script and they liked it. So, Brendan went over and worked with a translator and I was casting – fast forward to the Tarragon when Richard was planning this season and he offered me the role of Vincent in the play.

In *Alias Godot* you play a New York police officer named Vincent, and the show is inspired by *Waiting for Godot*. How did you prepare for this role?

I read the play a lot. I re-read *Waiting for Godot* and I went to see a wonderful production here in Toronto the day before I started rehearsal. I started changing my workouts at the gym as I knew that the show was going to be very physical and I wanted to make sure I was ready. I determined to forget everything I knew about the play from directing it – deliberately wiping the play from my head. It's so important to look at the play as if it were new – a fresh slate.

What is your favourite part of the process and what is your least favourite part?

My favorite part of process is figuring out the backstory and subtextual reality for the character. My least favorite (with this particular production) is waking up with the aches and pains from the sheer physicality of the show.

What advice do you have for students interested in pursuing a career in acting?

Read and see as much theatre as possible. In so doing find a company or group of artists that speak to you and volunteer to be near them... make yourself indispensable and take it from there.

Costume Design by Teresa Przybylski



Initial costume sketches by **Teresa Przybylski** for the costumes worn by Godot (left) and Linus, Act 11 (right).



Final Costumes

Theatre of the Absurd

Theatre of the Absurd: theatre that seeks to represent the absurdity of human existence in a meaningless universe by bizarre or fantastic means

Merriam-Webster Online. Retrieved April 23, 2008, from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/>

Both *Alias Godot*, and the play that inspired it, Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, fall into the genre of Theatre of the Absurd. Theatre of the Absurd is a designation for particular plays written by a number of primarily European playwrights in the late 1940's to 1970's, as well as to the style of theatre which has evolved from their work.

The term was coined by the art critic Martin Esslin, who made it the title of a book on the subject in 1961; *The Theatre of the Absurd*. Esslin saw the work of the playwrights he included in the movement as expressing the new existentialist philosophy that life is inherently without meaning. Esslin presented four playwrights who he claimed were the defining artists of absurdist theatre: Arthur Adamov, Eugene Ionesco, Jean Genet and Samuel Beckett.

Absurdist plays were not initially popular with audiences or artists. In fact, this genre of theatre took quite some time to catch on. As absurd drama relishes the unexpected and the logically impossible, the first response of audiences was confusion, and even disgust. To many theatre goers, the dialogue, action and characters never seemed to make any sense.

The plots of absurdist drama deviates from traditional structures and time, place and identity become ambiguous and fluid. The characters in Absurdist drama are lost and floating in an incomprehensible universe and they abandon rational devices and thought patterns because these approaches prove inadequate to understand their situation. For example, in the absurdist drama *Rhinoceros* by Eugene Ionesco, the citizens of a small French town slowly turn into rhinos, leaving the last citizens to seriously consider this unbelievable turn of events.

The playwrights loosely grouped under the label of the absurd endeavor to convey their sense of bewilderment, anxiety, and wonder in the face of this inexplicable universe. Theatre of the Absurd offer us the opportunity to not only think about absurdity, but to feel it and experience it simultaneously with the actors.

Resources

Esslin, Martin. *The Theatre of the Absurd*. London: Penguin Books, 1986.

The Samuel Beckett On-Line Resources and Links Pages
<http://www.samuel-beckett.net/>

The Absurdity of Samuel Beckett
<http://www.samuel-beckett.net/Absurdity.htm>

The Samuel Beckett Endpage
Department of Theatre Studies Tel Aviv University
http://www.ua.ac.be/main.aspx?c=*SBECKETT&n=22071

Croall, Jonathan. *The Coming of Godot*. London: Oberon Books, 2005.

Waiting for Godot – The Play

A Quick Summary of *Waiting for Godot*

ACT 1

Two men, **Vladimir** and **Estragon**, meet near a tree. They converse on various topics and reveal that they are waiting there for a man named **Godot**. While they wait, two other men enter. Pozzo is on his way to the market to sell his slave, **Lucky**. He pauses for a while to converse with Vladimir and Estragon. Lucky entertains them by dancing and thinking, and Pozzo and Lucky leave.

After Pozzo and Lucky leave, a boy enters and tells Vladimir that he is a messenger from Godot. He tells Vladimir that Godot will not be coming tonight, but that he will surely come tomorrow. Vladimir asks him some questions about Godot and the boy departs. After his departure, Vladimir and Estragon decide to leave, but they do not move as the curtain falls.

