



ENDGAME

Resource Pack

Complicite



SAMUEL BECKETT IS ONE OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY'S MOST CELEBRATED AND REVERED PLAYWRIGHTS. At the same time **he is one of the most daunting playwrights: notoriously obsessed with exact and minute detail;** devoted to often impenetrable in-jokes and allusions; and fascinated by the bleak, the melancholy and the absurd.

This guide offers a range of approaches to directing and performing Beckett's work. Drawn from Complicite's rehearsals of *Endgame* in summer 2009, the exercises and ideas are by no means exhaustive but will hopefully open up possibilities for investigating a text like *Endgame*.

Good luck!

Complicite ENDGAME

by Samuel Beckett

CONTENTS

04/05 **SAMUEL BECKETT** a timeline

06/07 **NOW YOU SEE IT** an introduction by Simon McBurney

10/11 **REHEARSING BECKETT'S ENDGAME**

TEXTUAL INVESTIGATION AND ANALYSIS:

Leitmotifs, Repetitions and Echoes

References and Encoded Meaning

Variation in Editions of Endgame

PLAYING: RHYTHMICAL AND PHYSICAL INVESTIGATIONS:

Status

Rhythm and Musicality

Physical Explorations

34/35 **DESIGNING ENDGAME** an interview with Tim Hatley

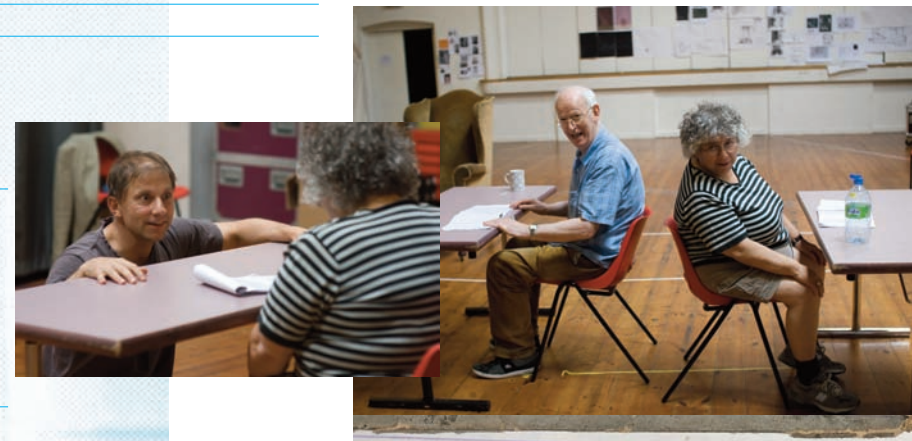
36/37 **PERFORMING ENDGAME** an interview with Tom Hickey

Director	Simon McBurney
Set Design	Tim Hatley
Lighting Design	Paul Anderson
Sound Design	Gareth Fry
Costume Design	Christina Cunningham

Associate Directors	Marcello Magni
	Ian Rickson
	Douglas Rintoul

Cast in order of appearance

Clov	Simon McBurney
Hamm	Mark Rylance
Nagg	Tom Hickey
Nell	Miriam Margolyes



SAMUEL BECKETT a timeline

- 1906 Samuel Beckett is born in Foxrock, Dublin
- 1927 Graduates from Trinity College Dublin with a First Class degree in French and Italian
- 1928 Travels to Paris to be an exchange *lecteur* at the École Normale Supérieure
- 1929 Publishes his first short story: *Assumption*
- 1930 Publishes the poem *Whoroscope*. Returns to Trinity College on a two-year contract as a French lecturer
- 1931 *Proust*, a collection of essays, is published
- 1934 Publishes his first novel, *More Pricks than Kicks*. Moves to London
- 1937 First attempt at a play: *Human Wishes*. Settles in Paris
- 1938 Publishes *Murphy*. Begins writing poetry in French
- 1945 Writes *Mercier et Camier*
- 1947 First play written in French, *Eleutheria*, published posthumously. *Murphy* is translated into French
- 1951 *Molloy* in French. *Malone meurt*
- 1952 *En attendant Godot*
- 1953 *L'Innommable*. *Watt* in English. First production of *Waiting for Godot*
- 1956 *Malone Dies*. First British publication of *Waiting for Godot*
- 1957 *Fin de partie, suivi de Acte sans paroles*.
First commission for radio: *All That Fall* (BBC)
- 1958 *Endgame* translation of *Fin de partie*. *The Unnamable*
- 1959 Receives an honorary D.Litt. degree from Trinity College Dublin
- 1961 *Comment c'est*. *Happy Days*. Beckett and Suzanne Descheveaux-Dumesnil marry in Folkstone, Kent
- 1964 *How it is* translation of *Comment c'est*
- 1965 *Imagination morte imaginez*. *Imagination Dead Imagine*
- 1966 *Comédie et Actes divers*. *Assez*. *Bing*
- 1967 *D'un ouvrage abandonné*. *Têtes-mortes*. *Eh Joe and Other Writings*
- 1969 Awarded Nobel Prize for Literature
- 1970 *Premier Amour*. *Le Dépeupleur*
- 1973 *Not I*. *First Love*
- 1976 *Pour finir encore et autres foirades*. *All Strange Away*. *Foirades/Fizzles* written in French and English. *Footfalls*
- 1978 *Poèmes, suivi de mirlitonades*
- 1980 *Compagnie*. *Company*
- 1981 *Mal vu mal dit*. *Rockaby*
- 1989 *Stirrings Still*. *Worstward Ho*. Samuel Beckett dies in Paris on 22 December 1989.



NOW YOU SEE IT by Simon McBurney

Right now I am sitting in the rehearsal room with the words. Nothing but the words. So precise, so hard to remember. And these words are not even the ones I have to speak.

...He looks up at window right. He turns and looks at window left. He goes out, comes back immediately with a step-ladder, carries it over and sets it down under window left, gets up on it, draws back curtain. He gets down, takes six steps (for example) towards window right, goes back for ladder, carries it over and sets it down under window right, gets up on it, draws back curtain. . .

Ah good.

One has the right to choose if there are six steps or more. Or less. Not many less because the next direction is for *three steps . . .*, the one after that for *one step*... And this is merely a fragment of the action Beckett details for Clov. And Hamm. Nagg and Nell too.

Throughout the play action, dynamics, pause and silence are chosen as fastidiously as the words voiced. They are the text. Just as the dynamics in Schubert's *Winterreise*, Beckett's favourite song cycle, are part of the score. Perhaps score would be more appropriate than text when speaking of the theatrical architecture Beckett presents you with. I don't know.

