

MOLLOY

by Samuel Beckett

Performed by CONOR LOVETT
Directed by JUDY HEGARTY

PHOTO: CONOR LOVETT



"...My characters have nothing. I'm working with impotence, ignorance... that whole zone of being that has always been set aside by artists as something unusable - something by definition incompatible with art." – Samuel Beckett

The Aula, collège des Coudriers, 15a Av. Joli-Mont, Geneva - January 26th, 2006



This is the first in a series of close encounters with famous writers to honour the late Harold Masterson, a founder member of the Geneva Literary Aid Society. Proceeds of this event will go towards the Masambo Fund to provide care and treatment for Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers living with HIV/AIDS.

What the papers said about MOLLOY.

"Gripping... One of our century's greatest storytellers"
The New York Times

"Magnificent... Wildly funny... Short, sharp and sidesplitting"
The Sunday Times.

"Striking... How at ease he (Lovett) seems in such a hallowed role... the gentle deadpan delivery brings out the casual genius"
Time Out (London)

"Lovett delivers... with a beautiful haziness which perfectly accommodates the absurd one-liners... RECOMMENDED"
The Independent (UK)

*"Masterly... Lovett plays the title role with distinction... As directed by
Judy Hegarty this is a performance to savour"*
The Irish Times

"Outstanding... Perfect... Kill to get a ticket"
The Scotsman

Introducing The Gare St. Lazare Players

Gare St Lazare Players were founded in Chicago by Bob Meyer in 1983 and have performed over 50 productions. They have a base at Mericourt outside Paris, France where they rehearse new and existing writing. In recent years Judy Hegarty Lovett and Conor Lovett have concentrated on recitals of Beckett's prose works and have toured extensively. The company is

currently preparing *Texts For Nothing* (to be performed by Conor Lovett), *Worstward Ho* (to be performed by Lee DeLong) and *Enough* (to be performed by Ally Ni Chiarain) for touring in 2006 with existing recitals of *Lessness* and *The Beckett Trilogy*. All of these recitals are directed by Judy Hegarty Lovett. Gare St. Lazare Players have committed to working with Positive Input in Ireland which is a HIV advocacy group set up two years ago in Cork by John Dunlea.

Director, Judy Hegarty is from Cork. She has a degree in Fine Art/Mixed Media from Crawford College of Art and Design in Cork and a Post-Graduate Diploma in Drama Therapy from the University of Hertfordshire. She trained in theatre with Bob Meyer in Paris and Philippe Gaulier in London. She has directed productions of *Waiting for Godot* and *Rockaby* by Samuel Beckett as well as *The Possibilities* by Howard Barker, *The Dumb Waiter* by Harold Pinter and **Bouncers** by John Godber. Her production, *Swallow* written and performed by Irish playwright Michael Harding recently toured Ireland.

Performer, Conor Lovett was born in Dublin and grew up in Cork. He trained at École Jacques Lecoq in Paris. Other Beckett roles include Hamm in *Endgame*, Vladimir and Lucky in *Waiting for Godot*, The Speaker in *A Piece of Monologue*, Bem in *What Where*, The Man in *Act Without Words 1* and B in *Act Without Words 2*. He has performed readings of extracts from various poetry and prose at The Gate Beckett Festival in London. Other theatre work includes *As You Like It* by William Shakespeare, *The Duchess of Malfi* by John Webster, *Early Morning* by Edward Bond, *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* by Joe Orton, *Blood Wedding* by Federico Garcia Lorca, *The Dumb Waiter*, *The Homecoming and Pinter Shorts* by Harold Pinter, *Leonce and Lena* by Georg Buchner, *Banana For A Boy King* by Bob Meyer, *The Three Legged Fool* by Anthony Ryan, *Sharks*, a creation by Lee Sekulic Company, *Orpheus after Orpheus* by Jean Cocteau and *The Proposal* by Chekov and *Requiem For A Heavyweight* by Rod Surling, *The Riot Act* by Tom Paulin and *Poor Bitos* by Jean Anouilh.

For television he appeared in the final series of *Father Ted* in an episode called *The Mainland* and for the big screen he appeared in *Moll Flanders* directed by Pen Densham. He has just co-produced and appeared in the short film *Shut Eye* directed by Jon Tompkins. Conor recently toured China playing the role of Lucky with The Gate Theatre's *Waiting for Godot*.

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Brush up your BECKETT... Start quoting him now

What are we doing here, that is the question. – (Vladimir, in *Waiting for Godot*, Grove Press (1954).)

Perhaps my best years are gone. When there was a chance of happiness. But I wouldn't want them back. Not with the fire in me now.

