

Waiting for Godot at 60: An Exhibition

Higher Bridges Gallery, Enniskillen, Saturday 25th July - Sunday 2nd August

2015 marks the 60th anniversary of the English language premiere of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, directed by Peter Hall, at the Arts Theatre, London, on 3rd August, 1955. The Irish premiere of *Waiting for Godot* followed at the Pike Theatre, Dublin, directed by Alan Simpson, on 28 October, 1955. Drawing on materials from the University of Reading's unique Beckett Collection, this exhibition celebrates the event that changed the landscape of theatre in the UK, Ireland and across the world.

The exhibition is a collaboration between the United Kingdom Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded Staging Beckett project (<https://www.reading.ac.uk/staging-beckett/>) and the Beckett International Foundation (<http://www.beckettfoundation.org.uk/>). This exhibition was therefore made possible by AHRC funding and BIF support, and we are most grateful to the Happy Days Festival for the invitation to participate in their 2015 Festival.

Curators: Matthew McFrederick, Anna McMullan, Mark Nixon

EXHIBITION GUIDE

Unless otherwise indicated, materials are from the Beckett Collection, University of Reading (UoR). We are grateful to the Victoria and Albert Museum for permission to use an image from their Houston Rodgers Collection in our publicity, and we thank Guy Baxter and Special Collections at UoR, the Happy Days Festival team, and Sarah McHugh, Museums Services Manager of Fermanagh & Omagh District Council.

The items included here indicate a very small selection of productions of this play that remains extremely popular across the globe. Images from some additional productions can be seen on the slide show which is presented in the exhibition, compiled by Matthew McFrederick. You will find useful contextual information on the DVD and selected scanned programmes displayed on the laptops (38-41).

ORIGINAL ITEMS IN VITRINE

- 1. Théâtre de Babylone, Paris, 5 January 1953, programme** (UoR MS 4186). World premiere of *En attendant Godot* in Paris, directed by Roger Blin.
- 2. Arts Theatre London, 3 August 1955, programme** (UoR MS 2883/1). World premiere of the English language *Waiting for Godot*, translated by Samuel Beckett, directed by Peter Hall.
- 3. Criterion Theatre, London 1955, programme** (UoR MS 3164). The Arts Theatre production transferred to the West End Criterion Theatre in September 1955, when Hugh Burden replaced Paul Daneman in the role of Vladimir. The production then went on a UK

tour during 1956, including Birmingham Rep., Theatre Royal Brighton, Blackpool Grand, Golders Green, and Stratham Hill.

4. Pike Theatre, Dublin, 28 October 1955, programme (UoR MS 3165). Irish premiere of *Waiting for Godot*, directed by Alan Simpson. The production played at the Pike from October 1955 to March 1956, then transferred to the Gate Theatre, Dublin and went on a national tour including Dundalk, Navan, Drogheda, Clonmel, Waterford and Carlow.

5-7. Schiller Theater, Berlin 1975-1977. Directed by Samuel Beckett, assisted by Walter Asmus. The production toured to several international venues including the Royal Court Theatre, London, in 1976 and the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, in 1977.

5. *Warten auf Godot* Production Notebook 2 (UoR MS 1396/4/4). Samuel Beckett prepared carefully in advance for productions he directed, and he also made notes during rehearsals. For the Schiller *Godot*, Beckett kept two notebooks: this is the more detailed notebook, which includes later additions and changes that Beckett made in red ink during rehearsals.

See also 13-14, for copies of two other pages of this notebook.

6. *Warten auf Godot* text Berlin 1975 B. Author alterations (UoR MS 1482).

7. Programme from the Royal Court Theatre tour of the Schiller *Godot* (UoR MS 3174).

FACSIMILE ITEMS:

1. Schlosspark-Theater, Berlin, 8 September 1953, programme (UoR MS 1227/6). German language premiere of *Wir Warten auf Godot*, translated by Elmar Tophoven. The 'Wir' [we] was removed in the German published text.

2-3. Arts and Criterion Theatre, London, August 1955-March 1956 (followed by UK tour). 2 Photos of Peter Snow Model Box of a variant design for the original London premiere (UoR MS 5531). This model box was created by the designer of the London premiere of *Godot*, Peter Snow. The final design discarded the interior setting, but the costumes here are accurate and the figures are modelled on the performers of the original production. The model box is part of the Katharine Worth Archive, kindly donated to the Beckett International Foundation, University of Reading, by Professor Worth. She discusses this 'road in room' variation in her book *Samuel Beckett's Theatre: Life Journeys*: pp. 27-8.

4-8. Portora Royal School, Enniskillen, 1964 (Collection Matthew McFrederick).

4-5. Programme from the 1994 production of *Godot* at Samuel Beckett's former school.

6-7. Notes from the school magazine about the production.

8. Programme from a more recent production at Portora in 2006.

9-10. Playhouse, Nottingham 1971. 2 press cuttings (UoR MS 1792 , MS 3162).

Peter O'Toole as Vladimir, Donal McCann as Estragon, directed by Frederick Monnoyer. O'Toole and McCann played these roles in an earlier 1969 production at the Irish National Theatre, the Abbey, in 1969, directed by Sean Cotter. Peter O'Toole had played Vladimir at the Bristol Old Vic in 1957. For more information on O'Toole and Beckett, see the Staging

Beckett blog at: <https://blogs.reading.ac.uk/staging-beckett/2014/04/30/from-the-archives-peter-otoole-in-waiting-for-godot/>

11-12. Ag Fanacht Le Godot, Taibhdhearc, Galway, 1971, programme of the Irish language premiere of *Godot* translated by Liam Ó Briain and Seán Ó Carra, directed by Alan Simpson (UoR MS 3172).