ACT 2

The next night, Vladimir and Estragon again meet near the tree to wait for Godot. Lucky and Pozzo enter again, but this time Pozzo is blind and Lucky is dumb. Pozzo does not remember meeting the two men the night before. They leave and Vladimir and Estragon continue to wait.

Shortly after, the boy enters and once again tells Vladimir that Godot will not be coming. He insists that he did not speak to Vladimir yesterday. After he leaves, Estragon and Vladimir decide to leave, but again they do not move as the curtain falls, ending the play.

Context and Interpretations

Waiting For Godot by Samuel Beckett premiered in January 1953 at Théâtre de Babylone in Paris. Though it is now hailed as a masterpiece, it was not – like most startling innovations – universally well-received in its time. While heavyweights like French playwright Jean Anouilh and British critic Kenneth Tynan lavished praise on it for its exciting and unsettling re-visioning of modern drama, others condemned it unequivocally – most infamously the British critic Bernard Levin who called it “a really remarkable piece of twaddle”.

A fusion of vaudevillian shtick and philosophical angst, the play defies convention which explains, at least in part, why it inspired such passionate and extreme reactions. It is deceptively complex, though superficially it seems quite simple with no recognizable plot. In *The Coming of Godot*, Jonathan Croall provides a useful synopsis:

The play is about two men, Vladimir and Estragon, waiting by a tree in an empty landscape to keep an appointment with a Mr. Godot, who never appears. While waiting they argue, joke, philosophize, indulge in cross-talk, try out comic routines, insult each other and eat a carrot or two. Once in each of the two acts they are interrupted by two other men, Pozzo and Lucky, apparently a master and his slave.

In short, the play is about the act of waiting. As such, *Waiting For Godot* has given rise to a multitude of interpretations, though its author refrained from ever shedding light on the meaning of his most celebrated work.

For example, many artists and critics believe that Godot has a master-servant (or perhaps employer-employee) relationship with Vladimir and Estragon. Samuel Beckett insisted all characters wear bowler hats in the first production in Paris which suggests that they are members of the bourgeoisie fallen on hard times. In the first English language production in

1955, twenty-four year old director Peter Hall had a similar revelation. Given the music-hall-feel of the script, he had to decide whether Vladimir and Estragon should be played as clowns or tramps. On the first day of rehearsal, he announced to the actors that they were to play clowns, only to reverse his decision days later – but the choice he made stuck. Samuel Beckett once quipped, "Do you realize they have gone round the world as tramps because of you?"

Whatever the case – whether as fallen bourgeoisie or full-blown tramps – it seems certain that Beckett saw his characters as people with little money and low social status. With the entrance of Pozzo and Lucky, who clearly have a master-servant relationship, it becomes easy to see how *Waiting For Godot* can provide a commentary on class structure. Viewed in this light, Godot becomes a master figure to Vladimir and Estragon's servants.

On the other hand, countless artists and critics have argued that Godot does not exist at all. In this interpretation, Vladimir and Estragon (and by extension, human beings) wait for an event, hoping for it to change their lives, without ever realizing that the power – the only power – to shape their lives lies in their own hands. Here, Godot is a figment of Vladimir and Estragon's imaginations, invented to provide a distraction from the tedium of their existence and imbue their lives with meaning. They remain utterly invested in Godot, refusing to abandon their appointment with him or openly admit that he will probably never arrive. However, they do know, on some level, that endlessly waiting in expectation is futile, and this torments them. Estragon laments "Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful!" In this brief moment, he has discovered, in Jean-Paul Sartre's words, that "man is nothing else but what he makes of himself."

In a totally different light, *Waiting For Godot* can be also read as an allegory of hope and redemption. As the play opens, Vladimir and Estragon are waiting in a landscape, barren save for a single tree. Suddenly, in the midst of their back-and-forth, Vladimir brings up the story of the two thieves who were crucified next to Christ, and asks Estragon "Suppose we repented?" In this context, the tree may represent the cross, which in Christian mythology signifies not only the crucifixion, but God's grace and the possibility of redemption. Taken together with other Biblical references in the play, and Vladimir's assertion that "We'll be saved" if Godot arrives, we see that perhaps Godot is not a red herring after all, but in fact a symbol and source of hope. Renowned actor Ralph Richardson, who turned down the part of Pozzo in what he would later call "the greatest play of my generation," asked Beckett if Godot was God. The playwright replied that "if by Godot I had meant God I would [have] said God, and not Godot" but also admitted – in later years – that "if I did have that meaning in my mind, it was somewhere in my unconscious and I was not overtly aware of it."