In France they call the people who come to the theatre *les spectateurs*, in Britain and Ireland they are *the audience*, the people who listen. This does not mean the French are not interested in language. On the contrary. It actually says more about the undeveloped visual sense over here. For Beckett what you see is as important as what is said. As carefully placed. This does not feel any more of a restriction than the words you are required to speak. Quite the opposite. Its precision is an injection into the artery of the imagination.

What you see is chosen as carefully as what you hear. Both are unusual. That is to say the use of image and the use of word resist an easy interpretation. A direct meaning. The words are the same as we might recognise on a bus, at home, in a place we might inhabit everyday. But they are, crucially, changed. Their meaning is exactly what we might expect of the everyday, but the way they are used is unexpected. We recognise them but we do not know what they mean when positioned as they are. We know what dustbins are but we are not familiar with them as housing for our ageing parents.



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So they are like the things we see on the other side of the street, the thing that catches your attention and you do not know why. Out of the corner of your eye, you see something and it reminds you. Sets off resonances, makes you laugh, moves you, repeats like a tune but resists a more prosaic explanation.

When caught in the web of Beckett's language (by this I mean his creation of sound, and image as well as the words which emerge from the mouths of the characters), there are many pauses. In the rehearsal room, I mean. We pause frequently; we stop, all four of us, Mark, Miriam, Tom Hickey and I. Even Tom who is the one actor who is not a virgin to playing Beckett is flummoxed. For us, the other three, it is our first time. We do not know where to go next. How to approach it again. How to say it. How ANY meaning, even a musical one, can find its way into the waiting silence. We search. And in the language itself it seems there is a search as well. The language itself appears to be 'looking' for something. A home?

When Beckett was asked once by an eminent French critic why, if he hated words as sometimes he claimed he did, why should he want to use them to convey his art, he replied "Que voulez vous monsieur, on a rien d'autre." ('What do you want, Monsieur? One has nothing else.')

His language is as rich as any poet, but it is pared down to an essence. I guess any writer who worked for James Joyce, as Beckett did, researching *Finnegan's Wake* for him, helping, supporting, admiring his immense reach, would look for another route. So Beckett stripped away. Reduced to nothing. Made the language do everything with nothing. Gave it a freedom to mean nothing, yet a muscularity that encompasses all. Perhaps? I don't know, as I stutter through the lines again. For a moment, and for a reason I cannot explain, it flickers into extraordinary life. I hope it will do so night after night. I cannot be sure. There is only the trying.

© Simon McBurney, September 2009



REHEARSING BECKETT'S *ENDGAME*

TEXTUAL INVESTIGATION AND ANALYSIS

“Beckett’s plays can be interpreted on many levels... instead of merely exploring a surface, a play like *Endgame* has become a shaft driven deep down into the core of being; that is why it exists on a multitude of levels, revealing new ones as it is more closely studied.”

Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*.

On first reading *Endgame* the play can feel dense and impenetrable. There are no scenes or acts as such; we are given little information about the characters, their situation, the historical setting, the passage of time or the environment. So how does one begin to think about rehearsing a text that appears to offer little information, is ambiguous, disconnected, repetitious, chaotic and structureless?

Leitmotifs, Repetitions and Echoes

Beckett rehearsing *Endgame* in Berlin in 1967 described it to his cast as a “play full of echoes...they all answer each other”. There are many words and phrases that keep cropping up. With Beckett’s statement in mind, can we begin to uncover footholds by which we can navigate our way through the text?

Grab some highlighter pens and have a look through the play bearing in mind the following words, themes and ideas:

END/DEATH/SLEEP: Highlight and look at all the references to death, endings and sleep. What do these references tell us about the world the characters live in, the characters themselves and their desires?

NATURE/LIFE: The world of the play is a world where nature seems to have ceased to exist. Highlight all the references to nature in the play. Nature functions in opposition to death. Why is the play full of references to life and procreation when the “outside is death”? Again, what can these references tell us about the characters, their desires, and the world they live in?



LEAVING: Clov repeats the phrase “I’ll leave you” many times throughout the play in a number of different forms. Mark these in the text and any references to leaving. What does this tell us about the character of Clov? Can we sense a continuous strengthening of his will to leave? Can we use these to chart a journey for Clov throughout the play?

ILLNESS: Hamm repeats the question “Is it not time for my pain-killer?” seven times in the play. Mark these in the text and any references to Hamm’s illness. What does this tell us about the character of Hamm? How can this help us to structure a journey for the character of Hamm?

PLAY: The piece is full of play as a metaphor. Look for references to play, chess, acting, the stage and storytelling. What does this tell us about the possible playing style of the piece? Often characters refer directly to the audience, so is *Endgame* naturalistic? Is there a fourth wall? Is *Endgame* supposed to be real or does it embody both reality and play?

Hamm’s story provides the play with its most cohesive thread, weaving in and out of the play. Work your way through the play making note of where Hamm’s story occurs and how it develops each time. What is the purpose of the story? Why must Hamm tell the story? What will happen to Hamm if the story is concluded? Does anyone want the story to be concluded?

UNSEEN CHARACTERS: Look at the text and highlight references to other people who do not appear on stage. Why does Beckett bring the doctor, Mother Pegg, the crawling man, the child and the boy outside the window into the play? Who are the people that Hamm could have helped or saved? What does this tell us about Hamm? Who were/are all the unseen characters and what could be their relationship to the other characters in the play? Beckett famously said that he didn’t know if Clov was the boy in Hamm’s story. What happens to the play and the audience’s experience of the play if the character of Clov is the boy in the story? What if he is the man who came crawling on his belly, or if he has no relationship to the boy at all?

ROUTINE: *Endgame* highlights notions of routine, circularity and infinities, all exploring the idea of a life being made of discreet, often banal or absurd moments. Mark references to repetition and routine in the play. Oppositionally have a look at the play and mark possible new events. Is this day like any other day? What is new for the characters? How does the death of Nell push the characters and the audience into new territory?



