

Visions & Voices: Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot

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Research Guide for the April 6, 2012 Visions & Voices Event

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Event Details

This guide is a compliment to the following *Visions & Voices* event:



When: Friday, April 6, 2012 : 6:30pm - 11:30pm

Where: Mark Taper Forum
Los Angeles, CA

Who: Open to current USC Students only.
Admission is free. Reservations required.

See [Visions & Voices website](#) for details

Related Research Guides

- [English Language & Literature](#)
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Event Description

"Recognized as the most significant English language play of the 20th century, this self-described "tragicomedy in two acts" by the Nobel Prize winner Samuel Beckett tells the story of two men waiting on a country road: *Waiting for Godot*. And what a wait it is!"

"Together for the first time, Barry McGovern and Alan Mandell—two of the most distinguished interpreters of Beckett's work—delightfully debate the meaning of life and the absurdities of human behavior in this engagingly funny, relevant and illuminating new production." Academy Award nominee James Cromwell (*Babe*, *L.A. Confidential*, *The Artist*), Hugo Armstrong and LJ Benet round out the cast. Michael Arabian directs. *Waiting for Godot* is playing at the Mark Taper Forum, in Downtown Los Angeles, March 14 - April 22, 2012.

-from the [Vision & Voices website](#) and the [play's website](#)

Reviews of *Waiting for Godot* @ the Taper Forum:

- [Los Angeles Times review of the play](#), March 22, 2012
- ["The Godot We've Been Waiting For" - Stage & Cinema Review](#), March 23, 2012
- ["James Cromwell and Others Make 'Godot' a Worthwhile Wait" Orange County Register](#), March 22, 2012
- [Variety review](#), March 22, 2012

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About the Author and the Play

Samuel Barclay Beckett (1906–1989) was born in Dublin, Ireland on April 13, 1906. In 1923 he entered Trinity College in Dublin to study French and Italian. After receiving his degree in 1927, he was awarded a 2-year post as *lecteur* (assistant) in English at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris. It was in Paris that Beckett met fellow Irish ex-patriate and modernist author, James Joyce, who would greatly influence his writing style. Beckett published novels, short stories, poetry and plays. It was through his plays that he reached a wider audience and received more acclaim. He won the **Nobel Prize for literature in 1969**. Beckett died in Paris in 1989.

- [Encyclopedia of World Biography](#)

Waiting for Godot was written in 1949 and first performed in Paris in January 1953. During the initial performances, many spectators were utterly confused and some left before the performance ended. Those who stayed had difficulty understanding what this new type of theater was about. The set was just a mound of dirt and a bare tree, there was no plot, no action and no climax, just two men talking and waiting. This complete upheaval of traditional theater techniques and expectations announced a major change in modern drama. Samuel Beckett was writing at the same time as a number of other dramatists (including, Eugène Ionesco, Jean Genet, and Jacques Audiberti), all independently transforming the shape of theatre, writing plays that would later be classified under the rubric of the theater of the absurd, the new theater or the anti-theater. All of these new playwrights were expressing the absurdity and the hopelessness of the human condition and they were to have a lasting effect on the direction and shape of drama in the latter half of the twentieth century.

- [Reference Guide to World Literature](#)

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Time

"Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time! It's abominable! When! When! One day, is that not enough for you, one day he went dumb, one day I went blind, one day we'll go deaf, one day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you? They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night

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Books

Click on the title of each book to see if it is available for check out (some titles are also available online).



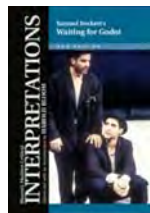
Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett - James Knowlson

Call Number: PR6003.E282Z764 1996

ISBN: 9780684808727

Publication Date: 1996

The authorized biography of the reclusive Nobel laureate, written by Knowlson (French/Univ. of Reading, England), who was not only a friend of Beckett's and his choice to do the book, but is also a noted Beckett scholar. This volume--based on access to Beckett's correspondence, papers, friends and colleagues, and most important, five months of interviews with the subject himself--will stand as definitive for the foreseeable future.



Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot - Harold Bloom (Editor)

Call Number: PQ2603.E378E677 2008

ISBN: 9780791097939

Publication Date: 2008

Includes critical essays reflecting a variety of schools of criticism - Notes on the contributing critics, a chronology of the author's life, and an index as well as an introductory essay by Harold Bloom.



The Coming of Godot: A Short History of a Masterpiece - Jonathan Croall

Call Number: PQ2603.E378E637 2005

ISBN: 1840025956

Publication Date: 2006

Fifty years ago Sir Peter Hall directed the English world premiere of Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot. Now he has returned to this quintessential absurdist piece that has become one of the most important works of modern drama. Jonathan Croall combines an account of this theatrical journey with an informative history of the play.



Beckett: A Guide for the Perplexed - Jonathan Boulter

Call Number: online book

ISBN: 9780826481955

Publication Date: 2008

Written in clear, accessible language, this guide challenges and encourages students to grapple with the difficult ideas and questions posed by Beckett's texts.



Samuel Beckett 100 Years - Christopher Murray (Editor)

Call Number: PR6003.E282Z79993 2006

ISBN: 1905494084

Publication Date: 2006

The centennial of the Irish playwright and novelist's birth is commemorated by Irish, British, and American scholars of drama, literature, and philosophy.

Beckett's Art of Absence: Rethinking the Void - Ciaran Ross.

Call Number: PR6003.E282Z798 2011

ISBN: 9780230575189

Publication Date: 2011

Using the work of W.Bion and D.Winnicott, this book offers a psychoanalytic study of Beckett's aesthetics of absence. Focusing on the first prose trilogy and Waiting for Godot, it offers a critical challenge to accepted viewpoints of Beckett's negative status, not only within psychoanalytic literary criticism, but within Beckett criticism at large.

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-"Beckett, Samuel"

-"theater of the absurd"

-"Modernism (Literature) Ireland"

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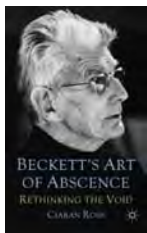


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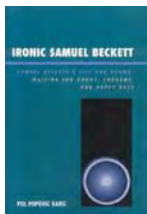


Ironic Samuel Beckett: Samuel Beckett's Life and Drama: Waiting for Godot, Endgame, and Happy Days - Pol Popovic Karic

Call Number: PQ2603.E378Z79 2007

ISBN: 0761835296

Publication Date: 2006



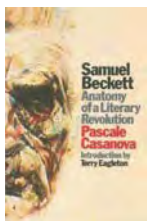
Beckett and Ireland - Seán Kennedy (Editor)

Call Number: PR6003.E282Z56945 2010

ISBN: 9780521111805

Publication Date: 2010

This is the first volume of essays devoted exclusively to the topic of Beckett's vexed relationship with his homeland. It provides compelling evidence of the continuing relevance of Ireland to Beckett's writing long after he left for wartime France. Each essay is written by a leading Beckett scholar, and presents new insights into a wide range of approaches and topics. The volume offers a fresh perspective, providing a genuine step forward in the understanding and appreciation of these texts. It is essential reading for Beckettians, Modernists, and those interested in Irish writing.



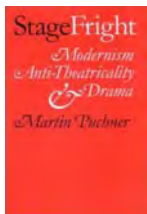
Samuel Beckett: Anatomy of a Literary Revolution - Pascale Casanova; Terry Eagleton (Introduction by); Gregory Elliott (Translator)

Call Number: PR6003.E282Z58713 2006

ISBN: 9781844671120

Publication Date: 2007

Casanova argues that Beckett's reputation rests on a pervasive misreading of his oeuvre, which neglects entirely the literary revolution he instigated. Reintroducing the historical into the heart of this body of work, Casanova provides an arresting portrait of Beckett as radically subversive "doing for writing what Kandinsky did for art" and in the process presents the key to some of the most profound enigmas of Beckett's writing.



Stage Fright: Modernism, Anti-Theatricality & Drama - Martin Puchner

Call Number: PN1851.P83 2002 and available as an e-book

ISBN: 0801868556

Publication Date: 2002

This book explores the conflict between avant-garde theater and modernism. While the avant-garde celebrated all things theatrical, a dominant strain of modernism tended to define itself against the theater, valuing lyric poetry and the novel instead. Defenders of the theater dismiss modernism's aversion to the stage and its mimicking actors as one more form of the old "anti-theatrical" prejudice. But Puchner shows that modernism's ambivalence about the theater was shared even by playwrights and directors and thus was a productive force responsible for some of the greatest achievements in dramatic literature and theater.

