ALL THAT FALL
DEC 20—21, 2012
BAM Fisher
By Samuel Beckett
Pan Pan Theatre Company

Study Guide Written by Nicole Kempskie
Dear Educator

Welcome to the study guide for the production *All That Fall* that you and your students will be attending as part of BAM Education’s Live Performance Series. At this unique performance, you and your students will sit in rocking chairs and listen to Samuel Beckett’s radio play *All That Fall*, an immersive auditory experience recorded in Dublin and directed by Gavin Quinn. Recreating the atmosphere of listening to the radio communally, with lighting that progresses slowly from sunlight to moonlight and stars, students will get to engage their imagination and intellect in an active way, as they co-create the world of Beckett’s play. In addition, this experience can serve as an impetus to investigate the musicality of Beckett’s writing—his masterful use of language, silence, and sound, and his ability to seamlessly blend them into a compelling, enigmatic and evocative dramatic experience.

Your Visit to BAM

The BAM program includes: this study guide, a pre-performance workshop in your classroom led by a BAM teaching artist, and the performance (December 20-21; 100 minutes).

How to Use this Guide

Arts experiences, such as the one you have chosen to attend at BAM, always work best when themes, ideas, and elements from the performance can be aligned to your pre-existing classroom learning. This guide has been created to do just that by providing you with background information to help you prepare your students for their experience at BAM. Depending on your needs, you may choose to use certain sections that directly pertain to your class exploration or the guide in its entirety. In addition, at the end of this guide you will find suggested classroom activities and ideas that you can implement before or after seeing the production. The overall goals of this guide are: to connect to your curriculum with standards-based information and activities, to reinforce and encourage critical thinking and analytical skills, and to provide you and your students with the tools and background information necessary to have an engaging, educational, and inspiring experience at BAM.
This tension is perfectly judged—it is not enough to distract from the fine performances and Beckett’s bleakly funny text, but it is enough to justify the whole idea of listening to them inside a controlled and designed environment.”

Fintan O’Toole, The Irish Times

BEHIND THE SCENES

The Company

PAN PAN THEATRE COMPANY

Since Pan Pan was established by co-directors Gavin Quinn and Aedín Cosgrove, the company has constantly examined the nature of its work and has resisted settling into formulas. Developing new performance ideas is at the center of the company’s raison d’être which is born from a desire to be individual and provide innovation in the development of theater art. All the works created are original, either through the writing (original plays) or through the totally unique expression of established writings. Pan Pan tries to approach theater as an open form of expression and has developed an individual aesthetic that has grown from making performances in a host of different situations and conditions. Pan Pan is committed to presenting performances nationally and internationally and developing links for co-productions and collaborations. The company has toured in Ireland, UK, Europe, USA, Canada, Korea, Australia, New Zealand, and China.

The Production

All That Fall is a radio play written by Samuel Beckett which was first broadcast in 1957. Throughout his lifetime, Beckett insisted that the play never be performed live, asserting that he specifically wrote it for the radio. Pan Pan, by presenting the play in its true form—a radio recording in which audience members sit in rocking chairs and listen—has found a way to share Beckett’s masterful radio play with theater audiences without dishonoring Beckett’s intentions for the piece.

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR:

I began making theatre when I was five years old in the back garden of the house, where I grew up in Dublin. My first works involved choreographing my sisters to the relevant pop music of the time. Circa 1974. I suppose even then I wanted to be a boy/man of my time. To be simply concerned with breathing in and out and attend the task of making theatre performances that I am engaged in, without being lascivious nor affected nor posing for the audience. For the past fifteen years I have mainly collaborated with the designer Aedín Cosgrove under the working name of Pan Pan.

The theatre that Pan Pan creates is of a contemporary attitude with a lot of personal feelings attached.

Pan Pan is willing to use any language of the theatre to express an intended meaning. Conventions, attitudes, and barriers that are both psychological and physical are always limiting performance. Pan Pan tries to approach theatre as an open form of expression. Pan Pan has developed an individual aesthetic that has simply grown from making performances in a host of different situations and conditions.