Regardless of what was suggested to him, Samuel Beckett remained for the most part inscrutable on the subject of Godot. What we do know is that no single interpretation of *Waiting For Godot* is all-encompassing or fully satisfying, and that goes a long way in explaining its power and resonance as a play. Let us give the last word to Samuel Beckett, who once wrote:

I know no more about the characters than what they say, what they do and what happens to them . . . Estragon, Vladimir, Pozzo, Lucky, I have only been able to know them a little, from far off, out of a need to understand them. They owe you some explanations, perhaps. Let them unravel. Without me. Them and Me, we're quits.

Pre-show Activity 1: Rehearse an Absurdist Scene

The setting of *Alias Godot* is an empty police interrogation room. VINCENT and EDWARD are police officers who have brought GODOT to the station after he showed up in an alley where the officers were trying to bring down a criminal called JIMMY NICKNAMES. Just before this excerpt GODOT has told VINCENT that EDWARD has read him his rights and that he has the “right to remain silent”.

All you need:

Enough copies of the EXCERPT for students to share as well as enough space for them to rehearse the scene in groups of three.

In groups of three:

Have the students each take a role and read the scene out loud.

Short discussion:

Have a discussion about what the students think of the situation and the style of the writing. This can lead into a short discussion on subtext.

In groups of three or four:

Have the students block the scene in groups to make the story and subtext clear to the audience. If they are in a group of four, one can be assigned as the director to lead the rehearsal of the scene.

Scene sharing:

Have each group presents the scene they have rehearsed to the rest of the class. This can be used to give practical feedback in front of the class for each group, and open a discussion about clarity in storytelling.

EXCERPT- From *Alias Godot* by Brendan Gall

GODOT

What's going on here? Where am I?

Vincent considers Godot, absently worrying his gun at his side.

VINCENT

Eddie, did you or did you not call this in.

Edward takes in the picture of Godot and Vincent, Vincent's gun.

EDWARD

I think so. I think I did.

VINCENT

You *think*. So he *might* be arrested, is what you're saying. You *might've* arrested him. He might actually be under *arrest*.

EDWARD

It's possible.

VINCENT

Jesus, Eddie...

GODOT

"Jesus *Eddie*?"

EDWARD

Either way, like you said: open carrier, so-

VINCENT

(pinching the bridge of his nose) Christ...

GODOT

There we are.

VINCENT

(to Godot) GET UP.

GODOT

(standing) Who's Jimmy Nicknames?

VINCENT

SIT DOWN.

Godot sits.

HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT NAME?

GODOT

Eddie keeps saying it.

Vincent observes Godot on the floor, clocking this for a second before turning to Edward.

VINCENT

This is *your* fuck-up!

EDWARD

(pleading) There was so much goin' on back in that alley, Vince. And the way things were goin' with Jimmy, you havin' him up against the wall like that-

VINCENT

Eddie stop talkin'.

GODOT

(to Edward) What have I forgotten?

EDWARD

And then clockin' him with your piece... I thought for sure you were gonna-

VINCENT

Well I didn't.

EDWARD

(indicating Godot) Only 'cause this guy came outta *nowhere*. I didn't know what to do so I just pulled him into the car. And you were takin' so long with Jimmy-

VINCENT

HEY.

Edward shuts up.

What's different in here? *(to Edward)* And what does *that* mean, "*I was taking* so long."

EDWARD

Screamin' and shovin' him... I was already halfway spooked, so when this guy showed up-

GODOT

Yes! You grabbed me and I dropped something!

EDWARD

It was just me an' him, Vince; I didn't have you there to- And with Jimmy Nicknames bawlin' like that-

VINCENT

EDDIE!

EDWARD

I just thought-

VINCENT

There. Is your first fuckin' mistake. If I had a lotto ticket for every goddam-

GODOT

Was Jimmy Nicknames the gentleman in the alley? The one with the jacket?

Vincent looks at Edward. Edward looks down at his shoes.

EDWARD

I didn't know what else to do.

GODOT

He seemed upset.

EDWARD

Who, me or Jimmy?

VINCENT

Eddie...

GODOT

(to Edward) Well, both of you, actually, but I was referring to Mr. Nicknames. There was a distinct note of pleading in his voice.

EDWARD

Well, I don't know if I'd call it pleading. I mean he was definitely *crying*...

VINCENT

(to Edward) HEY! SHUT UP!

