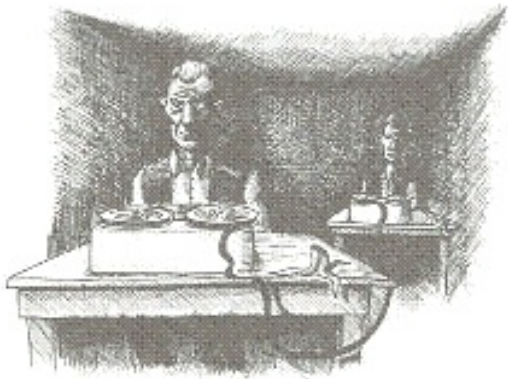


Samuel Beckett's

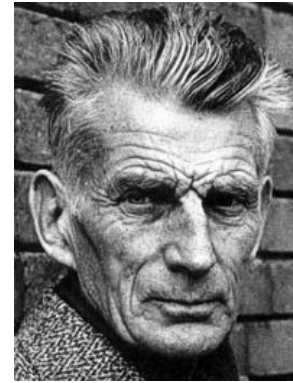
Krapp's Last Tape



A Playgoer's Guide

"*Krapp's Last Tape* is one of the most openly autobiographical of Beckett's writings, where he once again confronts himself but without the searing, wrenching pain and exhaustion of previous works. The play, tinged with sadness and at times overwhelmingly emotional is a poignant reflection of Beckett himself." – Beckett Centenary Festival

The man behind the script (Samuel Beckett)



Samuel Beckett, an Irish novelist and playwright, is well-known for his work in the Absurdist Theatre. His is also seen as a post-modernist and his writing consists of human struggles with meaningless, waiting, and uncertainty. Beckett was born near Dublin, Ireland, on April 13, 1906. It was both Good Friday and a Friday the 13th. He came from a prosperous Protestant Anglo-Irish family. In 1923, Beckett began his studies at Trinity College, Dublin. He graduated in 1927 with a B.A., having studied French, Italian, and English. He was awarded a scholarship to study at the École Normale Supérieure, Paris. It was here that he first met author James Joyce, and was even employed by Joyce as a secretary for a period of time.

It was in 1930 that Beckett received his first literary prize for a poem entitled "Whoroscope." He worked as a teacher for only two years before he left the job to travel through Europe. Beckett's first novel, *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, was written in 1932. The novel was not published until 1993. He did, however, have a book of short stories, *More Pricks Than Kicks*, published in 1933, but it met with little success.

Beckett became involved in World War II, joining the French Resistance as a courier in 1940, risking getting caught on several occasions by the Gestapo. He was awarded the Croix de Guerre and the Médaille de la Résistance by the French government, though Beckett did not seem to think of himself as a hero for the actions.

Beckett's most well known work to this day is the two act play, *Waiting for Godot*. It was first published in 1952 in French, and first performed in 1953. It was translated into English in 1955. After the success of his plays, Beckett began a new career as a theatre director in the 1960s. It was in 1969 that he won the Nobel Prize for literature. Samuel Beckett's health took a turn for the worse near the end of his life. " He had been suffering from emphysema and it is thought, possibly, Parkinson's disease. Both he and his wife passed away in 1989 and were buried together.

What happens (yeah... it's a synopsis)

In *Krapp's Last Tape*, which was written in English in 1958, an old man reviews his life and assesses how he became so isolated. Each year on his birthday Krapp records a reflection of the past 365 days of his life. He feels justified in cutting people out of his life as he feels he has been working on something very important.

One evening, on his 69th birthday Krapp, a writer, sits alone in his den confronted by the devastating defectiveness of a life lived in pursuit of his "great work" that is recorded on his past tapes. As the tapes go on, Krapp's autobiographical decline into loneliness and pessimism is presented. He begins to listen to one particular tape of his 39-year-old self. Krapp is dissatisfied with his younger self as he feels he was pompous and had misaligned priorities, particularly when talking about his past loves. Krapp finally records a reel in which he reflects on the experience of listening to his younger self, before wrenching it off the recorder. Gradually, the events that have led Krapp to this state unfold, and we see how he became the man that he is. the memories of past loves, and terrifying uncertainties of his future. A tragic blend of longing loathing and most of all regret, the script burns with that ever-haunting question . . . what if? [adapted from Theatremania and Wikipedia]

Yeah, this is absurd ... theatre.

Absurdist theatre is not a concept that appeared out of nowhere but emerged in Paris in the 1940's and 50's, having been strongly influenced by the events of World War II. Some of the names most commonly associated with absurd theatre are Arthur Adamov, Fernando Arrabal, Samuel Beckett, and Eugene Ionesco.

Absurd theatre is meant to startle the viewer. The writers often do so in innovative forms, taking them and us into a sense of the world as meaningless or absurd. It has been called anti-theatre, as it rejected the conventional theatre of the time. Absurd plays often apparently have no logic, conflict or even plot. It was when first presented, as can be expected, rejected by the viewers, but has since been recognized as a genuine revolution in the history of modern theatre.

There's even a Samuel Beckett Society

The Samuel Beckett Society is an international organization of scholars, students, directors, actors and others who share an interest in the work of Samuel Beckett. The Society provides opportunities for members to meet and exchange information, including two sessions each year at the MLA. Membership includes subscription to The Beckett Circle, the biannual newsletter of the Society.

For more information on the Samuel Beckett Society see:

http://www.ua.ac.be/main.aspx?c=*SBECKETT&n=22081

"I am fascinated by human interaction with technology. Beckett explores the contrast between memory and recorded memory as Krapp reminisces on his 69th birthday, struggling to reconcile perception and reality. Technology is an enormous issue today, so Beckett's themes are hugely relevant. The human inability to communicate in reality is brought into sharp focus." – Atom Egoyan

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