References and Encoded Meaning

Beckett may have embedded meaning into the play through his naming of the characters: Hamm may refer to a 'hammer' that drives in the nails (the French for nail is *clou*, the German is *Nagel* and the English nail – *Clov, Nag and Nell*) and Mother Pegg may be a fourth nail. Hamm may also refer to the 'ham actor' as well as holding a biblical allusion to Noah's son and the survival of the great flood. Other texts are also directly referred to in the play: "One by One" and "moment upon moment" connect to the paradoxes of the pre-Socratic philosopher Zeno; "Mene, Mene?" is a biblical reference taken from Daniel 5:26; "My kingdom for a nightman!" uses Richard III's appeal in Shakespeare's play; "Why did you engender me?" may allude to the last speech of Marlowe's *Faustus*; and "Our revels now are ended" is a potent lifting from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (giving a hint towards Hamm as a kind of toppled Prospero). **How does a knowledge of these references help us build up a bigger picture of the characters, the play and Beckett's intentions?**

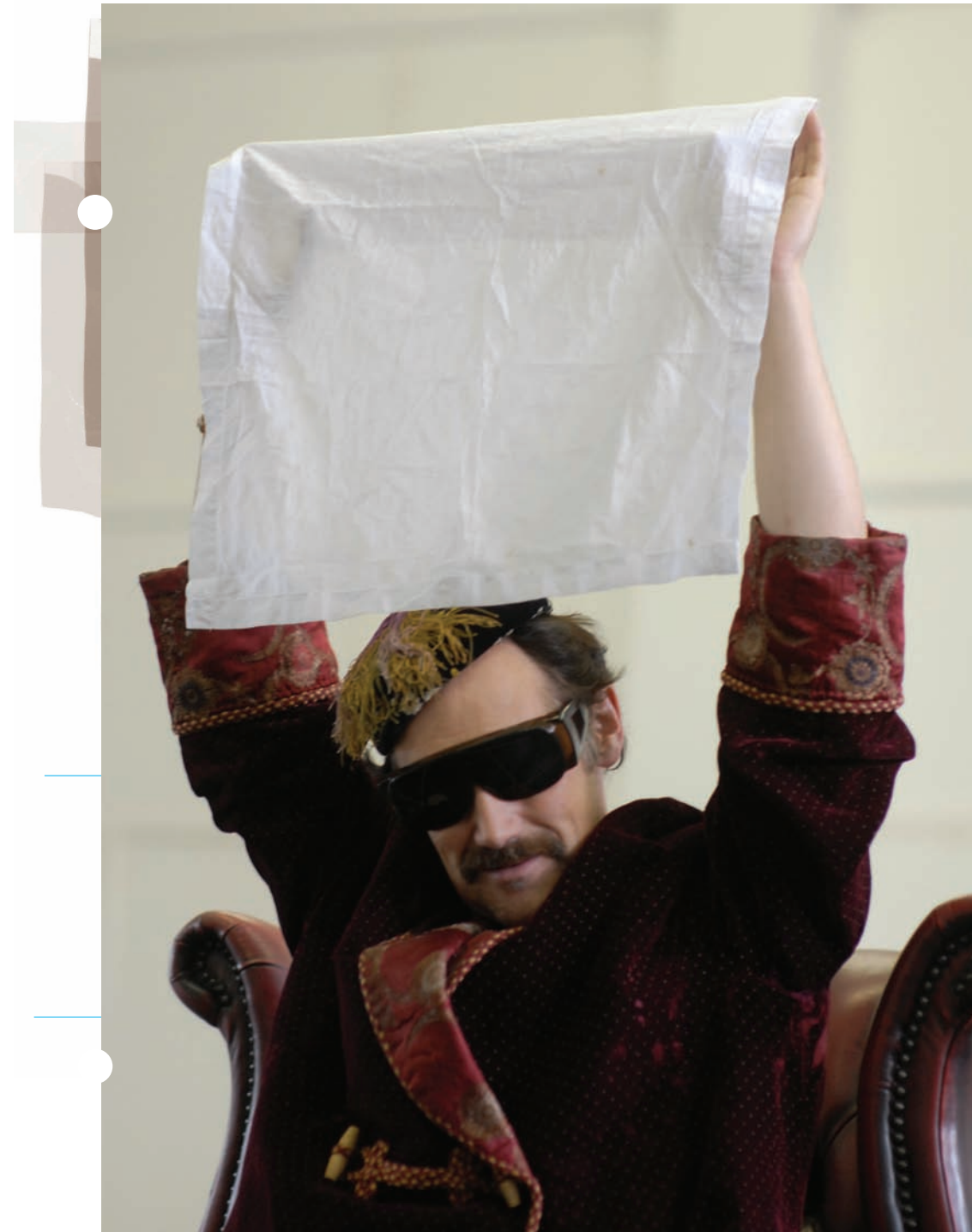
What other recurring motifs can you find?

How does this type of investigation begin to offer a way of understanding the text and facilitate rehearsals?

We may now have a greater idea of the characters and the narrative threads in the play. Take the character of Hamm or Clov (or both) and now write a list looking at the following points:

1. What facts do we know about the characters? **For example: Clov can't remember when he came here. Hamm has something dripping in his head and wants a painkiller.**
2. What do the characters say about themselves? **For example: Clov says he loves order and calls himself a dog. Hamm says he hesitates to end.**
3. What do the characters say about other people? **For example: Hamm calls Clov a creature and Nell a busybody. Clov says that Mother Pegg died of darkness.**

What does this list tell us about the characters and about the play? How does this list help us to think about developing a character?



Variation in Editions of *Endgame*

You may notice that Complicite's production of *Endgame* differs at times from your text. Before working on any play it's important to find out if there is only one edition of the play. There are numerous editions of Shakespeare's plays and even contemporary texts can often exist in different versions. Texts often change in performance or evolve over a number of different productions. Published versions of Complicite's own productions differ radically from the last performance of the piece because the show has changed. It is important to remember that a play only exists fully on the stage. A text is only a blueprint and intention or a record of something that will or has been performed. Looking at all the various editions of a text we can begin to understand the genesis of a piece and its evolution. We often think of Beckett's work as finite, but of all Beckett's plays *Endgame* was the one that he struggled with writing the most. It had a difficult birth and, perhaps as a consequence, was his favourite work.

"I did finish another [play], but don't like it. It has turned out a three-legged giraffe, to mention only the architectonics, and leaves me in doubt whether to take a leg off or add one on."

Samuel Beckett writing to his friend, the American director Alan Schneider, in April 1956



Here Beckett is referring to the first draft of *Endgame*, which was originally a two-acter. By June the same year he had reduced it to one act. This version was written in French and first performed in 1957. Beckett later translated his own text into English, which was performed in 1958. He later directed his own productions of *Endgame* in Berlin in 1968 and in London in 1980. For these productions he made adjustments to his text, which exist in a revised edition in *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett: Endgame v. 2*.

All these versions differ from each other in subtle ways. In the first draft the second act opened with Nell's dustbin gone from the stage. We also hear more explicitly that the parents' accident occurred the day after their wedding night and that they were crushed up to their groins. Clov dresses as a woman, alternately speaking in his own voice and a falsetto and Hamm is convinced that there is really a woman there, talking to 'her' as if she were his wife. In his notes, *Avant Fin de Partie*, Beckett also gives a setting for the first draft of the play: "the region of Picardy [France], and more precisely in Boulonnais...near Wissant". He goes on to describe the house as a "dwelling erected on a cliff" and the protagonists as "obviously survivors of a First World War battle and progressively destroyed in the autumn of 1914, the spring of 1918, and the following autumn, under mysterious circumstances."