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Streaming Videos

Beckett on Film - Waiting for Godot

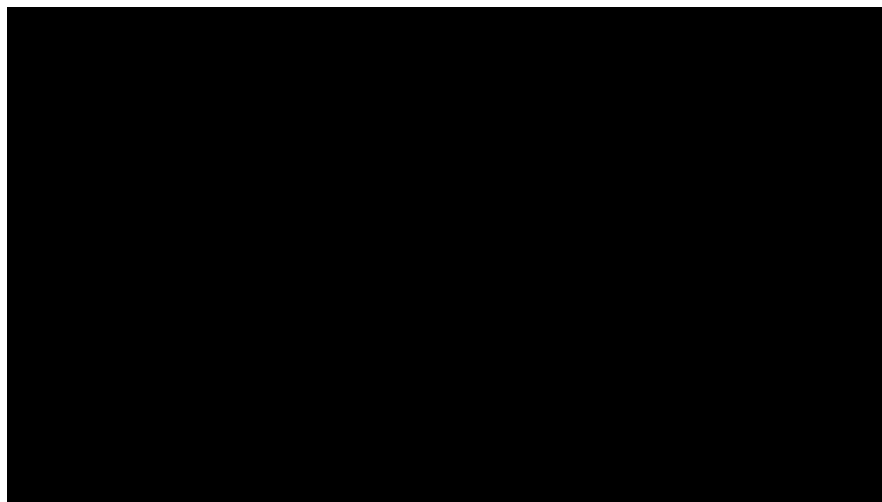
Call Number: Leavey Library - LVYDVD 137 discs 1-4 @ Circulation Desk

Publication Date: 2001

This 4 disc set includes all 19 of Beckett's plays, bringing together some of the world's most talented directors and actors. These videos have been described as "the most comprehensive cinematic interpretation of Beckett's plays."

Waiting for Godot - directed by Michael Lindsay-Hogg; Starring: Barry McGovern (also in the L.A. Mark Taper Forum production), John Murphy, Alan Stanford, Stephen Brennan and Sam McGovern.

Also available on Youtube to watch online (1:53 min.):


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Videos

- Lecture on Waiting for Godot**
 "Big Ideas" Lecture given by University of Toronto English Professor, Nick Mount in 2009 (48:25 min.)
 This video requires QuickTime plugin
 Can listen to it here: <http://cattroller.com/Podcasts/BigIdeas/1376128>
- Samuel Beckett: Silence to Silence (Documentary)**
 (Films For The Humanities & Sciences, 1987) 80:37 min
 The elusive author of *Waiting for Godot* cooperated in the production of this documentary, which traces Beckett's artistic life through his prose, plays, and poetry. Billie Whitelaw, Jack McGowran, and Patrick Magee—Beckett's great dramatic interpreters—appear in selected extracts from the plays; Beckett specialist David Warrilow narrates a variety of texts.
 USC Login required if off-campus

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A few recent journal articles on Beckett and Waiting for Godot