GODOT

I intend to; it's my right.

VINCENT

(advancing on Godot) I swear to God-

GODOT

(rising and accusing the heavens) IF there's a God!

Godot sits down again.

Pre-show Activity 2: *Waiting for Godot* in Three Minutes

Alias Godot is a re-visioning of Samuel Beckett's classic play *Waiting for Godot*. All the characters, apart from GODOT, are reminiscent of the characters and structure of Beckett's play. Use this exercise to review Beckett's play and give your students an opportunity to be creative with telling a story in three minutes.

All you need:

Enough copies of the THREE MINUTE WAITING FOR GODOT HANDOUT for your students and an open space to rehearse.

Read synopsis:

Read the synopsis of *Waiting for Godot* from earlier in this study guide to your students.

In small groups:

Have the students read through the handout and figure out how they are going to get each act across to the audience in 90 seconds. They can use tableau or even lines from the play (if copies are available at your school).

Scene sharing:

Have each group presents their THREE MINUTE GODOT for the rest of the class. This can be used to give practical feedback in front of the class for each group, and open a discussion about interpretation as there will be differences in how each group presents the play.

Waiting for Godot

Act One – 90 seconds

- Introduce Estragon and Vladimir – boot struggle
- “Nothing to be done”
- Discuss why they are waiting
- Estragon falls asleep & wakes up from nightmare
- They find rope and debate who should be hanged first
- Entrance of Pozzo and Lucky – set up picnic
- Lucky’s speech
- Estragon removes his boots
- The arrival of the boy

INTERMISSION

Act Two – 90 seconds

- Estragon and Vladimir discuss why they can’t leave
- They notice that the tree has sprouted
- Discuss if they in the same place as before
- Estragon finds his boots and puts them on
- Find Lucky’s hat and try on different hats
- Pozzo and Lucky return – Pozzo is blind, Lucky is mute
- Pozzo falls and Estragon and Vladimir try to help him up
- Estragon and Vladimir left alone
- Boy returns to say that Godot is not coming
- Try to hang themselves again with Estragon’s belt

Pre-show Activity 3: Interrogation Scene – Writing Exercise

Alias Godot is an exploration in theatre of the absurd that takes place in a New York police interrogation room. Use this playwriting exercise to have your students write an interrogation scene of their own.

All you need:

Each student will need paper and a pen/pencil.

Brainstorm Examples:

As an open discussion, perhaps using the chalkboard or chart paper, brainstorm different situations where a perpetrator might be interrogated by the police.

Writing activity:

On their own, have the students decide on:

- Who are the characters in the scene (age, occupation, etc)?
- Where and when did the crime take place that led them to this room?
- What is the situation that led to the arrest?
- What are the stakes of the situation? – encourage them to be high stakes

In 10 minutes or less, have the students write a short scene using the idea of interrogation from one of the brainstormed situations. The students should be encouraged to think about subtext, real life dialogue and not making it easy for the interrogator to get the answers they're looking for, as well as exploring normal speech patterns and incomplete sentences.

Rehearsing a reading:

Have the students get into small groups and rehearse a reading of their scenes.

Sharing of the scene:

Each group presents their scene to the class.

Post-show Activity 1: Write an Absurdist Scene

As you have seen, *Alias Godot* is an exploration in theatre of the absurd. Use this playwriting exercise to have your students explore writing in this style.

All you need:

Each student will need paper and a pen/pencil.

Discussion:

Have a discussion about what Theatre of the Absurd is, using the information about it from earlier in this study guide. Below are some questions to get you started:

- Why do you think this genre is called theatre of the absurd?
- What are some of the key elements or ideas behind theatre of the absurd?
- What do you believe is the biggest challenge when writing absurdist theatre as opposed to other genres?
- In what ways does theatre of the absurd appeal to you?
- What kind of ideas can be explored in this style of theatre that cannot be explored in other genres?
- How is existentialism related to Theatre of the Absurd?

Writing:

Either in pairs or on their own have your students choose a simple location and decide on two characters that might be there. Once the students have done this, have them write a short theatre of the absurd scene. Limit their time to about 10 minutes.

Sharing:

Have the students share some of these short scenes with the rest of the class. This can open into a discussion on how challenging or easy they have found it to write in this genre of theatre.

Post-show Activity 2: Linus' Long Rant

The character of LINUS in *Alias Godot* has a long rant much like the character of LUCKY in *Waiting for Godot* that comes at you so fast you can only catch bits of it. Use this exercise to breakdown what LINUS actually says and show your students how difficult it is to memorize and have it make sense.

