

NYU
SKIRBALL



**STEPHEN REA
SAMUEL BECKETT
KRAPP'S LAST TAPE
OCTOBER 8-19**

KRAPP'S LAST TAPE

Written by **Samuel Beckett**

Starring **Stephen Rea**

Directed by **Vicky Featherstone**

Set Designer **Jamie Vartan**

Costume Designer **Katie Davenport**

Lighting Designer **Paul Keogan**

Sound Designer **Kevin Gleeson**

Audio Director **Stephen Wright**

Produced by **Landmark Productions**

Production Manager **Eamonn Fox**

Stage Manager **Fiona Kennedy**

Assistant Stage Manager **Méabh Crowe**

Associate Sound Designer **Fred DeFaye**

Sound Engineer | Original Tapes **Bill Maul**

Set Construction **TPS**

Scenic Artist **Sandra Butler**

For Landmark Productions

Producer **Anne Clarke**

Associate Producer **Jack Farrell**

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WHO'S WHO

Born in Dublin in 1906, **Samuel Beckett** is among the most influential writers of the twentieth century. A novelist, playwright, poet, and critic, his works probe the absurdity, comedy, and despair of the human condition in a style at once spare and profound. After studying at Trinity College Dublin, Beckett moved to Paris, where he became closely associated with James Joyce and later joined the French Resistance during World War II. Beckett's plays, including *Waiting for Godot* (1953), *Endgame* (1957), *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958), and *Happy Days* (1961), revolutionized modern theater through their stark minimalism, existential themes, and dark humor. His prose works, such as *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, and *The Unnamable*, further cemented his reputation as a master of form and language. His artistic collaborators and interpreters have included theater makers, actors, and directors across the globe, and his texts have been staged in nearly every major language. Beckett also directed many of his own works, leaving a distinctive imprint on performance practice. Beckett received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1969 for his writing, which "transformed the destitution of modern man into his exaltation." He was also awarded the Croix de Guerre for his wartime service in France. Beckett died in Paris in 1989, leaving behind a body of work that continues to shape literature, philosophy, and performance worldwide.

Stephen Rea (Krapp) is one of the foremost actors of his generation, coming to worldwide attention when he was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Actor for Neil Jordan's *The Crying Game* in 1992. He has enjoyed great acclaim on Irish and international stages through his collaborations with playwrights Sam Shepard, Brian Friel and Enda Walsh. Following his debut at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, he moved to London. His early experimental work with veterans of LaMama and Nancy Meckler's Freehold Theatre Company was followed by many leading roles at the National Theatre, including *The Playboy of the Western World* and *The Shaughraun*. His theatre career spans several decades, with many memorable highlights. These include establishing the ground-breaking Field Day Theatre Company with Brian Friel in the 1980s, with whom he appeared in many plays, including Tom Kilroy's *Double Cross*; his friendship and collaboration with Sam Shepard, which saw him star in Sam's directorial debut of his play *Geography of a Horse Dreamer* in 1974 and continued when Stephen appeared in *Kicking a Dead Horse* and *Ages of the Moon*, both at the Abbey Theatre and in New York; his acclaimed performance in Enda Walsh's *Ballyturk* for Landmark Productions and Galway International Arts Festival; and, most recently, international critical acclaim on both sides of the Atlantic for his powerful and deeply disturbing performance in *Cyprus Avenue*, an Abbey Theatre and Royal Court Theatre co-production, which enjoyed a lengthy run in New York in 2018. His career on stages across Dublin, London, and New York has taken place in tandem with his award-winning film and television career. In addition to *The Crying Game*, highlights of his many film credits

include *Breakfast on Pluto*, *Michael Collins*, *V for Vendetta*, *The End of the Affair*, and *Black '47*. On TV, he won critical acclaim for his remarkable performance in *The Honourable Woman*, which also garnered him a BAFTA award, and he has most recently appeared in *The Stranger*, *War and Peace*, *Flesh and Blood*, the Emmy-nominated *Counterpart*, and *The English* for BBC/Amazon.