We work on the exploration of new forms, new approaches, and experiments with time, space, music, and performance. Our objective has always been to be idiosyncratic, to find the individual step.

There are primary characteristics to our work: authenticity of the performer, humility of purpose, the world as a place of chaos and disorder full of oppositions, conflicts and complexities of existence.

—Gavin Quinn

Synopsis

The play begins with Maddy Rooney on what seems to be a long and arduous journey to the train station to meet her blind husband Dan, whom she will walk back home. As she travels along she passes the time with a number of local characters: Christy, a dung carrier; Mr. Tyler, a retired broker who is riding by on his bicycle and is almost hit by a passing van; and Mr. Slocum, a clerk from the racehorses who gives Maddy a ride to the station. At the station Maddy converses with more of the locals as she waits for Dan’s train, which seems to be delayed. Eventually the train arrives and Maddy and Dan begin their labored trip home. Dan refuses to tell Maddy why the train was delayed, despite her nagging. Jerry, a small boy who helped Dan off the train, runs after the two to return something Dan dropped. Jerry tells Dan and Maddy that the train was delayed because a young child fell out of the carriage and onto the tracks.

The Setting

A rural village in Ireland

The Characters

Maddy Rooney (Maddy)
A woman in her seventies

Christy A dung carrier

Mr. Tyler A retired bill-broker

Mr. Slocum Clerk of the Racehorse

Tommy A porter

Mr. Barrell Train station-master

Miss Fitt A woman in her thirties

A Female Voice

Dolly A small girl

Dan Rooney Husband of Mrs. Rooney, blind

Jerry A small boy

The Cast

Andrew Bennett, Phelim Drew, John Kavanagh, Aíne Ní Mhuirí, Robbie O’Connor, Joey O’Sullivan, David Pearse, Daniel Reardon, and Judith Roddy

The Setting

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Jerry A small boy
Samuel Barclay Beckett was born on Good Friday, April 13th, 1906 in Foxrock, Ireland, a well-to-do suburb of Dublin. The younger of two sons, Beckett was very close to his affectionate father, but had a troubled relationship with his overbearing mother. This conflicted relationship would find its way into Beckett’s writing later in life.

Growing up, Beckett was both a strong student, known for his intellectual rigor, and a gifted athlete, excelling at both cricket and rugby. He received his B.A. in Modern Literature (French and Italian) from Dublin’s prestigious Trinity College. It was here he became engrossed in the great French authors of the time such as Proust, Gide, Larbaud, and the playwright Racine, as well as the Italian Renaissance writer, Dante, and the great German philosophers. He spent his hours away from school taking in theatrical performances and his summers traveling to France, Italy, and Germany where he could feed his love for the fine arts.

In 1928, Beckett secured a short-term teaching post in Paris at the École Normale Supérieure, succeeding Irish poet and academic Thomas MacGreevy, who introduced him to the Irish writer James Joyce and his friends. He worked alongside Joyce, assisting him, writing essays about his work, and helping to translate what would later become Finnegans Wake into French. In addition, he became preoccupied with the work of modernist author Marcel Proust, whose existential ideas would later come to play greatly in his writing.

In 1930, Beckett returned to Dublin for a full-time teaching job at Trinity College where he found himself restless and unhappy. He left the college, traveled and tried to live in Germany, Paris and in London, finally returning to Dublin lost and distraught. A series of events, including his cousin and first love Peggy Sinclair’s death to tuberculosis, as well as his father’s sudden death to a heart attack, sent him back to London where he spent two years under psychoanalytical care, recovering from a “nervous collapse.”

Beckett then returned to Paris, settled, and began his writing career in earnest in 1938, publishing poetry, short stories and his first novel, Murphy. That same year, he began his lifelong partnership with Suzanne Déchevaux-Dumesnil, who championed his works and is attributed with getting his first plays produced. During WWII, the two worked for the French Resistance and were forced to flee to the South of France, where Beckett would spend his days as a farm laborer and his evenings writing his second novel, Watt.