There are significant differences between the English translation and the final French text, too. Most significantly, in the English translation, Beckett cut Clov's description of the boy seen out of the window as being seated with his back against a standing stone looking at his naval. Other changes in the revised edition of the English text include different stage directions where Clov lifts Hamm's handkerchief at the beginning of the play, gives the dog's arse to Hamm to fondle instead of the dog's head and pretends to look out of and open the window at the end of the play. **What does this tell us about the process of writing a piece of theatre?** Why was Beckett's text so fluid and alive? Why do you think Beckett made changes? What does the cutting of lengthy descriptions and elucidations tell us about Beckett as a writer and his desire to allow meaning to exist on a number of levels? **How do these differences in the texts enable us to understand the play in more detail and how can this greater understanding help or hinder our own staging of the play?**

Now that we have pulled together a wealth of textual analysis and have uncovered a number of questions to be explored in rehearsal, how do we actually begin to rehearse the play?

PLAYING: STATUS, RHYTHMICAL & PHYSICAL INVESTIGATIONS

Status:

A knowledge of how status operates can help us to understand and clearly define relationships on stage and specifically the relationships within *Endgame*. To begin to think about or to play with the complex status relationships that exist in *Endgame* the company used the following exercises to develop a status vocabulary or scale they could collectively refer to.

Status is made up of external and internal status: respectively how the world sees us and how we see ourselves. Our status as human beings can change according to the situation we find ourselves in and who we find ourselves with. Status is at the core of all drama. Firstly let's explore in a purely technical way what we mean by external status. Let us look at what 'high status' and 'low status' is. Imagine a numerical scale of status using the numbers 1 to 20, with 20 being the highest status and 1 the lowest.

Who in our world has a high status? Who has a low status? Walk around the room with 'high status'. Notice how you hold your head, your spine, how your clothes feel, how your feet move, how you breathe, whether you move quickly or slowly, evenly, or with jerks. What is your level of tension? Now walk with 'low status'. Again notice how you hold your head, your spine, how your clothes feel, how your feet move, how you breathe, whether you move quickly or slowly, evenly, or with jerks. **What is your level of tension? What are the differences?**

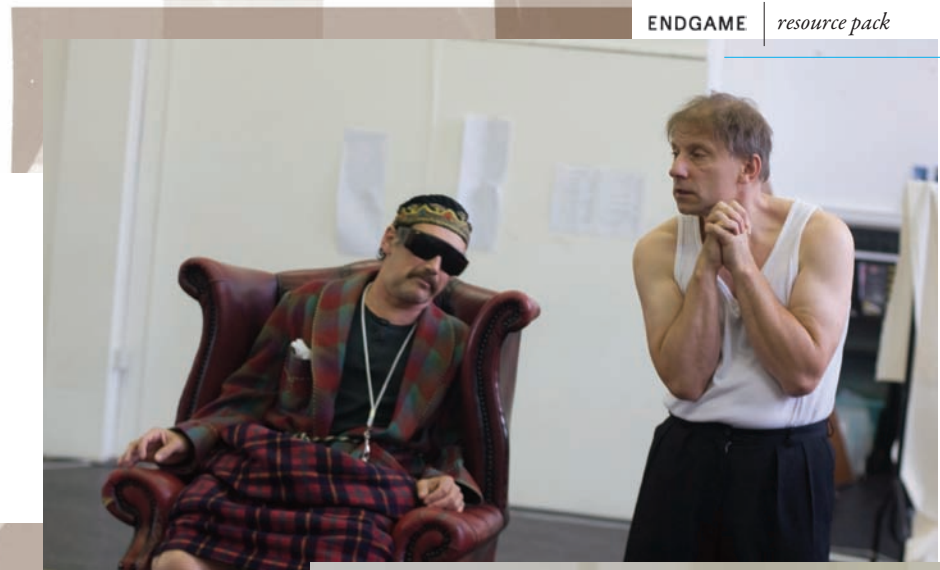
Now, in a group, set up some chairs for an audience. Place some more chairs and a table in front of the audience. This is our playing space, our stage for an improvisation. Sit the group down on the chairs. Take a hat and make 20 pieces of paper numbered from 1 to 20 (making a clear distinction between 6 and 9). Fold the pieces of paper and put them into the hat. Ask for 4 or 5 volunteers. Each volunteer takes a number from the hat. They look at their number without revealing it to the other volunteers or the group. When everyone has taken a number they then return their numbers to the hat. Ask the volunteers to pick up any props, coats etc. they feel they may want to include in the improvisation. Send all of the volunteers out of the room (they must not reveal their numbers to each other whilst outside: there should be no discussion). The volunteers should then enter the room one by one and start to improvise a scene (it could be an emergency business meeting where an important issue needs to be resolved or any setting where a clear status hierarchy exists). The object of the



improvisation is to communicate very clearly to each other and the audience what their given level of status is. We will try to guess this number at the end of the scene. When we feel that we have seen enough, end the scene and ask the audience to guess the individual status of each volunteer. What did we see? What made us think one person was of higher or lower status than the others? What did we see physically? Who was relaxed, anxious, stressed or carefree? **Who was still and who moved around a lot?** Where were they positioned in the room and in relationship to the others? How do all these aspects contribute to communicating status? Now ask the volunteers to reveal their numbers and what they experienced. Repeat the exercise with new volunteers until everyone has had a go.

Now let's explore internal status. Using the same pieces of paper as before, ask four or five volunteers to take a number as before. This is their external status: how the world sees them. After returning their numbers to the hat ask the volunteers to take a new number. This is their internal status: how we see ourselves. As before, ask the volunteers to leave the room and enter into the improvisation. The object of the exercise is to communicate successfully their external and internal status. How would a high external and a very low internal status manifest itself? Who do we know in the world around us who has a conflicting internal and external status? How can we tell? Again end the scene and ask the audience to guess the individual status of each volunteer. What did we see? What made us think one person was externally or internally higher or lower than the others? **What do we see physically? How does a conflict manifest itself?** Did someone appear to be relaxed on the outside but held a lot of tension internally? Or was it the other way round? Did someone have a similar external and internal status? Now ask the volunteers to reveal their numbers and what they experienced. Repeat the exercise with new volunteers until everyone has had a go. The combining of internal and external status exposes a very human contradiction. We are all made up of how we are perceived by the world around us and how we perceive ourselves. These are the foundation blocks for forming a character on stage. How can we use this scale in rehearsal?