Vicky Featherstone (Director) was Artistic Director of the Royal Court from 2013-2023. She was the inaugural Artistic Director of the National Theatre of Scotland from 2005-2012 and Artistic Director of Paines Plough from 1997-2005. As a director focusing on new writing and living playwrights, Vicky has directed over 50 world premieres by some of the UK's leading playwrights and has been responsible alongside her teams for developing some of the finest and most influential new voices of our time. Her work has toured extensively throughout the UK and internationally, and has won many awards. She is an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Honorary Professor in Theatre and New Writing from Manchester University and Honorary Doctor of Literature from St Andrews University and is currently a trustee of the Citizens Theatre, Glasgow. Vicky played a leading role in the UK theatre movement around MeToo, creating the Code of Behaviour which has been used internationally. As a result of this and her leadership at the Royal Court she was named No 1 most influential person in theatre in *The Stage*. Recent work as director includes *This Is My Family* by Tim Firth (Anthology Theatre and Southwark Playhouse) and *The Outrun*, adapted by Stef Smith from the book by Amy Liptrot (Lyceum Theatre and Edinburgh International Festival). For the Royal Court: *Cuckoo* by Michael Wynne, *all of it* by Alisdair McDowall (and Avignon Festival), *Jews. In Their Own Words* [co-director], *The Glow* by Alisdair McDowall, *Maryland* by Lucy Kirkwood, *Living Newspaper*, *Shoe Lady* by EV Crowe, *On Bear Ridge* by Ed Thomas (and National Theatre Wales) [co-director], *Cyprus Avenue* by David Ireland (and Abbey, Dublin/ MAC, Belfast/Public, NYC), *The Cane* by Mark Ravenhill, *Gundog* by Simon Longman, *My Mum's a Twat* by Anoushka Warden, *Bad Roads* by Natalka Vorozhbit, *Victory Condition* by Chris Thorpe, *X* by Alasdair McDowall, *How to Hold Your Breath* by Zinnie Harris, *God Bless the Child* by Molly Davies, *Maidan: Voices from the Uprising*, *The Mistress Contract* by Abi Morgan, and *The Ritual Slaughter of Gorge Mastromas* by Dennis Kelly. Other theatre includes *What if Women Ruled the World?* (Manchester International Festival); *Our Ladies of Perpetual Succour* (National/West End/International tour), *Enquirer* [co-director], *An Appointment with the Wicker Man*, *27*, *The Wheel*, *Somersaults*, *Wall of Death: A Way of Life* [co-director], *The Miracle Man*, *Empty*, *Long Gone Lonesome* (National Theatre of Scotland); *Cockroach* (National Theatre of Scotland/Traverse); *365* (National Theatre of Scotland/Edinburgh International Festival); *Mary Stuart* (National Theatre of Scotland/Citizens/Royal Lyceum, Edinburgh); *The Wolves in the Walls* [co-director] (National Theatre of Scotland/Tramway/ Lyric, Hammersmith/UK tour/New Victory, NYC); *The Small Things*, *Pyrenees*, *On Blindness*, *The Drowned World*, *Tiny*

Dynamite, *Crazy Gary's Mobile Disco*, *Splendour*, *Rid-dance*, *The Cosmonaut's Last Message to the Woman He Once Loved in the Former Soviet Union* and *Crave* (Paines Plough).

