

# English—Waiting for Godot theatre visit—27th November 2024

On a recent chilly afternoon, the English students of Year 13 were entering the Theatre Royal Haymarket, about to experience what is regarded as one of the most significant plays of the 20th century. Samuel Beckett's 'Waiting for Godot,' was waiting for us in the blank setting of barren land and a singular withered tree.

At first, the play seemed to be foolish, even comedic- two men, in ragged clothes, staggered about on stage blindly attempting to string together a notion of what happened in the past, and what they should do next. They wait, impatient and dissatisfied, in a place they do not recognise and for a man they do not know, for reasons they cannot articulate. As the play progressed, the misery of the characters- portrayed so well by Lucian Msamati and Ben Whishaw- began to show overwhelming similarities to our own lives; in a way, what we found comedic was a starkly truthful presentation of the meaninglessness of all of our lives. It's not for nothing that Beckett titled this play a 'tragicomedy', after all.

At the intermission, everyone had an unsettled air of surprise. If the meaning of art is to comfort the disturbed and to disturb the comfortable, then this is a prime example. By stripping away the usual drama and entertainment that accompanies theatre, Beckett laid open the meaninglessness of daily existence in all its glory.

The language of the play was deconstructed along with our expectations for an evening out at the theatre. The dialogue was fragmented and disjointed, addressed to each other, the audience, and sometimes to no-one at all. It seemed that language held barely any meaning- seemingly, the only meaningful thing was the connection between the two tramps, Didi and Gogo. In a burst of shattered phrases, Gogo cries out "Don't touch me! Don't question me! Don't speak to me! Stay with me!" The acting was superb. It just was. It drew us all in, effectively making us, too, wait for Godot.

More impactful than the characters' failed attempts to amuse themselves or end their lives by hanging (they forgot to bring rope) was the immobile nature of the play. Nothing, ultimately, happened with our characters; in both acts, they resolve to leave but seem unwilling, or perhaps unable, to do so. We were left with a sense of nihilism and disappointment, but also with an understanding of Beckett's genius, and a wholeheartedly enjoyable afternoon.

"EASTRAGON: Well, shall we go?

VLADIMIR: Yes, let's go.

*They do not move."*

Many thanks to the English Department for organising such an eye-opening visit!!

Written by Kamila