It was during this time period, the pre- and post-war years and after the death of James Joyce, that Beckett was most prolific and where he truly found and developed his unique voice. John Banville wrote in the New York Review of Books that:

“It is certain that Beckett did undergo some kind of profound realization of the artistic path that he must take. He would allow “the dark” into his work, the chaos, pain, and painful comedy of existence as he experienced it, and thereby make a new kind of art, one that depended not on Joycean richness and playfulness, but on deliberate shrinkage of material and elimination of literary ornament.”

This combination of existential questioning along with a spare, compressed writing style was perfectly served by Beckett’s choice not to write in his native language of English (with the ornamental and lyrical flair of his Irish predecessors like Joyce), but rather, in French. Between 1946 and 1960, Beckett produced novels, screenplays, teleplays, radio plays, and his most seminal dramatic works: Waiting for Godot, Endgame, Krapp’s Last Tape, and Happy Days. The radio play All That Fall, written in 1957, was Beckett’s first foray into writing dramas specifically for the radio, and his first dramatic piece written in English.

Beckett continued to write and direct throughout the remainder of his life, receiving numerous awards and honors, one of which included the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1969. He died at the age of 83 on December 22, 1989 in Paris, France.

Selected Works

Dramatic Works
Eletheria (1940)
Waiting for Godot (1953)
Act Without Words I (1956)
Endgame (1957)
Krapp’s Last Tape (1958)
Happy Days (1961)
Play (1963)
Come and Go (1965)
Breath (1969)
Not I (1972)
That Time (1975)
Footfalls (1975)
A Piece of Monologue (1980)
Rockaby (1981)
Catastrophe (1982)
What Where (1983)

Radio
Embers (1957)
All That Fall (1957)
From an Abandoned Work (1957)

Television
Eh Joe (1965)
Quad I + II (1981)

Cinema
Film (1965)

Novels/Novellas/Stories
Dream of Fair to Middling Women (1932)
Murphy (1938)
Watt (1945)
Molloy (1951)
Malone Dies (1951)
The Unnamable (1953)
How It Is (1961)
More Pricks Than Kicks (1934)
Company (1980)
Worstward Ho (1983)
First Love (1945)
Stories and Texts for Nothing (1954)

Non-fiction
Proust (1931)

Poetry collections
Collected Poems in English (1961)
Collected Poems in English and French (1977)
The Magic of Radio

"Radio is at once both public and private...it is much more direct; it's one to one...we are required to collaborate as we are when we read a book. Then we are giving something. We are not just taking...There's no set designer like your own self; you furnish the mis-en-scène, the wardrobe, the physical proportions of the actor, and the setting."

Radio Drama writer/director Norman Corwin

The History

Chances are it will be difficult for students to imagine a world without Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, let alone without television, but in the early 30s, the most popular form of home entertainment was a box with a dial and speakers that broadcasted music, news and programming ranging from soap operas to superhero adventures. That box was the radio and prior to 1922, this new form of technology created by Italian inventor Guglielmo Marconi was mainly used like a telephone, serving as an effective tool in WWI for international and at-sea communication.

That all changed when David Sarnoff, a worker at the American Marconi Co. (which would later become RCA) saw how much potential the radio had, if only it were wireless and more affordable. In a 1916 memorandum he wrote: “I have in mind a plan of development which would make a radio a ‘household utility’ in the same sense as the piano or phonograph. The idea is to bring music into the home by wireless.” And that’s exactly what he did.

The wireless Radiola console was introduced in 1922 and middle-class citizens who were enjoying the financial boom of the 20s scurried to buy one of these new-fangled boxes. In a matter of three years, sales of the Radiola rose from $11 million to $60 million, and the radio became a permanent fixture in the American home.