Jamie Vartan's (Set Designer) designs for theatre include several shows for Landmark Productions and Galway International Arts Festival (GIAF), including *Enda Walsh's Bedbound* (GIAF/Olympia, Dublin); *Medicine* (Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh International Festival/GIAF/St Ann's Warehouse); *Arlington* (GIAF/New York); *Ballyturk* (GIAF/National Theatre, London/St Ann's Warehouse); *Misterman* (GIAF/ St Ann's Warehouse/NT, London); and *Woyzeck in Winter* (GIAF/Gaiety, Dublin/Barbican). Other theatre includes *Dublin Gothic* (Abbey Theatre); *Audrey or Sorrow* (Landmark Productions/Abbey Theatre); *Happy Days* (Landmark Productions: Olympia, Dublin/Cork Opera/Birmingham Rep); *Grief is the Thing with Feathers* (Galway/Dublin/Barbican/NYC); *Bondagers* (Edinburgh Lyceum); *Khandan* (Royal Court); *Mass Observation* (Almeida); *The Tin Soldier* (Gate Theatre); *The Lost Child Trilogy* (David Glass Ensemble) with residencies in Vietnam, Indonesia, China, Philippines, Colombia; and *Knives in Hens* (Perth). His opera designs include *Carmen* (Bari); *Rigoletto* (Irish National Opera/Santa Fe Opera); *William Tell* (Irish National Opera/Fribourg); *Così fan tutte* (INO); *La Traviata* (Malmö); *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Salzburg); *Carmen* (Lisbon); *A Village Romeo and Juliet* (Wexford); *Eugene Onegin* (Opéra du Rhin); *The Queen of Spades* and *Ariadne auf Naxos* (La Scala); and productions in Marseille, Cagliari, Naples, Florence, Parma and for the Royal Opera House and Scottish Opera. His opera designs for Landmark and INO include Donnacha Dennehy and Enda Walsh's *The First Child* (Dublin Theatre Festival/GIAF); *The Second Violinist* (GIAF/DTF/Barbican); and *The Last Hotel* (Dublin/London/NYC/Luxembourg). Film production design includes *The Last Hotel* (Sky Arts).

Katie Davenport (Costume Designer) is a set and costume designer based in Dublin. She has received an Irish Times Theatre Award for costume design (2021 & 2022) and was nominated in 2019. She is artist in residence with Luail, Ireland's National Dance Company. International work includes *Roberto Devereux* (Donizetti Opera Festival, Italy); *Safe House* by Enda Walsh (Abbey Theatre/Schaubühne, Berlin/St Ann's Warehouse); and *What We Hold* (Jean Butler/ New York). She is currently designing *The Playboy of the Western World* (National Theatre, London). Other notable designs: *Audrey or Sorrow* (Landmark Productions and Abbey Theatre), *Tartuffe*, *Elsewhere*, *The Fall of the Second Republic*, *This Beautiful Village*, and *What Put the Blood* (Abbey Theatre); *The Pillowman*, *Peter Pan*, *Endgame*, *Once Before I Go*, *The Visiting Hour*, and *A Christmas Carol* (Gate Theatre); *La Traviata*, *Maria Stuarda*, *Griselda*, *The Magic Flute*, *The Tales of Hoffman* and *20 Shots of Opera* (Irish National Opera); *King | Shrine*, *Night Dances*, *Dolorosa*, and *I Am Ireland* (United Fall); *Sentient*, *Yes and Yes*, and *Demos* (Liz Roche Dance Company); *Chora* (Luail); *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Rough Magic); *Ritual*, *Powerful Trouble* (Junk Ensemble); *The Piece with the Drums* (CoisCéim).

Paul Keogan's (Lighting Designer) previous collaborations with Landmark Productions include *Happy Days*, *Blood in the Dirt* (also set design), *Postcards from the Ledge* and *Between Foxrock and a Hard Place*. Other designs include: *Ainadamar* (LA Opera, Metropolitan Opera, New York, Detroit Opera, Welsh National Opera, Scottish Opera); *King Lear* (Kenneth Branagh Theatre Company, New York and London); *Quake* (also set design, for Once Off Productions and Dublin Theatre Festival); *Masterclass* (also set design, for Once Off Productions); *The Sugar Wife* and *Tales from the Holywell* (also set design), *Portia Coughlan*, *Walls and Windows*, *Citysong* (Abbey Theatre); *Translations* (Abbey Theatre, Dublin and Lyric Theatre, Belfast); *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *Circle Mirror Transformation*, *The Steward of Christendom*, *Constellations*, *The Visiting Hour*, *Hamlet*, *The Snapper*, *The Glass Menagerie*, and *Molly Sweeney* (also set design, for Gate Theatre); *Elektra* (also set design, for Irish National Opera); *The Gondoliers/Utopia Ltd* (Scottish Opera); *Our Country's Good*, *Faith Healer*, *Love Love Love*, and *The Plough and the Stars* (Lyric Hammersmith); *Doubt: A Parable* (Chichester Festival Theatre); *Sadie* (Lyric Theatre, Belfast and BBC Arts), *Shirley Valentine* (also set design) and *Double Cross* (Lyric Theatre, Belfast); *I Think We are Alone* (Frantic Assembly UK Tour); Cyprus Avenue (Abbey Theatre, MAC Belfast, Public Theatre NY, Royal Court); *The Caretaker* (Bristol Old Vic); *The Gaul*, *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian* (Hull Truck, UK); *Far Away* (Corcadorca Theatre Company, Cork); *The Treaty*, *Duck Duck Goose* (also set design, for Fishamble, Dublin); *Semele* and *The Return of Ulysses* (also set design, for Opera Collective, Ireland); *Sama* and *Flight* (Rambert); *No Man's Land* (English National Ballet, Queensland Ballet).