Now take the opening dialogue between Clov and Hamm from "Get me ready, I'm going to bed" to "Outside of here it's death". In pairs, have a look at the internal and external status of Hamm and Clov. Hamm clearly has the higher external status because he is the master, he orders Clov around. **But Clov also appears to have an inner strength.** What is his internal status? Remember Clov has power because he can move and see. Play around with some combinations, choose combinations that you think are totally wrong for the characters as well as those that you think are right, act these out. When you have played around with a number of combinations, get each couple to perform one version. Ask the audience to try and guess the combinations. What do we see and feel? Ask the actors to reveal the combinations and talk about what they experienced.



The status relationship between Hamm and Clov is complex and is in constant flux throughout the piece. This status vocabulary gives us a shorthand to start exploring the possibilities that exist between Clov and Hamm and to construct some kind of journey for the characters.

Rhythm and Musicality

Having mined the text for possible meanings and structures, and having looked at status, let's momentarily throw all this work away and look at the text in a purely musical way. Imagine that Beckett's texts are like a piece of music and, like a musician looking at a musical score for the first time, we have to look at the composition in a technical way. Beckett is extremely precise in his composition of image, physical text and language. The punctuation of the text and inclusion of the pauses is very calculated: everything has a purpose. We have to find out what that purpose is, for example what the journey through a pause may be. If we trust what Beckett has written, we may get very near to what he intended for performance.

The beginning of rehearsals for this production began (unusually for Complicite) seated around a table. In the first week the company focused on purely speaking the words, giving specific weight to the commas, full stops, pauses, ellipses, exclamation marks, italics and em dashes etc.

A full stop (.) is chiefly used to mark the end of a sentence expressing a statement. It can also often define the end of a complete thought. Take a look at this section of Clov's text.

Clov: I say to myself — sometimes, Clov, you must learn to suffer better than that if you want them to weary of punishing you— one day. I say to myself—sometimes, Clov, you must be better than that if you want them to let you go—one day. But I feel too old, and too far, to form new habits. Good, it'll never end, I'll never go. (*Pause.*) Then one day, suddenly, it ends, it changes, I don't understand, it dies, or it's me, I don't understand that either. I ask the words that remain— sleeping, waking, morning, evening. They have nothing to say. (*Pause.*) I open the door of the cell and go. I am so bowed I only see my feet, if I open my eyes, and between my legs a little trail of black dust. I say to myself that the earth is extinguished, though I never saw it lit. (*Pause.*) It's easy going. (*Pause.*) When I fall I'll weep for happiness. (*Pause.*)

Read this section aloud running the sentences together, ignoring the pauses and full stops.

Now read the text giving weight to the full stops (we'll deal with the pauses in a bit). If you're finding this difficult, speak each sentence as if it is the only thing that you are going to say: as if the next sentence does not exist. Hide the coming sentence if you like. Thump your hand or stamp your foot on the last word of the sentence. You may find that the full stop often gives weight to the last word in the sentence. When you have tasted each sentence and evaluated its weight in its own right, speak the whole text. How is this different from your first speaking of the text?



Now have a look at **the commas (,)**. A comma is used to indicate a separation of ideas or of elements within the structure of a sentence. They can help an actor navigate their way through complicated ideas and clauses existing within a text. Read through the text allowing the commas to guide you.

Clov's text is **full of em dashes (—)**. An em dash is used to indicate a break in thought or sentence structure, to introduce a phrase added for emphasis, definition, or explanation, or to separate two clauses. An em dash can indicate an interruption, either by someone else or the character himself or herself. When the character interrupts themselves the interruption is often caused by the speed of a new thought interrupting the previous one, or a fast elucidation of the previous thought. Now read this section of text bearing this in mind. What does this reveal about Clov's state of mind?

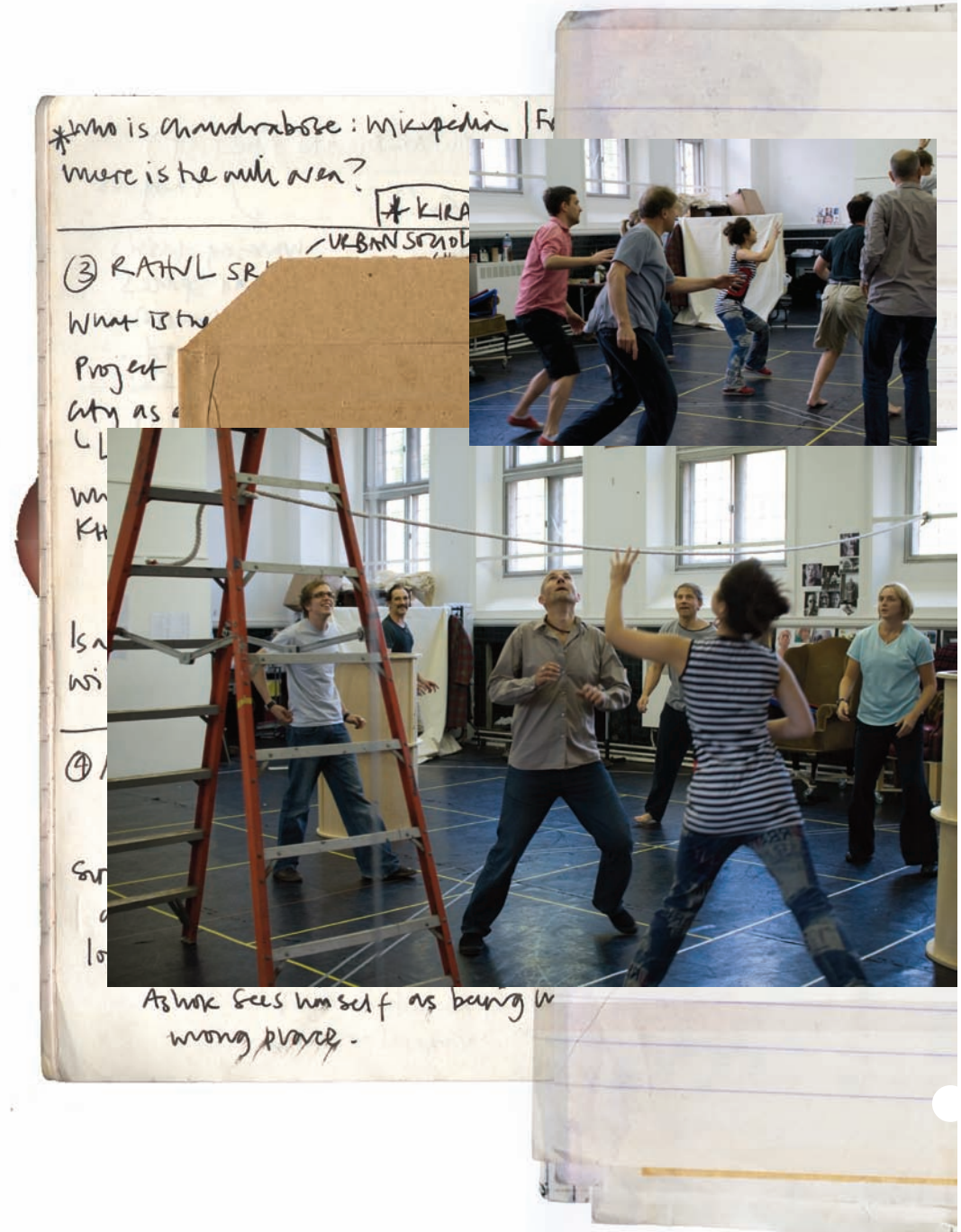
Now look at the pauses. What is a pause? Pauses in Beckett's text are as important as a spoken word, sentence, thought or physical movement. In fact a pause is often a piece of unspoken text, an unvoiced thought or the search for a thought, it is never just a moment of inactivity. Beckett's pauses are rich and can often help us to understand what is happening within a scene. Read the text again giving weight to the full stops, commas and now the pauses. What do we notice? Can the pauses help to mark the emotional undertow existing beneath Clov's words?