Early Radio Programming

Families would gather around the radio, in much the same way families gather around the television today to watch a favorite show. The same genres of programming that we encounter while channel surfing with our remotes today—adventure, drama, comedy, and suspense can be traced back to radio shows like Abbott and Costello; Amos ‘n’ Andy; The Adventures of Superman; Little Orphan Annie; The Shadow; Clara, Lu, and Em; Lassie; and The Hitchhiker. Many shows were broadcast in a serial format, similar to the episodic television programming we watch today, and audiences would have to tune in the following week to find out if Superman saved the day or what the future held for Orphan Annie.

In addition to weekly serial programming, full-length radio dramas hit the airwaves and became hugely popular. These were full-length plays that were either written for Broadway and performed live in the studio for broadcast, or were written specifically for the radio, like All That Fall. Most notable was actor and director Orson Welles’s Mercury Theatre on the Air program, known for its historic broadcast of War of the Worlds, a radio play that sent listeners into a panic thinking that aliens had invaded New Jersey.

How it Worked

Radio plays were created, recorded, and broadcast from the studio. Actors were cast in roles based on their voices and would perform at microphones, scripts in hand. In addition, all of the sound effects were made simultaneously by “sound effect artists,” artists hired to “play” the sound effects in much the same way an instrumentalist plays their instrument in an orchestra. The sound effects were small handmade “instruments” constructed to make the sounds of trains, car engines, brakes screeching, doors opening and closing, horses galloping, and so on.

Active Listening

The beauty of radio theater is that it requires the listener to take part in bringing a story to life. Much like reading a book, the listener actively engages their imagination and paints images with their mind as the drama unfolds. In this fast-paced, wired world we live in, a world in which we are all so used to engaging in multiple activities at once (texting, emailing, tweeting, watching television, talking on our phones, etc.), students might need a little practice cultivating the stillness, focus, and deep level of concentration required when listening to a rich, layered radio play such as All That Fall. Prepare students by doing the activity on the right before your visit.

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITY

Tuning In

☐ Begin by reviewing and discussing the “Radio Drama Components” on the following page with students. (Students also have a copy in their student guide.)

☐ Next, choose a radio play from the 30s, 40s, or 50s for students to listen to. The web archive at (http://archive.org/details/oldtimeradio) contains numerous free options including such classics as The Adventures of Superman, The Hitchhiker, Little Orphan Annie, Lassie, and War of the Worlds.

☐ Have students turn to the “Listening Activity Notes” page of the student guide.

☐ Play the program and have students take notes according to the instructions and prompts in the table as they listen.

☐ After listening, have students share their responses with the class.

Standards: CCR6-12 Speaking & Listening 1-4; Language 1-5; Blueprint: Making Connections
RADIO DRAMA COMPONENTS

The Introduction
A theme song or opening repeated at the start of every episode that lets listeners know that a specific program is starting.

Example: Superman: “Look up in the sky! It’s a bird, it’s a plane, it’s Superman.”

The Announcer
The narrator of the show who re-caps the previous show at the start of an episode, who inserts descriptive narration, and sets the scene so that we can visualize the location or the events occurring, and who closes the episode.

Example: “When last we saw him, Superman was trapped in the warehouse, unable to save Lois Lane from the evil Boris Beeker.”

The Dialogue
The conversations between the characters in the play. Often the actors will utilize a wider range of vocal techniques and dynamics (volume, pitch, tempo, emphasis, and emotion) than film or television actors do and the dialogue will be more descriptive.

Example: “Look! That lamp is on fire! The flames are getting closer! We must run!”

The Sound Effects
- Atmospheric sounds that help us create vibrant images in our minds as we listen, and help us understand the actions that are taking place.
- Background sound effects create the environment.
- Action sound effects indicate physical actions that are occurring.

Example: Background sound effects for a radio play set on a ship might include waves crashing, seagulls, wind; action sound effects for that same play might include the footsteps of the sailors, the sound of a sailor raising the mast, a door opening to the galley.

The Music
Orchestrations used to create the mood or tone. In radio plays, music can be used to punctuate key moments, to underscore emotional moments, and to transition from one scene to the next.

Example: String instruments underscoring a romantic scene between a couple in love.

The Sponsor
The corporation who is paying for the program’s air time on the radio in exchange for advertising.