Kevin Gleeson (Sound Designer) is a composer, music producer and theatre artist from Tipperary. In the past decade he has completed 13 new works with award-winning theatre company Dead Centre including productions at Vienna Burgtheater, Schaubühne Berlin, Schauspiel Stuttgart, Stadsteater Göteborg, and Gate Theatre Dublin. His work has toured to theatres in over 30 countries, including BAM, International Theatre Amsterdam, Seoul Performing Arts Centre, Hong Kong Cultural Centre, Southbank Centre London and Alexandrinsky Theatre St. Petersburg. *Chekhov's First Play* was awarded Best Sound Design at the 2016 Irish Times Irish Theatre Awards. Kevin produces and releases music under the moniker Sour Blood. His debut *SUAS* was released in August 2024.

Stephen Wright (Audio Director) was a founding member and Artistic Director of Tinderbox Theatre Company. He directed the Irish premiere of *Gibraltar Strait* by Hugh Stodart, and produced Stephen Rea's production of *Northern Star* by Stewart Parker. For the BBC he worked across radio, television and film. Stephen produced and directed for Radio 3 and Radio 4, where his credits include *Vampyre Man* by Joseph O'Connor, *Embers* by Samuel Beckett, *Bloody Sunday: Scenes From the Saville Inquiry*, and *Dubliners* with Stephen Rea. His television credits include *Holy Cross* by Terry Cofolla, *Paula* by Conor McPherson, and *A Song for Jenny* by Frank McGuinness. Films include *Five Minutes of Heaven* with Liam Neeson and James Nesbitt, and *Eye in the Sky* with Helen Mirren, both written by Guy Hibbert. As

Head of Drama for BBC NI he commissioned *The Fall* and *Line of Duty* for BBC 2. Stephen is currently Creative Director for Two Cities Television, where he is a Co-creator and Executive Producer on *Blue Lights* Series 1, 2 and 3. *Blue Lights* Series 2 won the BAFTA for Best Series in 2025. He is Executive Producer on *Amadeus* for Sky.

Eamonn Fox (Production Manager) a Galway native, is delighted to be working again with Landmark Productions. He is a freelance Production Manager/Event Controller, plying his trade in the theatre, arts, television and entertainment world as an escape from reality. He has worked extensively with Landmark Productions, Druid Theatre Company, Galway International Arts Festival, Dublin Theatre Festival, St Patrick's Festival, MCD, TG4, Ros na Rún, Shinawil and Irish National Opera. He has toured extensively around the world but has a lot more of it to explore.

Fiona Kennedy (Stage Manager) is a Scotland based Company Stage Manager with over 20 years experience in theatre, dance and events. She has worked nationally and internationally with companies such as the National Theatre of Scotland, Royal Court Theatre, National Theatre, Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre, Lyric Hammersmith, Frantic Assembly, Young Vic, Sadler's Wells, London City, and the Royal Opera House. This is her second time working with Landmark, she was the SM on the world premiere of *Arlington* (Landmark Productions and Galway International Arts Festival). She is also a practicing Voice Coach having gained her Masters from Central School of Speech and Drama in 2020.