13-14. Schiller Theater, Berlin 1975-1977. 2 additional pages from the *Warten auf Godot* Production Notebook (UoR MS 1396/4/4).

14-15. Riverside Studios, 1984. (Collection Matthew McFrederick).

This production, directed by Walter Asmus, based on the 1975 Schiller-Theater *Godot*, was bound for the Adelaide Festival. Rehearsals were held in February 1984, with 2 performances on the 1st and 2nd March at the Riverside Studios for local school children.

14. Programme Leaflet.

15. Postcard of lithograph by Tom Phillips.

16-20. Lincoln Center, New York, 1988. 5 photographs by Brigitte Lacombe (UoR MS 3325). Vladimir: Steve Martin, Estragon: Robin Williams, Pozzo: F Murray Abraham, Lucky: Bill Irwin. Directed by Mike Nichols.

21-22. National Theatre, 1987, toured to Theatre Royal Glasgow, 1988. Programme and related cartoon from *The Guardian* 4 December 1987 (UoR MS 3220).

23-25. Taboo Theatre Company, 1991, Galway and Focus Theatre, Dublin 1991.

This production, directed by Nora Connolly, had an all female cast. The materials on display are from her archive, and include one of her own drawings. She has donated copies of these materials to the Beckett Collection at UoR. By kind permission of Nora Connolly.

23. Drawing for Lucky by Nora Connolly.

24. Photographs of the set.

25. Poster. 26-27. *Waiting for Godot* in Sarajevo, directed by Susan Sontag, produced by Haris Pasovic. This production took place during the siege of Sarajevo (April 1992 - February 1996).

26. News clipping from *The Daily Telegraph* 18 August 1993 (UoR MS 4061).

27. News clipping from *The Independent* magazine 21 August 1993 (UoR MS 4061).

28-29. Budapest 1994. Hungarian *Godot*, programme (Collection Anna McMullan). This production took place not long after the fall of the communist regime in 1990. It was directed by a well known Hungarian actor, Iván Darvas, who was a member of Parliament at the time. The set included a tattered piece of the 1956 Hungarian flag.

30-33. Gate Theatre Dublin, 1988-2008. The Gate Theatre Dublin, whose Artistic Director is Michael Colgan, first presented *Waiting for Godot*, directed by Walter Asmus, and designed by Irish artist, Louis le Brocquy in 1988. This production then became the cornerstone of their Beckett Festival, first presented in Dublin in 1991, and revived at the Lincoln Centre New York in 1996, the Barbican, London, (as part of the BITE Festival) in 1999, and as part of the Beckett Centenary celebrations in Dublin in 2006. Individual

productions and programmes have also toured internationally. In 2008, the Gate's *Waiting for Godot* production toured to all 32 counties of Ireland. **A scanned copy of pages from the 1988 *Godot* programme can be viewed on one of the laptops (39).**

30. Programme of the 1988 Gate Theatre *Waiting for Godot* (UoR MS 3473)

31. Details of the Gate Theatre Festival at the Barbican Centre, 2006. (UoR MS 4691)

32-33. Leaflet and details of the 2008 Gate Theatre **Waiting for Godot** national tour of Ireland (Collection Matthew McFrederick).

34. Peter Hall Company, Old Vic, 1997, programme (UoR MS 5201). Since his 1955 premiere of *Waiting for Godot*, Sir Peter Hall has directed the play on several other occasions, from this 1997 production at the Old Vic to the 2005 production at the Theatre Royal, Bath, which then transferred to London.

35. Talawa co-production with the West Yorkshire Playhouse, 2012, programme. (Collection Anna McMullan). Featured an all black cast.

36. Gare St Lazare, Gaiety Theatre Dublin (Dublin Theatre Festival) and Lyric Belfast, 2013, programme (Collection Anna McMullan). This production will tour to the Skirball Center, New York, October 13-17, 2015.

MOUNTED iPad

37. Irish Theatre Company 1982. *Waiting for Godot*, directed by Ben Barnes, toured on a double bill with Synge's *Well of the Saints*, both designed by Monica Frawley.

Photographs by Amelia Stein and quotation from Christopher Murray, 'Beckett Productions in Ireland: A Survey', *Irish University Review* (1984) 14.1, 103-125.

LAPTOPS

38. Theatre Royal Haymarket, 2009 & 2010 and UK Tour

DVD-Theatreland-Behind the Scenes Documentary. Contains interviews with cast and director. (Collection Matthew McFrederick).

39. 1988 Gate Theatre Dublin, pages from the programme (UoR MS 3463)

40. 1995 Royal Lyceum Edinburgh, programme (UoR MS 4218)

41. 2003 Company B Australia, programme (MS 5025)

HOW YOU CAN HELP: We are always looking to gather more materials on national and international productions of Samuel Beckett's work. If you have relevant materials please contact the University archivist, Guy Baxter (g.i.baxter@reading.ac.uk) or the co-directors of the Beckett International Foundation Anna McMullan (a.e.mcmullan@reading.ac.uk) and Mark Nixon (m.nixon@reading.ac.uk).