Elsewhere in *Endgame* you **may find ellipses (...)**. An ellipsis is a mark or series of marks that usually indicates an intentional omission of a word or a phrase from the original text. Often in Beckett's text an ellipsis can be used to indicate a hiatus in speech, an unfinished thought, or, at the end of a sentence, a trailing off into silence.

HAMM: And yet I hesitate, I hesitate to... to end. Yes, there it is, it's time it ended and yet I hesitate to— (*He yawns.*) —to end.

Try speaking the sentence above, giving full weight to the ellipsis. Why has Beckett put an ellipsis here? What word should be in its place? Why can't Hamm say the word 'end' in place of the ellipsis?

Now look at the first exchange of text between Hamm and Clov again, paying particular attention to the full stops, commas, pauses, ellipses and em dashes. Also have a look at the exclamation marks. The text is full of them. An **exclamation mark (!)** is used in writing to indicate intensity of emotion, or loudness. In pairs, take a short section of the exchange and work through it, heightening your exploration of



the music in the text. Make sure there are no gaps between one person speaking and the other responding unless Beckett has specified it. Run it through again and again until the text starts to feel familiar. Can you see how carefully structured Beckett's text is? Does exploring this structure in purely technical terms allow us to get closer to the meaning, feeling or sense of the words or the relationship between the two characters? Can you feel the 'to and fro' between the two characters?

In rehearsals for *Endgame* the company would explore large sections of the text in this way, repeating the section again and again like a musician or orchestra rehearsing for a concert. What do you think the benefits of rehearsing this kind of text in this way are? Interestingly the French word for rehearse is *répéter*, which literally means 'to repeat'.

Now let's look at an exercise created and used in rehearsals to highlight this idea of Beckett's text being a rhythmical score between two characters. In pairs, face one another on chairs. One person starts by voicing a rhythmical phrase, without words, at the other person. Immediately their partner responds to this phrase by repeating it, adapting it or by making a totally new phrase that in some way is linked rhythmically to the initial phrase. The exercise continues in this fashion with one person responding to the other in turn until we are freely improvising with sound (think about the way jazz musicians improvise with each other). Think about the quality of pauses, full stops, em dashes, ellipses and commas that we have already explored. Incorporate these into the rhythmical call and response. A form of communication and play starts to exist, it may feel childlike, animalistic or even tribal. Now allow this non-verbal rhythmical exploration to underpin the first section of dialogue between Clov and Hamm, with one person playing Hamm and the other playing Clov. Create the same kind of play but using Beckett's words. Don't worry so much about the meaning of the words, look for the music.

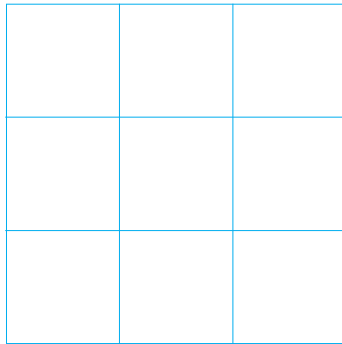


"It's hard for me if I hold on to the way I normally make sense of things. With most Shakespeare plays you can't say exactly what they mean, but the characters will definitely have a past and a future and be moving towards an objective. Usually I try to find the cause and the need for everything. But with this it's more liberating if I just play, like a child really, without any of those responsibilities that my training and my experience have taught me."

Mark Rylance

Physical Explorations

PAUSING ON THE GRID: Mark up a grid on the floor with tape. The grid is made of 9 squares; each square is 1.5m x 1.5m.



First, as a purely physical exercise to get people connecting with each other in space, line everyone up in a queue outside the bottom right corner of the grid. One person starts the exercise by entering the grid on the bottom right hand corner, they mark this position on the grid with a pause or a suspension and then they move on to a new position on the grid (use the points where lines meet or cross on the grid to define your position). Again they mark this new position on the grid with a pause or a suspension and then they move on. When the first person has taken their second position, the person directly behind them in the queue moves onto the bottom right hand corner of the grid just like the person before. They are now one move behind the person in front. This second person will now copy the movements of the person in front but always being one movement behind. On the second person's second move, the next person directly behind in the queue will join the grid in the same way. This third person is now one move behind the person in front: they are copying the movements of the second person who is copying the movements of the first person. This continues along the line until everyone has joined the grid. Everyone will be copying the person in front of him or her and will remain one move behind. When everyone moves on the grid they must try to move together. Be careful, there will be times when more than one person will be occupying the same point on the grid. How do we negotiate moving around the grid with a large number of people? Eventually the leader steps out of the grid and one by one the rest of the group will follow the leader's departure as they catch up with his or her movements.

Now try this again with people joining the grid two moves behind the person in front. This means they will join the grid on the leader's third movement. How was this exercise? What did we enjoy? What did we find hard?



Now, in pairs, and one pair at a time, let's look at the pauses in Beckett's text by physicalising them on the grid. Use the opening dialogue between Hamm and Clov that we have already looked at. It would be great if you could learn the text so that you can move freely around the grid without having to look at your text, you want to try and look at your partner. This time you do not have to follow the movements of the person in front. To start, both take different positions on the grid. Start the dialogue making sure that there are no gaps between the exchanges unless specifically marked by a pause. **If there is a pause then you must change your position on the grid.** You may want to get nearer to your partner or move away depending on the quality of the pause. You may want to move together on the pause or individually, depending on who has created the pause or for whom the pause feels the most uncomfortable. The game has no set rules, it was invented specifically for this rehearsal and is organic and can change depending on where the exploration leads the two actors. The one rule is that you can only move when there is a pause.