Read the Rant:

LINUS' rant is in three sections. Choose three students, who can read out loud quickly, to read a section for the rest of the class.

Discussion:

Ask your students what they remember from seeing the rant performed and what they missed now that they're heard it again.

Further:

Have the students get into small groups and choose a section to memorize and present to the rest of the class. What are the challenges?

Linus drops his files, faces out and begins to speak. Throughout the speech he grows progressively more and more agitated.

LINUS

Given ferally legislated public law number one-oh-seven dash fifty-six bacronomically known as The Uniting andandandand Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept andandandand Obstruct Terrorism Act passed from the failing kidneys of the twentieth century through the urinary tract of the millennium exploding out the urethra of the eleventh day of the ninth month of the two thousand-and-first year preceding the death of our lord god the Father Christmas miracle baby introduced by Republican House of Reprehensibles member of the fifth digressional district of Wisconsin A.K.A. The Cheese State A.K.A. The Snowmobile Capital Of The World expanding legalitarian authoritation of law endorsement for the united stated purposes of fighting those disambiguated domestic terrorizers strategically colour-coordinating indiscriminate attacks in manners unbecoming a lady and so allegorically debunking the oft-carried but rarely borne belief that all is indeed fair in so on and so forth etcetera etcetera ad nauseum while not belonging to any recognized armed force irregardless of any so called ideillogical label or otherwise seeking tax shelter under the skin-stretched canopy of those majestic B-blooded near-extincted poached and bush-meated beasts while detecting and pro-actively persecuting other allegedly alleged potentially potential criminally criminal crimes up to and excluding in a negative capacity the sneaky-sneaky peaky-peaky unexpirable Provision Two-One-Three reauthorizing surreptitillating Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court search warrants without warning in regards to both petite and grand mal seizures upon a showing of unreasonable antinecessitation defecating the requirement of Rule Forty-One

Linus falls asleep. Rocko elbows him and he launches back in.

of the Federal Rules of Criminal blah blah blah that immediate notificating of *carpéd* phone records be released to the air like homing pigeons to Judas and judicially delayed for as few and as many as ninety days in cases where tell-taling or "rat-tattling" risks entanglement of life and individual limbs flying from justice deploying tampered evidential evidence intimidated by potentially testilying witlesses permitting obtainment of *ex-parte in camera* warrants for library and bookstore records under Section Two-Fifteen up to and inducing any late fees consumption of food and non-water beverages or instances of decibels-levels above *sotto voce* after three verbal warnings upending Sections Two-One-Two and Two-One-Nine HUT of the Degredation and Nationality Act as it indirectly contradicts with Eighteen United Stakes Code Section Two-Three-Three-Nine A and B criminimizing immaterial support and other best-before expiry dated revisions as authority to intercept electromagnanimous voice-mail-bombs protecting lies livery and the pursuit of happenstance with pen register trap and trace sunset and impunity and the power to turn the cameras off and send the reporters home to crumpled beds the power to turn dust into broken concrete and rust into twisted steel turning wine into water and ash into flesh

Rocko registers this shift in content and moves to stop him. Linus continues. Rocko attempts to physically subdue him. Edward, who has become very wrapped up in all of this, jumps in to help Linus. Vincent jumps in to pull Edward off. The four of them become a tangled mass of arms and legs as Linus continues to rant.

and ascending and merging in the buttercup blue of the sky shattered corpses personifying hurtling slower tumbling upwards losing momentum rejoining hands swallowing prayers re-alphabetizing papers slipping ducking heads past unsplintering frames of unshattering glass forming windows sucking smoke through shrinking cracks growing smaller sealing over spitting out retreating airplanes reversing screams down closing mouths eyes turning downward feet walking backward passengers pocketing every sharp-edged instrument growing duller reversing through unbeeping metal detectors regurgitating breakfasts into dirty bowls unbrushing teeth unmaking beds unsettling dust colliding forming towns of houses hurling bomb-shaped pearls shot from reforming chimneys swallowed up into hungry metal bellies sucked back across oceans observing the inverse laws of aerodynamics and systematically dismantled by assembly line... newspapers deleting headlines... short-pantsed boys shouting read not about it... statisticians reporting a marked increase in community picnicsÉ and spelling bees...

Linus collapses, weeping. The others collapse, exhausted from the struggle.

**"What do I know about man's destiny? I could tell you more about radishes."
-Samuel Beckett**

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