- Begam, Richard. "How to do Nothing with Words, Or Waiting for Godot as Performativity." *Modern Drama* 50.2 (2007): 138-67.** [f](#)
 This essay analyzes how Waiting for Godot exposes the structural logic of both rhetorical and dramatic performativity. Drawing on the language- philosophy of J.L. Austin and Ludwig Wittgenstein, Begam considers what happens to "performative" locutions – statements that actually make things happen, such as "I now pronounce you man and wife" – when they are theatrically represented. Austin claims that such locutions when uttered on stage are rendered intransitive – i.e., they lose their performative force – and are therefore relegated to the Kantian realm of the purely aesthetic. Yet Beckett's play spends two acts demonstrating that the primary function of language is not "constative" – not meant to give us a picture or representation of reality. Rather, Beckett's conception of language – drawn from his reading of Mauthner – is essentially performative.
- Milutinovic, Zoran. "The Death of Representation and the Representation of Death: Ionesco, Beckett, and Stoppard." *Comparative Drama* 40.3 (2006): 337-64.**
- Haney, William S., II. "Beckett Out of his Mind: The Theatre of the Absurd." *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 34.2 (2001): 39-53.**
- Brater, Enoch. "The Globalization of Beckett's Godot." *Comparative Drama* 37.2 (2003): 145-58.**
- Keatinge, Benjamin. "Beckett and Language Pathology." *Journal of Modern Literature* 31.4 (2008): 86-101**
 This article begins with an account of Beckett's translations of Surrealist texts for the September 1932 issue of *This Quarter*, which contained extracts from Breton and Eluard's *Simulations*. The essay argues that Beckett was influenced by these sketches in psychic confusion and suggests that traces of this encounter can be found in Lucky's speech in *Waiting for Godot*. Beckett is seen to use pathological language structures in a deliberate way and Lucky's schizophrenic language seems to correspond to the psychiatric concept of formal thought disorder. Irrational speech patterns in *Watt* are also examined and viewed as another deliberate sabotage of logical speech. A discussion of *Worstward Ho* using Deleuzian conceptions of language pathology suggests that Beckett is swayed, in the later prose, by the rhythms of pathological language in an unconscious way. Beckett's linguistic play is seen to echo, in an austere manner, the more expansive language of *Finnegans Wake*.
- McCarthy, Sean. "Giving Sam a Second Life: Beckett's Plays in the Age of Convergent Media." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 51.1 (2009): 102-17.**
- Journal of Beckett Studies**
 Review articles published in the *Journal of Beckett Studies* between 2008-present

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The philosopher and critic, Michel Foucault on Waiting for Godot

Foucault saw a performance of *Waiting for Godot* in Paris in the winter of 1953.

"Shortly before his death, Foucault remarked, 'I belong to that generation who, as students, had before their eyes, and were limited by, a horizon consisting of Marxism, phenomenology, and existentialism. For me the break was first Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, a breathtaking performance.'

That this drama of futility, folly, and aborted metaphysics should have suggested the best way yet to escape from Sartre's 'terrorism' is not accidental. The world of *Godot* is a world where the very ideas of freedom and responsibility have been dramatically emptied of any lingering moral significance. 'Moral values are not accessible,' Beckett would later declare. 'It is not even possible to talk about truth, that's part of the anguish. Paradoxically, through form, by giving form to what is formless, the artist can find a possible way out.'

From, *The Passion of Michel Foucault*

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Recommended databases for finding literary and theater criticism

The following databases are good places to search for scholarly articles, dissertations and book chapters.

- International Index to the Performing Arts Full Text** [f](#)
 IIPA draws its current content from more than 100 international performing arts periodicals from 9 countries, and also indexes feature performing arts articles and obituaries appearing in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. IIPA covers nearly all aspects of the world of the performing arts, from the most scholarly studies to the latest crazes. Most IIPA records in the current coverage (1998 forward) contain an abstract.
- MLA International Bibliography**
 Index to scholarly publications in literature, languages, linguistics, and folklore from over 4000 journals and series published worldwide. Indexing only: no full text.
- Literature Resource Center**
 Includes biographies, bibliographies and critical analysis of authors and texts from every age and literary discipline. Covers more than 90,000 novelists, poets, essayists, journalists and other writers.
- JSTOR**
 Includes core journals in social science and humanities disciplines
- Project MUSE** [f](#)
 Provides access to the complete content (including all images) of nearly 500 current scholarly journals in the humanities and social sciences.

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Web Sites

- [Fathoms from Anywhere: A Samuel Beckett Centenary Exhibition](#)
Posted by the Harry Ransom Center @ The University of Texas at Austin, which has a large collection of Beckett's letters and manuscripts. This site includes a timeline, resources related to all of his literary works, information on productions and reviews of his works, and digitized images from the collection
- [The Samuel Beckett On-Line Resources and Links Page](#)
A rich resource of information and links on Samuel Beckett and his work
- [Beckett International Foundation](#)
The Beckett International Foundation at the University of Reading was established in 1988 to further the study and appreciation of the work of Samuel Beckett. This foundation is a charitable trust that holds the most extensive collection of Samuel Beckett materials in the world. T

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