Example: Today’s production of Little Orphan Annie is sponsored by Ovaltine! Don’t forget to drink your Ovaltine every day!”

After Your Visit: Discussion Questions
Knowing what you know about traditional radio theater, how does Beckett push the boundaries of the form in innovative ways? How does he use background sounds differently? Why do you think he does that? From whose perspective do you think we are hearing the background sounds? How is that effect created and why?

How does he use the action sound of Maddy’s footsteps for dramatic effect?

How do the actors use their voices and the language to help us understand their emotional states?

What piece of music does Beckett use? Why do you think he chose that?

How is silence used?

How is the language used in a musical way?
“In life man commits himself to his own portrait, outside of which there is nothing. No doubt this thought may seem harsh to someone who has not made a success of his life. But on the other hand, it helps people to understand that reality alone counts, and that dreams, expectations, and hopes only serve to define man as a broken dream, aborted hopes, and futile expectations.”

— JEAN-PAUL SARTRE (From, Existentialism Is a Humanism)

Beckett, like many great writers, is an author who can’t be compartmentalized or placed into one specific intellectual or cultural context. For example, Beckett was raised in a middle-class suburb in Ireland and assisted one of the most characteristically Irish writers—James Joyce—but chose to write in French. In his early days he lacked an interest in politics, but during WWII joined the French Resistance. Nevertheless, all writers are influenced by the political, social, and economic climates that surround them, even if it is indirectly.

In Beckett’s lifetime he lived through two world wars, the rise of Stalin and Hitler, the Holocaust, the Anglo-Irish War, the Irish Civil War, colonial wars in Africa and the threat of atomic warfare as the Cold War heightened. Out of these dark times came a number of key philosophical and cultural movements that coincided with Beckett’s writing career. While scholars disagree as far as which of these events come into play directly in Beckett’s work, the following overview of existentialism, absurdist theater, and modernism will allow students to ponder that question for themselves.

The Backdrop: The Horrors Of World War II

Horrified by the rise of Hitler’s Nazi regime, Beckett witnessed the persecution of his Jewish friends in occupied Paris. When Paul León, a friend and assistant to Beckett’s mentor James Joyce, was arrested and sent to a concentration camp on August 21, 1941, Beckett decided to join the French Resistance. As a member of the Resistance, Beckett mainly acted as an information handler. In August of 1942 when his Resistance cell was discovered, Beckett and his wife narrowly escaped arrest and deportation to a concentration camp. They managed to escape to a rural area in unoccupied France where they lived out the remainder of the war.

During this time Beckett worked as a farm laborer in the day and in the evenings he wrote. The aftermath of WWII and the horrors of the Holocaust left artists and writers like Beckett disillusioned at best, devastated at worst. As a result, nations around the world faced a social, economic, and existential crisis. A sense of cynicism toward conventions and a general sense of unease and anxiety pervaded.

Existentialism

Existentialism was a complex philosophical movement that came out of this pervading sense of national despair. It was associated with a number of post-war French thinkers. Key figures in the movement held different positions within the discipline, but a core belief was that self-inquiry was the way to understand human existence. This philosophical movement found its way into the literature, art, and dramatic writing of the Post-WWII period during which Beckett created a number of his masterpieces.

A Selection of Existential Precepts

- Our lives are determined by our individual choices as opposed to a predetermined fate.
- The universe is random and meaningless, as opposed to ordered and rational.
- We create meaning in our lives and define ourselves through our values and how we choose to act according to those values.
- Humans should make decisions and act based on their own personal belief systems rather than for rational reasons; authenticity is emphasized versus acting in accordance with social norms.
- Because such an emphasis is placed on our individual freedom and a responsibility for the path our lives take, this leads us to feel a great deal of “existential angst,” despair, dread, and anxiety.
- An emphasis is placed on “The Absurd”: the notion that there is no meaning to be found in life beyond what meaning we give it.
“The Theatre of the Absurd attacks the comfortable certainties of religious or political orthodoxy. It aims to shock its audience out of complacency, to bring it face to face with the harsh facts of the human situation as these writers see it. But the challenge behind this message is anything but one of despair. It is a challenge to accept the human condition as it is, in all its mystery and absurdity, and to bear it with dignity, nobly, responsibly; precisely because there are no easy solutions to the mysteries of existence, because ultimately man is alone in a meaningless world. The shedding of easy solutions, of comforting illusions, may be painful, but it leaves behind it a sense of freedom and relief. And that is why, in the last resort, the Theatre of the Absurd does not provoke tears of despair but the laughter of liberation.”