Méabh Crowe (Assistant Stage Manager) is a graduate of the Bachelor of Stage Management and Technical Theatre degree from The Lir Academy, where she specialized in Stage Management and Prop-Making. She has worked as Stage Manager on *Theatre for One: This Ireland* (Landmark Productions); *Danti-Dan*, and *The Whispering Chair* (Livin' Dred); Paul Curley's *Polar Bear and Penguin*; and Jess Rowell's *Making Waves and Other Worlds*. She has also worked as Assistant Stage Manager on productions such as *Happy Days* (Landmark Productions); *King Lear* and *The Price* (Gate Theatre); *The House*, *Macbeth*, *Riders to the Sea*, *The Last Return*, and *The Cavaliers* (Druid); *Tarry Flynn* (Livin' Dred); *Everything Falls* (Brokentalkers); and *Absent the Wrong* (Dublin Fringe Festival).

Landmark Productions is one of Ireland's leading theatre producers, which celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2024. It produces wide-ranging work in Ireland and shares that work with international audiences. Led by Anne Clarke since the company's foundation, its productions have received multiple awards and have been seen in leading theatres in London, New York and beyond. It co-produces regularly with a number of partners, including, most significantly, Galway International Arts Festival, Irish National Opera and the Abbey Theatre. Its 34 world premieres — and counting — include new plays by major Irish writers such as Enda Walsh, Mark O'Rowe and Deirdre Kinahan, featuring a roll-call of Ireland's finest actors, directors and designers. Numerous awards include the Judges' Special Award at the Irish Times Irish Theatre Awards, in recognition of "sustained excellence in programming and

for developing imaginative partnerships to bring quality theatre to the Irish and international stage”; and a Special Tribute Award for Anne Clarke, for her work as “a producer of world-class theatre in the independent sector in Ireland.” Its productions include *The Weir*, starring Brendan Gleeson, which is currently playing a sold-out season at the Harold Pinter Theatre in the West End of London. Landmark’s art-led work is funded by The Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon. Its international touring is supported by Culture Ireland.

STEPHEN REA ON THE TAPES

I had no certainty that one day I might play Krapp, but I thought it a good idea to pre-record the early tapes so that the voice quality would differ significantly from that of the older character, should the opportunity ever arise to use it.

So I politely asked my good friends Stephen Wright, fine radio producer, and Bill Maul, genius sound engineer, to record the appropriate pieces. They were happy to assist and their work was, as always, superb.

That was that, and I forgot all about it.

And then one day twelve years later, Anne Clarke, gifted theatre producer, invited me to play Krapp, directed by my long-time collaborator, awesome theatre director Vicky Featherstone. And, after a few days’ panic, I agreed.

Why wouldn’t I? After all, I had the early tapes.

Dublin, January 2024

MEANING AND RHYTHM: A CONVERSATION

Dr. Tanya Dean (Lecturer in Drama at the Technological University Dublin Conservatoire) joined Vicky Featherstone and Stephen Rea at rehearsals to discuss their work together on Krapp’s Last Tape. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Tanya: I know you two have worked together before on David Ireland’s play, *Cyprus Avenue*, in the 2016 Abbey Theatre/Royal Court co-production. Did that experience influence the decision to work together again on this?

Stephen: It’s always good to work with somebody that you like and trust and admire, and someone who you think will understand the material. So it was a very simple choice.

Vicky: I was introduced to Stephen in *Cyprus Avenue*, and it’s been one of the great honours and privileges of my life to meet him and to work with him, to get to know him, and for him to become part of my family and my world. We do create communities to make theatre; we come together because we believe in our shared humanity. I do think that’s how you make your best work. And we talked about doing *Krapp’s Last Tape*, because Stephen had said that he wanted to do that play at some point far in the future.

Stephen: Roughly 13 years ago, I did record the early tapes. When I’d seen the play before, I was never quite convinced by the early tapes; I thought it was a bit frozen. So I recorded it.

