

WAITING FOR GODOT

By Samuel Beckett. First London performance at the Arts Theatre on August 3, 1955. Directed by Peter Hall, with decor by Peter Snow.

Vladimir, PAUL DANEMAN; *Lucky*, TIMOTHY BATESON;
Pozzo, PETER BULL; *Estragon*, PETER WOODTHORPE;
A Boy, MICHAEL WALKER.

SAMUEL BECKETT was secretary to the blind James Joyce, which meant that during Joyce's latter years Beckett played an intimate part in his work. Now the pupil has produced a play in the Joyce manner without any of the genius of the master. It might almost be a parody of Joyce.

Beckett defies every known law of playwriting, his play is about nothing. Two tramps are waiting for a mysterious Mr. Godot, who never turns up for the appointment. Each Act is interrupted by a big bully and a fool he keeps on a chain, whom we see in the first Act on their way to a fair and in the second, running away from what they have seen. That is all. There is no climax, no sense of anticipation and the situation becomes obvious in the first five minutes.

The one saving grace of this odd piece lies in the isolated moments when the author stops fooling and uses his subtle sense of language to convey the hopelessness of man's dilemma.

I think that people are wrong in trying to read a philosophy into this odd mass of nonsense. It should be remembered that the author is an Irishman and full of leg pulls.

Perhaps the greatest handicap of the play is the humour, which is made up of stock music hall tricks of 30 years ago, such as passing three hats between two men and putting on a shoe and falling over backwards—all extremely naïve unless performed by technicians with routines which have taken them the best part of a lifetime to perfect. The two actors who played the tramps, Paul Daneman and Peter Woodthorpe, coped well enough with the serious episodes but were obvious and uninventive when it came to the comedy routines.

Peter Bull's Pozzo was a *tour de force* and Timothy Bateson as Lucky, the man in harness, gave a pathetic comedy performance. This was the only creation in the play; all else was derivative.

Now that Beckett has made enough money out of pulling both legs of the audience in most European countries, he should sit down and write a real play.

Ronald Barker