MARTIN ESSLIN, introduction, Absurd Drama

The Theatre of the Absurd

The term Absurdist Theatre was coined by writer Martin Esslin in his book of the same name. It was an outgrowth of existential philosophy. This style of theater rejected the conventional “realistic” representations of the human experience that audiences had become accustomed to at the theater, and questioned the standards by which theater had been judged for centuries. Such standards included: logical dialogue, recognizable or motivated characters, and a traditional three-act structure that contained a beginning, middle, and end that tied up neatly. Contrarily, the practitioners of Absurdist Theatre took the ideas and arguments of the existential thinkers and philosophers and applied them to their playwriting, dramatic structure, character choices, directing styles, and dramaturgical choices.

Absurdist Theatre was characterized by...

- Minimal, strange, and abstract physical surroundings which the characters seem trapped in.
- Non-illusory theatre, theatre that references in the staging and dialogue that the plays are plays, the characters are performers, and the audience members are spectators.
- Non-linear dramatic structure; action that has no clear beginning, middle, or end.
- The present experienced as futile and the character memories of their pasts and their hopes for the future as futile.
- Little distinction between characters’ individual identities.
- An emphasis on language in which it is used repetitively, rhythmically, sparingly, and comically to play up the existential themes of anxiety about isolation and the pointlessness of existence.
- Broad vaudeville elements and physical comedy combined with disturbing and tragic situations.

TO DISCUSS

While many of the criteria above apply specifically to visual theater, challenge students to apply the criteria to the performance of All That Fall. How does Beckett use language, music, and sound effects in such a way that could be considered absurdist? How is the plight of Dan and Maddy absurdist?

MAKING CONNECTIONS:

THE INFLUENCE OF MODERNISM

Beckett’s writing, always innovative and original, has often been examined for its modernist attributes. Known for pushing boundaries in form, content, and style, Beckett’s foray into radio drama was no different. In fact, new technology had to be invented in order for Beckett to use sound effects the way he did in All That Fall.

The Modernist movement, like Absurdism and Existentialism, was a reaction to the horrors of war, albeit in this case, WWI. Artists, philosophers, and writers like Marcel Proust, whom Beckett wrote about extensively, felt betrayed by the war and the institutions which led the world into its atrocities. Like existentialists, modernists questioned institutions as being a reliable means to access the meaning of life. Instead they turned within themselves to discover the answers.

Modernism was characterized by...

- A strong and intentional break with tradition, including established religious, political, and social views.
- A belief that the world is created in the act of perceiving it—it is what we say it is.
- The conviction that there is no such thing as absolute truth. All things are relative.
- An emphasis on the individual and inner strength.
- The belief that life is unordered.

Modernist artists and writers...

- Adopted complex and difficult new forms and styles.
- Experimented with perspective and content.
- Wanted to rupture realistic conventions.
- Favored the avant garde, uniqueness, originality, and individuality. Explored their feelings of alienation, loss, and despair in their work.
Glossary

Death and the Maiden: A classic piece of chamber music written by Franz Schubert in 1824 after suffering through a serious illness and realizing he was dying; Schubert's testament to death.

Hinny: The offspring of a male horse and a female donkey. Because of cross-breeding they have an uneven number of chromosomes and an incomplete reproductive system, making them sterile.

Dung: Manure.

Laburnum: A small tree that has chains of yellow flowers. All parts of the tree and its flowers are poisonous.

Doily: A small table napkin.