Vicky: It’s extraordinary, because the play is in three parts, really: the setting up, the listening, and then the speaking. And I was watching Stephen as Krapp listening to the tape, listening to himself, and I was thinking that this is the older person genuinely listening to the younger person. The authenticity of that is heart-breaking. That is what Beckett wrote, and Stephen has created it.

Stephen: It is like when you watch a film that you’ve been in; after a while, it stops being you. You watch it differently.

Tanya: The tape that Krapp is listening to gets filed in the ledger under “Farewell to Love;” what do you think is the relationship that Krapp has to love?

Vicky: I think that he’s a fool for love and he falls very quickly; something that recurs all the way through the play is how he falls into people’s eyes and that shifts him in some way and he seeks that out. And of course, he has his big epiphany — which is the same as Beckett had — standing in the wild storm and thinking about the work that he should make; and he can’t, because love has stopped him from being able to. So love is the most important thing in his life, and the thing that he has to get out of his life in order to be able to continue to create. But then he can’t create, so he’s lost everything. So I think Krapp is deeply, deeply romantic. And he is trying to remember what this tape is in order to get back to that feeling, which I feel was the purest moment that he had. He ended it and he’s had to live with the emptiness ever since. And he’s realizing, I think, in this last day or night, that literally nothing has happened that’s been worthwhile in his life since that moment. It’s desperate. What Krapp does — which is something that we recognize in other people — is he sabotages his own happiness because he can’t handle the weight of it.

Tanya: And of course there is also a deliciously sly humour to Beckett: a literal banana peel moment. How are you finding working with the comedic aspects?

Vicky: I think Stephen — which is why he’s so perfect for this part — naturally holds melancholy and darkness, and a childlike sort of humour, both in the same beat. And that is definitely what Beckett was playing with. And I think as well that the comedy at the beginning (with the banana skin and all the repetitions) is so that we can’t sentimentalize the fact that this man is old and that it’s his last tape. Beckett throws us into something else; we don’t start it with sadness. He decentralizes it every time. That has to be left until it’s time for us to think of that. It’s so clever.

Tanya: Stephen, you of course actually worked with Beckett at the Royal Court; how did that come about?

Stephen: Well, it all goes back to Jack McGowran. Jack gave me my first job in London, in *Shadow of a Gunman*. In 1976, they were going to do *Endgame* at the Royal Court for Beckett’s 70th birthday, and Jack [who had famously played Clov in the 1957 production at the Royal Court] had died. So the Royal Court phoned me up and asked me to meet with the director, Donald McWhinnie, because Donald had said, “well, you need an Irish actor who can be funny.”

And so I met with him and he said, “would you play Clov?” and there I was, in the room with the great Beckett (who was at all the rehearsals) and Patrick Magee. So Magee and Beckett and McWhinnie and this little whippersnapper. It was a heavy learning experience, because *Endgame* is a tough thing. I remember Beckett saying he loved *Endgame*, and he didn’t like *Waiting for Godot*. And I said, “well, it’s been absorbed.” And he said, that’s it, he said, it has been absorbed. So it was an extraordinary learning experience for me. It’s the movement away from the whole notion of naturalism.

Tanya: I remember reading in an interview that you said that Beckett gave you a couple of notes that you found transformational for the possibilities of what modern acting could be.

Stephen: I asked him the meaning of a particular line. He said, “don’t think about meaning, think about rhythm.” The other one was a beautiful note: Clov says “I’ll leave you”, and he repeats it. And I said, “at this point, Sam, is he leaving to go to the kitchen or is he leaving for good?” And Sam said, “it is always ambiguous.” And that is a great note for acting that isn’t based on “intention.” Because people do spend their lives not knowing what they’re going to do.

Vicky: It’s the first time I’ve done a play for maybe 25 years without having the writer in the room. I know so much has been written about Beckett, but I’ve really approached this like as if it’s a new play. What’s so exciting is being able to have the direct conversation with Beckett through Stephen in a way. And Beckett’s understanding of the whole of theatre is so shocking, when you just look at how he’s refined his work and the purity of it.