What does this kind of exercise reveal about the written text? It helps the actors to mark the pauses and remember where the pauses are, but what difference is there in inhabiting the pauses physically like this compared to when we just read the text while sitting around a table? Now read the text again, seated, to see what residue from the exercise is left in your reading of the text.

Sight

The characters in Beckett's plays often have physical disabilities. In *Endgame* the motif of physical deterioration of the body is very present. All of the characters have some degree of visual impairment: Hamm can't see, Nagg and Nell can hardly see and Clov's eyes are bad. It was important in rehearsals to engage the actors' imaginations with these various degrees of visual impairment.

Get into pairs. One person closes their eyes and offers their arm to their 'seeing' partner. The 'seeing' partner leads the other around the room, gently at first. Once a trusting relationship is fully established, explore how fast you can lead your partner, and on what levels you can lead them (closer to the floor, higher up, up stairs or through corridors). Swap over. What is the sensation of being led or leading? **What happens to our body, arms, legs and facial expressions when we are being led?**

Stay in pairs, again one person closes their eyes. The 'seeing' person (this time not touching their partner) hums or 'la's a phrase of a song to their partner (it may be a well-known song). Sing it a few times close to them. Then start to guide your partner around the room, using only the song to direct them: leave your partner, take a position anywhere in the room and sing your phrase. Your partner must move towards the direction of your voice. Play with distance, proximity, height, movement and pauses between the phrases of the song. Swap over. What did you experience this time? What happened to the body of the person being led? **What feelings were evoked in the leader?** Sympathy, compassion, or power?

Now line everyone up on one side of the room. Place a beanbag, scarf or small bag on the far side of the room directly in front of the group. Get one person to walk to the object with their eyes open. They should stop before the object, bend down and pick it up. Get them to replace the object and return to the line. This time repeat the whole sequence but getting the person to do it with their eyes closed. Let everyone have a go. How did you do? What did you notice about the difference of the body and the rhythm of the movement? Was there tension or anxiety? How did it feel?

Now let's return to our grid of nine squares. On one side of the square, line everyone up along one edge. On the opposite side place one person in the middle. Ask them to close their eyes. When the space is settled and silent, between 1 and 5 members of the group in unison will take a large step towards the person with their eyes closed. Hold there for a moment until the person with their eyes closed has made a guess at how many people have stepped towards them? **In silence return to the line.**

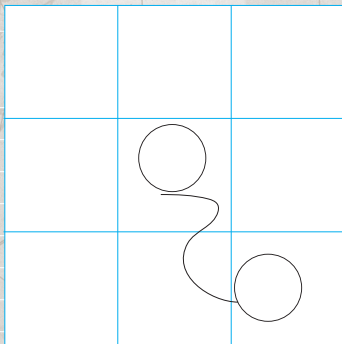
Repeat this three or four times. Let everyone have a go. How many did they get right? What do we notice about the physical quality of the person with their eyes closed? What shapes does their body make, particularly their face? Do they reposition their head? What is the quality of listening? Is it intensified? How did it feel to do it?



Come and... Go

One of the most significant dynamics of *Endgame* is the physical and emotional tugging that occurs between Hamm and Clov. Their relationship can be seen as a codependency. Look at the text, remembering that Clov is the only person who can move. How many times does Clov attempt to leave? Is there a greater frequency in the attempts as we get further into the play? **Under what circumstances does Clov leave to go into the kitchen? Does he ever leave of his own volition?** Clearly we can see a coming and going between Clov and Hamm, with Hamm often restricting Clov from leaving. Let's exaggerate this sense of physical spatial tension that exists between the two characters.

Take a heavy chair and place it in the middle of the nine-square grid. Put someone in the chair blindfolded. Give that person a piece of rope (up to six metres long) and now place someone else anywhere in the grid and hand him or her the other end of the string.



The person seated in the middle has to try and control the other person in the grid with the rope. They are the master. The other person wants to try and leave the grid. Within this exercise there must be a strong sense of play, remember, both Hamm and Clov enjoy the game. Now repeat the exercise but this time using the opening dialogue between Hamm and Clov. Use the game of the rope to underpin the dynamics inherent in the text. What

happens in the pauses? Is the rope taught or loose? During the exercise, when is the rope most taut? Repeat the exercise, this time abandoning the rope but trying to remember the sensation of the rope between the two players. What does this exercise tell us about the relationship between two people in space and the kind of thread that can exist? How can we use this language in performance and with Beckett's text?

These physical explorations are intended to give a fuller realisation of the text. How do you think that this kind of work can release and underpin a text like Beckett's? How does this physical language help to communicate the play more clearly to an audience?



All these investigations (textual, rhythmical and physical) indicate a handful of ways in which the company approached Beckett's *Endgame*. Most exercises were proposed and often invented during the process of rehearsal. There was no preconceived or fixed way of working. All work manifested itself as a direct response to the needs of the text and the actor. Ultimately these very different yet complementary ways of looking at Beckett's text were designed to give the actor a reservoir of ideas that would support and inform their playing of the text in performance.

Douglas Rintoul, Associate Director, September 2009

DESIGNING *ENDGAME* an interview with Tim Hatley

Beckett became known for his sparse use of set design, an attitude that had a powerful impact at the time of the original productions because it was at odds with the broadly naturalistic set designs popular in mainstream theatre. The idea of the black-box theatre, of which Beckett was an early proponent, and of stripped down, symbolic set designs, is common today, so making a strong impression can be more difficult for a designer. Here Tim Hatley, set designer for *Endgame*, talks about his work on the production.

Can you describe for me the process of arriving at this design?

I started from the text. After reading the text, I began spending a lot of time in rehearsals with the script and with the actors. I worked with Simon over a number of weeks to develop the design. My usual process is working with a model box in my studio and going to meetings before rehearsals begin. However, that's not the way Complicite works. In this case, there was no commitment to having a design ready early. With Complicite, the design is developed in tandem with the rehearsals so, for this production, we were able to delay build time to the middle of the rehearsal period.

So I attended rehearsals, worked, and sketched as the process continued. I would share these examples with Simon during tea breaks, before, after and in between rehearsals. The design changed. At one point, we had more elaborate designs. At another, we had simpler designs. At the core of it always was the text. In the text, you are told what you need. You don't need very much. It's not a showy design.

I believe that my job, as a designer, is to disappear into the background. It's not about being clever. It's a supporting role; a design is generally something that supports the piece. I think if you leave the theatre thinking, 'Those sets were amazing,' that's not the point. What I look for is total theatre, where everything is in balance. A designer should be another member of the company.

Did you think much about Beckett as the master of minimalism? Did you feel restricted creatively by this aesthetic?