– (Krapp's Last Tape, Grove Press (1960).)

Well, I suppose it is the Protestant thing to do. –

(Miss Fitt in "All That Fall." This is play on the phrase "the Christian thing to do. Reprinted in *Krapp's Last Tape*, Grove Press (1960).)

At this place, at this moment of time, all mankind is us, whether we like it or not. – (Vladimir, in *Waiting for Godot*, Grove Press (1954).)

His writing is not about something. It is the thing itself. – ("Dante ... Bruno. Vico ... Joyce," Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress (1929). Beckett is referring to Joyce.)

God is love. Yes or no? No. – (The narrator, in *Company*, Grove Press (1980).)

Watt had watched people smile and thought he understood how it was done. – (The narrator, in *Watt*, Grove Press (1959).)

For the only way one can speak of nothing is to speak of it as though it were something, just as the only way one can speak of God is to speak of him as though he were a man. – (The narrator, in *Watt*, Grove Press (1959).)

The screaming silence of no's knife in yes's wound. – (The narrator, in *Stories and Texts for Nothing*, Grove Press (1968).)

I did not want to write, but I had to resign myself to it in the end. – (Malone in *Malone Dies*, Grove Press (1970).) Beckett once made a similar comment about himself.)

We are all born mad. Some remain so. – (Estragon, in *Waiting for Godot*, 1954).

The words too, slow, slow, the subject dies before it comes to the verb, words are stopping too. – (The narrator, in *Stories and Texts for Nothing*, Grove Press (1968).)

I've just been listening to that stupid bastard I took myself for thirty years ago, hard to believe I was ever as bad as that. – (Krapp, in *Krapp's Last Tape*, Grove Press (1960).)

The only thing you must never speak of is your happiness. – (First published in 1953. Malone, in *Malone Dies*, p. 100, Grove Press (1970).)

There's man all over for you, blaming on his boots the faults of his feet. – (Vladimir, in *Waiting for Godot*, Grove Press (1954).)

Preparations are under way around the world to celebrate Nobel Prize-winning writer Samuel Beckett in 2006.

Dublin, London, Paris, New York and Tokyo will host events to commemorate the 100th anniversary of his birth. Ireland's Arts Minister John O'Donoghue has allocated funding for staging plays, exhibitions, readings and musical performances.

Samuel Barclay Beckett was born in Foxrock, Dublin in 1906 of French Huguenot descent. He graduated from Trinity College in 1930 with a Bachelor's degree in French and Italian, briefly had a lectureship there, then traveled and studied in Germany, England and France before settling in Paris in 1937, where he was an intimate friend of James Joyce. During this time he published a long poem, *Whorescope* (1930), a short story, *Proust*, at about the same time, a book of short stories, *More Pricks than Kicks* (1934) and a novel, *Murphy* (1938).

At the outbreak of the Second World War he was in Ireland visiting his mother, but he returned to Paris almost immediately. Though he at first considered himself neutral, the Nazi occupation changed his opinions and he joined the French resistance and spent two years collating intelligence, then took refuge in Vichy France when his group was betrayed. Then he lived in disguise as an agricultural laborer and wrote *Watt* (not published until 1953). With the production of *En Attendant Godot* (*Waiting for Godot*) Beckett received immediate critical acclaim, and this success was repeated in productions in London, Dublin and New York. A trilogy of novels followed. *Molloy*, *Malone Dies* and *The Unnamable* and a series of plays for theatre, radio and television, including *All That Fall*, *Endgame*, *Krapp's Last Tape*, *Happy Days*, *Play*, *Cascando*, *Film*, *Breath and Other Short Plays* and *Not I*. His later prose work includes *How It Is*, *Imagination Dead Imagine*, *First Love*, *Mercier and Camier*, *Company*, *Ill Seen Ill Said* and *Worstward Ho*. Among his last works were in French, *L'image*, a 1,299 word single sentence, and *Stirrings Still*, a monologue. Samuel Beckett won the Prix Formentor in 1961 and the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1969.

Samuel Beckett died in 1989.

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Life.

Samuel Beckett was born in a suburb of Dublin. Like his fellow Irish writers George Bernard Shaw, Oscar Wilde, and William Butler Yeats, he came from a Protestant, Anglo-Irish background. At the age of 14 he went to the Portora Royal School, in what became Northern Ireland, a school that catered to the Anglo-Irish middle classes.