Stephen: Most people’s understanding of theatre is to be very versed in it and to repeat what other people have done. Whereas he saw it as a particular thing: part of it was music hall, and poetry, and music, very much music.

Vicky: He’s so amazing with language and with rhythm, but he really looks at that in a three-dimensional setting and a lot of writers — a lot of brilliant writers — don’t do that. They leave that for the people who will interpret the world. He immediately puts it into something; his writing of it is three-dimensional, which is kind of mind-blowing. The thing I think that we’re really observing in our rehearsals is how vital the rhythm of the physical stuff is, as well as the language, and how the rhythm affects the audience.

Stephen: And also, we are becoming part of the tradition of doing it. Those actors, they changed things. In a strange way, sometimes it takes a long time for a play to become available to everybody. But eventually, through many performers, it becomes more available.

Vicky: And it really does feel like we’re all looking at a new play that hasn’t been done before. We are not bringing a weight of pain or history to it, and that feels really exciting.

LISTENING TO WHAT ENDS

Seventy years after its creation, how should we understand *Krapp’s Last Tape*, which depicts an elderly man listening to his past recordings: a drama of old age, a metaphysical meditation on the passing of time, an allegory of our apocalyptic world? Beckett always rejected symbolic interpretations of his works. Each person has their own understanding, depending on their culture. In French theatres, a deathly silence reigns in the face of such depressed characters, overwhelmed by the absurd fate of humanity. In English-speaking theatres, there is a lot of laughter as the audience recognizes the humor that inspires the zany gestures and puns. Buster Keaton inspired Beckett as much as the philosophers of the early modern age. In *Krapp’s Last Tape*, the character discusses life while stuffing a banana into his mouth. Half sad clown, half metaphysical bum, he is associated with rubbish and crap. Beckett doubles the joke of the English title with the French title, *La Dernière Bande*, which refers to a reel of recorded tape but also to sexual arousal, a questioning for the old man. Beckett is one of the few bilingual authors in literature, and he takes obvious pleasure in using salacious expressions specific to each of the two languages.

However, the main character in this play is perhaps not Krapp, but the tape recorder he manipulates, which plays back his voice from the past. In the 1950s, this device became widely available and appeared on theatre stages and in films. Everyone could then record others and listen to themselves, with the curiosity of not completely recognizing their voice. The fake dialogue between Krapp and the tape recorder is extraordinarily modern when we consider our current behavior with artificial intelligence, which has become a major interlocutor. The speaker who fed the device with his words is now a listener. At the end of the play, the tape recorder has the last word, humanity having become nothing more than an ear.

The protocol of the ending is undoubtedly the essential feature of Beckettian theatre. How to end? That is the big question, even if nothing ever ends. Beckett highlights the decrease, the least, the worst, while preserving the remnants, the dead voices, and the memories. Many things now lie in the trash bins, and it matters little whether they are dead or dying: Humanity with a capital “H,” planet Earth, the hope for a better Tomorrow, the identities of the Self. Krapp observes: “Just been listening to that stupid bastard I took myself for 30 years ago, hard to believe I was ever as bad as that. Thank God that’s all done with anyway.” All that remains is the grain of voice and the specter of aborted fictions. Modernists have historically proclaimed the end of the old world and the beginning of the New. Beckett, more singularly, has continued to question the remainder, even if it is greatly diminished and whispered. That is why he remains our contemporary.

François Noudelmann is Professor of French Literature, Thought and Culture, and Director of La Maison Française of NYU.