Protestant: A member of a Western Christian church whose faith and practice deny the universal authority of the Pope and affirm the Reformation principles of justification by faith alone, the priesthood of all believers, and the Bible as the only source of revealed truth.

Lusitania: A British ocean liner launched in 1907 that sank after being struck by a German U-Bomber; 1,195 people died.

Matterhorn: A mountain in the Pennine Alps on the border between Switzerland and Italy with one of the highest peaks in the Alps.

Fixture: A sports match or social occasion.

Nip up: To spring up to a standing position.

Guff: Verbal abuse.

Blancmange: A cream and sugar based dessert with the consistency of pudding.

Agog: Very curious or eager to hear something.

Arcady: A region offering rural simplicity and contentment.

Grimm’s Law: A linguistic formula created by Jakob Grimm that explained developmental and pronunciation changes in certain German words.

Lunatic specialist: A psychotherapist.

Bogey: A person or thing that causes fear or alarm.

Elevenses: Tea or coffee taken at mid-morning and often accompanied by a snack.

Cretonne: A strong cotton or linen cloth used for curtains and upholstery.

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITY

The Words

Before attending the performance, have students stand in a circle and say the line that follows together. After the students are comfortable speaking the line and can recite it from memory, go around the circle, and one at a time have students recite the line experimenting with each of the vocal tools below.

Do not imagine, because I am silent, that I am not present, and alive, to all that is going on.

VOLUME: How loud or soft the actor speaks—such as a whisper, a shout, casual tone, etc.

PITCH: Where the actor places the sound in their vocal mechanism—high, low, mid-range, etc.

TEMPO: How quickly or slowly the actor speaks and paces the words.

EMPHASIS: Which words the actor chooses to put the emphasis on and how that changes the meaning or emotion behind the text.

INTENTION: Who the actor is speaking to, how they feel about them, what the circumstances are, and why they are speaking at that moment.

After students have had the chance to experiment with the tools in the circle, discuss how the actors who did the recording of All That Fall might have utilized these tools in order to express the full range of their character’s emotions.

Standards: Blueprint: Theater Making
Curriculum Connections

10

THEMATIC ELEMENTS

Samuel Beckett is the most written about playwright other than Shakespeare. The reason that Shakespeare and Beckett’s works transcend time and resonate with us today as strongly as they did when they were originally performed is because both had the ability to tap into universal themes, longings, questions and experiences that are so rooted in our human existence that they never grow old.

ENRICHMENT EXERCISE

In addition to using the questions provided below for a classroom discussion, have students complete the “Supporting Evidence from the Play’s Text” column in the table provided in their student guide.

Standards: CCR6-12 Reading 1-7; Writing 1; Listening 1-6; Language 1-6; Blueprint: Making Connections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE THEME</th>
<th>FOR DISCUSSION</th>
<th>SUPPORTING EVIDENCE FROM THE PLAY’S TEXT</th>
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<tr>
<td>Weightiness, Exertion, &amp; Intertia</td>
<td>How does Beckett use the characters, events, and sound effects to create a heavy, foreboding mood throughout the play that is palpable, despite the fact that we can’t see anything? What is the larger meaning or metaphorical meaning of weightiness, exertion, and inertia as they relate to the characters’ lives? Of the human condition?</td>
<td>Examples: The unmoving hinny; the unresponsive car engine; the delayed train; and Maddy’s laborious footsteps.</td>
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<td>Absence / Invisibility</td>
<td>Beckett said the following: “I once attended a lecture by [Carl] Jung in which he spoke about one of his patients, a very young girl. After the lecture, as everyone was leaving, Jung stood by silently. And then, as if speaking to himself, astonished by the discovery that he was making, he added: In the most fundamental way, she had never really been born. I too always had the sense of never having been born.” How does this idea thematically tie into All That Fall?</td>
<td>Examples: Maddy’s statement, “Do not imagine, because I am silent, that I am not present, and alive, to all that is going on;” the dead child referred to in Maddy’s story about the conference; and Minnie, Maddy and Dan’s deceased child.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Death</td>
<td>References to death and despair pervade in this play. How can this prevalent theme be linked to the philosophical movements (Existentialism, Modernism, and Absurdism) and Beckett’s experiences in WWII? If you were to stage this play or film it, what visual imagery would you use to convey this theme?</td>
<td>Examples: The child falling onto the tracks; Mr. Slowcum running over a chicken and killing it; and Maddy’s insistence on continuing to speak a “dead” language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sterility</td>
<td>If looked at metaphorically, sterility can refer to the lost opportunities or ruptured possibilities of the characters, a theme Beckett often explored. In what ways is this true of the characters in All That Fall? Are there any moments in the play that use the opposite of sterility—sexuality—to poke fun at the characters and bring in an element of humor and parody?</td>
<td>Examples: The hinny (a sterile cross-breed of a donkey and horse); Mr. Tyler discussing his daughter’s hysterectomy; and the lack of affection between Dan and Maddy when she meets him at the station.</td>
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<td>Symbols &amp; Metaphors</td>
<td>How are some of the audio choices that Beckett makes (music and sound effects) symbolic? Why do you think Beckett chose to name the play All That Fall? What is the significance of the following bible passage that Dan quotes: “The Lord upholdeth all that fall and raiseth up all those that be bowed down.”</td>
<td>Examples: Falls/Falling; “Death and the Maiden;” laburnum; the hinny, the train; and the wind.</td>
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**This American Life**