From 1923 to 1927, he studied Romance languages at Trinity College, Dublin, where he received his bachelor's degree. After a brief spell of teaching in Belfast, he became a reader in English at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris in 1928. There he met the self-exiled Irish writer James Joyce, the author of the controversial and seminal modern novel *Ulysses*, and joined his circle. Contrary to often-repeated reports, however, he never served as Joyce's secretary. He returned to Ireland in 1930 to take up a post as lecturer in French at Trinity College, but after only four terms he resigned, in December 1931, and embarked upon a period of restless travel in London, France, Germany, and Italy.

In 1937 Beckett decided to settle in Paris. As a citizen of a country that was neutral in World War II, he was able to remain there even after the occupation of Paris by the Germans, but he joined an underground resistance group in 1941. When, in 1942, he received news that members of his group had been arrested by the Gestapo, he immediately went into hiding and eventually moved to the unoccupied zone of France. Until the liberation of the country, he supported himself as an agricultural labourer.

In 1945 he returned to Ireland but volunteered for the Irish Red Cross and was back in France as an interpreter in a military hospital and ambulance driver in Normandy. In the winter of 1945, he finally returned to Paris.

Production of the major works.

There followed a period of intense creativity, the most concentratedly fruitful period of Beckett's life. His relatively few prewar publications included two essays on Joyce and the French novelist Marcel Proust. The volume *More Pricks Than Kicks* (1934) contained 10 stories describing episodes in the life of a Dublin intellectual, Belacqua Shuah, and the novel *Murphy* (1938) concerns an Irishman in London who escapes from a girl he is about to marry to a life of contemplation as a male nurse in a mental institution. His two slim volumes of poetry were *Whoroscope* (1930), a poem on the French philosopher Descartes,

and the collection *Echo's Bones* (1935). A number of short stories and poems were scattered in various periodicals.

During his years in hiding in unoccupied France, Beckett also completed another novel, *Watt*, which was not published until 1953. After his return to Paris, between 1946 and 1949, Beckett produced a number of stories, the major prose narratives *Molloy* (1951), *Malone meurt* (1951; *Malone Dies*), and *L'Innommable* (1953; *The Unnamable*), and two plays, the unpublished three-act *Eleutheria* and *Waiting for Godot*.

It was not until 1951, however, that these works saw the light of day. After many refusals, Suzanne Deschevaux-Dumesnil (later Mme Beckett), Beckett's lifelong companion, finally succeeded in finding a publisher for *Molloy*. When this book not only proved a modest commercial success but also was received with enthusiasm by the French critics, the same publisher brought out the two other novels and *Waiting for Godot*. It was with the amazing success of *Waiting for Godot* at the small Théâtre de Babylone in Paris, in January 1953, that Beckett's rise to world fame began. Beckett continued writing, but more slowly than in the immediate postwar years. Plays for the stage and radio and a number of prose works occupied much of his attention.

Beckett continued to live in Paris, but most of his writing was done in a small house which he built himself, secluded in the Marne valley, a short drive from Paris. His total dedication to his art extended to his complete avoidance of all personal publicity, of appearances on radio or television, and of all journalistic interviews. When, in 1969, he received the Nobel Prize for Literature, he accepted the award but declined the trip to Stockholm to avoid the public speech at the ceremonies.

Continuity of his philosophical explorations.

Beckett's writing reveals his own immense learning. It is full of subtle allusions to a multitude of literary sources as well as to a number of philosophical and theological writers. The dominating influences on Beckett's thought were undoubtedly the Italian poet Dante, the French philosopher Descartes, the 17th-century Dutch philosopher Arnold Geulincx – a pupil of Descartes who dealt with the question of how the physical and the spiritual sides of man interact – and, finally, his fellow Irishman and revered friend, James Joyce. But it is by no means essential for the understanding of Beckett's

work that one be aware of all the literary, philosophical, and theological allusions.

The widespread idea, fostered by the popular press, that Beckett's work is concerned primarily with the sordid side of human existence, with tramps and with cripples who inhabit trash cans, is a fundamental misconception. He dealt with human beings in such extreme situations not because he was interested in the sordid and diseased aspects of life but because he concentrated on the essential aspects of human experience. The subject matter of so much of the world's literature—the social relations between individuals, their manners and possessions, their struggles for rank and position, or the conquest of sexual objects—appeared to Beckett as mere external trappings of existence, the accidental and superficial aspects that mask the basic problems and the basic anguish of the human condition. The basic questions for Beckett seemed to be these: How can we come to terms with the fact that, without ever having asked for it, we have been thrown into the world, into being? And who are we; what is the true nature of our self? What does a human being mean when he says "I"?