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- Member offers at local Greenwich Village restaurants and shops

SIDEKICK • \$125 (\$110 tax-deductible)

All of the benefits Friends receive plus:

- Up to 20% off two tickets per show
- Complimentary NYU Skirball tote bag
- Complimentary ticket exchanges
- VIP seating for select NYU Skirball humanities events

COMRADE • \$250 (\$235 tax-deductible)

All of the benefits Sidekicks receive, plus:

- Up to 20% off four tickets per show
- Waived ticketing fees (savings of up to \$6 per ticket)
- Exclusive access and invitations to meet artists
- Invitations to private dress rehearsals

BESTIE • \$500 (\$470 tax-deductible)

All of the benefits Comrades receive, plus:

- Complimentary drink at the Lobby Café
- Invitations to opening night parties
- Private backstage tour

BOSOM BUDDY • \$1000 (\$955 tax-deductible)

All of the benefits Besties receive, plus:

- Two complimentary drinks at the Lobby Café per Skirball Presents production
- Two passes to all Skirball humanities event receptions
- Enhanced pre-sale, prior to Member pre-sale
- Dedicated patron line for personalized customer service

SOUL MATE • \$2500 (\$2455 tax-deductible)

All of the benefits Bosom Buddies receive, plus:

- Four passes to all NYU Skirball humanities event receptions
- Ability to secure premium house seats



SCAN TO **BECOME A MEMBER.**

NEXT @ NYU SKIRBALL

Theater in Quarantine: Phantom of the Opera

October 23–November 3 • USA • World Premiere

Just in time for Halloween, the OBIE-winning Theater in Quarantine unveils a virtual reimagining of *Phantom of the Opera*, commissioned by NYU Skirball. Following their acclaimed *Nosferatu*, the company uses cutting-edge tech to transform classic horror into a pulse-raising digital experience. All from the comfort of your phone.

Susie Wang: Burnt Toast

November 5–8 • Norway • North American Premiere

Norway's Susie Wang makes its U.S. debut with *Burnt Toast*, a surreal, darkly comic thriller set in a crimson hotel lobby where a strange encounter spirals into horror. With echoes of Lynch and absurdist wit, this internationally acclaimed company bends the everyday into the uncanny.

Ultima Vez: Infamous Offspring

November 13–15 • Belgium • North American Premiere

Wim Vandekeybus and Ultima Vez bring myth to life in *Infamous Offspring*, an electrifying mix of dance, theater, and cinema. With raw physicality and a pounding score, performers embody the chaos, beauty, and brutality of ancient tales in the U.S. premiere of this visceral work.

Jack Ferver: My Town

November 21–22 • USA • World Premiere

Commissioned by NYU Skirball, Jack Ferver's *My Town* is a twisted, darkly funny take on *Our Town*. With multimedia by Jeremy Jacob, Ferver digs into America's rural ghosts with biting humor, raw vulnerability, and haunting echoes of memory and myth.

Mario Banushi: Mami

January 7–10 • Greece • North American Premiere

A breakout hit from Athens to Avignon, Mario Banushi's *Mami* arrives in the U.S. at NYU Skirball. Blending dance, surreal imagery, and ancestral memory, Banushi crafts a hypnotic meditation on motherhood and myth, confirming him as one of theater's most urgent new voices. Presented with Under The Radar Festival.

Narcissister: Voyage Into Infinity

January 16–18 • USA

Narcissister transforms Skirball's stage into a surreal chain-reaction machine in *Voyage Into Infinity*. With live score by Holland Andrews, this feminist response to Fischli & Weiss iconic video *The Way Things Go*, ignites spectacle, humor, and critique, centering the artist's iconic mask in a fierce exploration of identity and power. Presented with Under The Radar Festival.



SCAN TO **PURCHASE TICKETS.**

STAFF

Director **Jay Wegman**

Supervisor, Lighting and Sound **Emily Anderson**

Ticket Operation Specialist **Cliff Billings**

Engagement Director **J de Leon, PhD**

Theater Technician **Brian Emens**

Company Manager **Taylor Elizabeth Everts**

Theater Technician **George Faya**

Theater Technician **Angie Golightly**

Operations Manager **Jenny Liao**

Marketing Manager **Clare Lockhart**

Box Office Manager **Craig Melzer**

Front of House Supervisor **Jordan Peters**

Development Director **Kimberly Olstad Piegaro**

Production Manager **Alberto Ruiz**

Senior Supervisor, Lighting and Sound **Don Short**

Administrative Coordinator **Zakiya Rowe**

Finance & Administration Manager

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