I think it's quite liberating, actually. I think there's a lot of liberation in restriction. When you have been given instructions, you can be very creative within those parameters. When it's very blank, I find it very difficult to focus. I personally sometimes get misled when there is a totally empty canvas. And so I think the restrictions are very useful. The minimalism is the point of the play and to ignore it would be to ignore the play.

What influenced this particular design? Did you do any research into past designs of previous productions?

I didn't. I used to assist Jocelyn Herbert, who designed the original production at the Royal Court. I saw photos of her production but I've never seen the play performed live. Generally, I'm not all that interested in past designs of plays.

For this production, we found ground in looking at the space of the theatre itself. We asked, 'How can we make this space special?' We made an early decision that it should resemble an empty theatre and the interesting thing about the text is that it needs nothing—and yet it still needs something. I looked at the angles of the walls in the theatre. I took a lead from the side walls, which angle towards the centre, and used them to focus in and give strength to the central armchair.

The theatre makes you feel like you are going down into the earth. We drew on this and concentrated on height and scale, clearing the grid completely. I imagined that there was daylight only beyond the top of the proscenium, out of view. It's the perfect theatre for this show.

Would the design transform in a different space?

I think we would use the same approach but definitely adapt it for a new space. I think it's important that a design fits in a space. A good design has to fit well into a room. The great thing about this production is that we are here for a length of time, so we can do things we couldn't do otherwise. That's the beauty of it.



PERFORMING *ENDGAME* an interview with Tom Hickey

Tom Hickey, the actor who played Nagg, was the only member of the company who had previously played in a Beckett production. We asked him whether working with Complicite had made any difference to his performance, and to his understanding of the play.

What would you say characterises Simon's approach to directing Endgame and Beckett in general?

With the type of perception that Simon has, I think, he is able to illuminate the play in a particular way—by winking out new performance choices and discoveries. What makes his perception different is that these choices are never the most obvious or easiest. However, they are always fascinating.

Simon's emphasis on the physical is clear. The idea of the body remembering is very present in this rehearsal process. There are always many physical exercises, which bubble away in Simon's imagination.

Have these sorts of exercises been present in past theatre processes you have experienced?

Not to the same extent. I worked for many years with the Irish playwright Tom MacIntyre. A lot of his work is surreal. In the '80s, in Dublin, we did his plays and it was a very collaborative journey between the author, director and me. There were some similarities in that process. But there were also differences. We worked with two guys who had just come back from the Marcel Marceau school in Paris. They did physical exercises and warm ups, but those were different in many ways. Simon has his own particular genius.

You performed Nagg in a production of Endgame a couple of years ago. How does this differ from your previous experience of being directed in Endgame?

Yes, I did. There was a Beckett festival at the Gate Theatre in Ireland and they did a lot of his plays. We did a short run for a week there and then at Barbican. I think the basic difference is that Simon is continually unlocking more and more from the text. He plays with it. The previous production was very formal in comparison. This one is essentially more playful. Nevertheless, it's still very disciplined. Our work is not drawing back from Beckett's discipline with the text. We adhere to it, while remaining playful.

Has your portrayal of Nagg changed from three years ago? What have you discovered about the character this time around?

It's different. How is it different? I think because there is a larger landscape to play with. Simon has unlocked more for Nagg this time around.

The whole basis for the people in this play is that it's non-naturalistic. The text and characters are split up in a surreal way. Therefore, one can come up with all sorts of facets for a single character. For Nagg, it's as if the fragmentation of past experience is activating the present.

Simon never stops making new choices if he feels that they are more appropriate and expressive. He sees the production as an ongoing process. I may be doing things now that I might not be doing next week. There's no it. It's a process. It's about revealing the play *Endgame*.

Can you describe a particular moment in rehearsal where something was illuminated?

The moment where Nagg and Nell recollect their boat ride on Lake Como. We began to mime the movement of the boat while remaining in our bins. The boat business was very much a realisation. I would say in relation to Nagg and Nell, but particularly Nagg, that the amount of physical variation that I am doing in the bin is far more than I would have expected I would be doing.

Is this physicality very challenging?

It's very challenging. But one knows that it's also a mark of Simon's way of working.

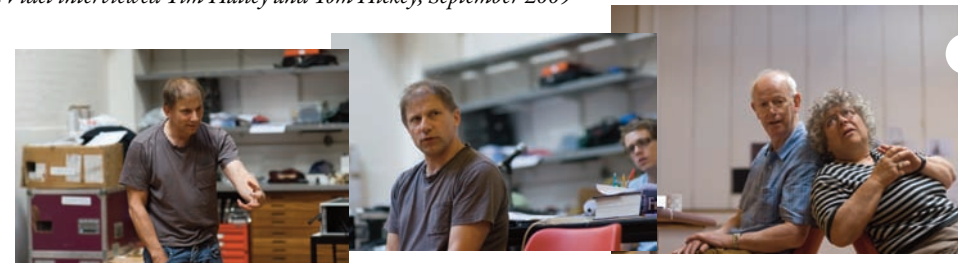
Are there new things you have learned about Beckett's text from this particular production?

All over the place. There are always more insights about the play. As I said to Simon, there should be laughs in it—dark laughter that you hear at the edge of a volcano. The humour is never far away with Beckett. It's in our bones, you know, that misery is laced with laughter. That's what keeps his characters going. "I can't go on. I will go on." Beckett has such a bleak vision of the world but he never, in his work, says you should give up. "Try. Try again. Fail. Fail Better."

Do you think that speaks to this particular rehearsal process?

Oh for sure this speaks to this process.

Calla Videt interviewed Tim Hatley and Tom Hickey, September 2009



Endgame Resource Pack
produced by **Complicite**

Writers: Douglas Rintoul and Calla Videt
Complicite Education Coordinator: Poppy Keeling
Design: Russell Warren-Fisher
Rehearsal photos: Sarah Ainslie

Complicite's education programme informs and reflects its artistic programme, finding connections and ideas that contribute to the creation of new work, as well as complementing current productions. At the core of Complicite's education work are its workshops, which offer an insight into the company's working processes. Large-scale lecture demonstrations, post-show talks, intimate workshops and residencies have taken place all over the world with people of varying interests, abilities and backgrounds, from professionals and students, to young people within and without the theatre community.

Complicite associate performers teach a range of workshops on physical preparation of the body, the neutral mask, ensemble, clown, improvisation and text-based work. Workshops may relate to a specific production or explore particular techniques or styles of work.

If you would like to find out more about booking a workshop, presentation or talk, please contact poppy@complicite.org

If you would like to join Complicite's mailing list and receive details of performances and workshops, please send your name, telephone number and email address to email@complicite.org

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