What appears to the superficial view as a concentration on the sordid thus emerges as an attempt to grapple with the most essential aspects of the human condition. The two heroes of *Waiting for Godot*, for instance, are frequently referred to by critics as tramps, yet they were never described as such by Beckett. They are merely two human beings in the most basic human situation of being in the world and not knowing what they are there for. Since man is a rational being and cannot imagine that his being thrown into any situation should or could be entirely pointless, the two vaguely assume that their presence in the world, represented by an empty stage with a solitary tree, must be due to the fact that they are waiting for someone. But they have no positive evidence that this person, whom they call Godot, ever made such an appointment—or, indeed, that he actually exists. Their patient and passive waiting is contrasted by Beckett with the mindless and equally purposeless journeyings that fill the existence of a second pair of characters. In most dramatic literature the characters pursue well-defined objectives, seeking power, wealth, marriage with a desirable partner, or something of the sort. Yet, once they have attained these objectives, are they or the audience any nearer answering the basic questions that Beckett poses? Does the hero, having won his lady, really live with her happily ever after? That is apparently why Beckett chose to discard what he regarded as the inessential questions and began where other writing left off.

In his trilogy of narrative prose works – they are not, strictly speaking, novels

as usually understood – *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, and *The Unnamable*, as well as in the collection *Stories and Texts for Nothing* (1967), Beckett raised the problem of the identity of the human self from, as it were, the inside. This basic problem, simply stated, is that when I say “I am writing,” I am talking about myself, one part of me describing what another part of me is doing. I am both the observer and the object I observe. Which of the two is the real “I”? In his prose narratives, Beckett tried to pursue this elusive essence of the self, which, to him, manifested itself as a constant stream of thought and of observations about the self. One’s entire existence, one’s consciousness of oneself as being in the world, can be seen as a stream of thought. *Cogito ergo sum* is the starting point of Beckett’s favourite philosopher, Descartes: “I think; therefore, I am.” To catch the essence of being, therefore, Beckett tried to capture the essence of the stream of consciousness that is one’s being. And what he found was a constantly receding chorus of observers, or storytellers, who, immediately on being observed, became, in turn, objects of observation by a new observer. Molloy and Moran, for example, the pursued and the pursuer in the first part of the trilogy, are just such a pair of observer and observed. Malone, in the second part, spends his time while dying in making up stories about people who clearly are aspects of himself. The third part reaches down to bedrock. The voice is that of someone who is unnamable, and it is not clear whether it is a voice that comes from beyond the grave or from a limbo before birth. As we cannot conceive of our consciousness not being there – “I cannot be conscious that I have ceased to exist” – therefore consciousness is at either side open-ended to infinity. This is the subject also of the play *Play* (first performed 1963), which shows the dying moments of consciousness of three characters, who have been linked in a trivial amorous triangle in life, lingering on into eternity.

The humour and mastery.

In spite of Beckett’s courageous tackling of the ultimate mystery and despair of human existence, he was essentially a comic writer. In a French farce, laughter will arise from seeing the frantic and usually unsuccessful pursuit of trivial sexual gratifications. In Beckett’s work, as well, a recognition of the triviality and ultimate pointlessness of most human strivings, by freeing the viewer from his concern with senseless and futile objectives, should also have a liberating effect. The laughter will arise from a view of pompous and self-important

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preoccupation with illusory ambitions and futile desires. Far from being gloomy and depressing, the ultimate effect of seeing or reading Beckett is one of cathartic release, an objective as old as theatre itself.

This article was written in part by Martin J. Esslin who is Emeritus Professor of Drama at Stanford University, California. He is the author of *The Theatre of the Absurd* (1980).

Taken from Encyclopaedia Britannica

Acknowledgements

The voluntary group, the Geneva Literary Aid Society celebrates one year of activity with this production of Molloy by Samuel Beckett. During that time, with your generous support, we have raised just over CHF 30,000 (not including proceeds from tonight's event) for the care and treatment of people living with HIV/AIDS and which we have channeled through the Masambo Fund of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Global Network of People Living with AIDS.

We hereby acknowledge the contributions of all the performers, writers and musicians who have actively supported our modest contribution to the cultural life of this city and the cause to which we are committed. We also thank all the local organizations and individuals who have helped us in anyway. The following is not a complete list.

The Geneva Irish Association
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The following actively participated in the organization and successful running of tonight's event: Claire Geraty, WHO; Sophie Barton-Knott (UNAIDS); Chris Black, (WHO); Katilee Black; John Black; Brian Tisdall, ICRC; Mark Willis, Global Fund; and Kirsten Bendixen-Masterson.

We also acknowledge tonight the great contribution made to getting this initiative off the ground by the late Harold Masterson who passed away in August last. May his soul rest in peace.

<http://www.theglas.org>