Direct students to the website for the popular National Public Radio program *This American Life* (www.this-american-life.org) and for homework have them choose one episode to listen to and write a short report on the episode they chose. The report should cover the following: the episode title and date, why they chose it, what the topic was, what they learned from listening to the episode, and an overall assessment or critique (what they liked or disliked). Students should be encouraged NOT to multi-task while they are listening (no emailing, texting, tweeting, etc.) and to listen to the one hour program uninterrupted. The next day, have students share their reports with the class and discuss the following:

- How would you rate your experience of listening to a radio program for an hour?
- What was challenging about it? What was rewarding?
- Were you able to just listen without doing any other activities?

With visual media widely available, why do you think people still tune into this program on the radio?

Standards: CCR6-12 Writing 1-5; Speaking & Listening 1-3; Language 1-6; Blueprint: Making Connections

**War Of The Worlds**

Listen to the classic radio play *War of the Worlds* by Orson Welles based on H.G. Wells's science-fiction novel of the same name and have students research why it has gone down in history as being one of the most famous radio plays broadcast.

Standards: CCR6-12 Speaking & Listening 1-3; Language 1-6; Blueprint: Making Connections

**Re-Creating Radio**

Have students work in small groups to write and record radio dramas using all of the components listed on the “Radio Drama Components” table in this guide. After writing scripts, have students rehearse and perform them live, and if possible, do audio recordings of the performances that the students can listen to after. (The voice memo application on most smart phones works well for recording.)

Standards: CCR6-12 Writing 3-6; Blueprint: Theater Making, Theater Literacy

**Exploring Existentialism**

Use the list of existential thinkers and artists provided below and in the student guide and have students choose one person to do further research on. Students can present their findings in a traditional research paper, an essay that links that person’s ideas to Beckett’s *All That Fall*, an oral presentation or a compare/contrast essay.

Søren Kierkegaard  
Friedrich Nietzsche  
Martin Heidegger  
Gabriel Marcel  
Jean Paul-Sartre  
Simone de Beauvoir  
Franz Kafka (*Metamorphosis*)  
Albert Camus (*The Stranger*)  
FYodor Dostoyevsky (*The Brothers Karmazov, Notes from the Underground*)  
Jean Genet (*The Balcony*)  
Eugene Ionesco (*The Bald Soprano, The Chairs*)  
Arthur Adamov (*The Confession*)

Standards: CCR6-12 Reading 1-9; Writing 1-9; Speaking & Listening 1-6; Language 1-6; Blueprint: Making Connections

**BEYOND ALL THAT FALL**

Read another play by Beckett, such as *Endgame, Waiting for Godot, or Happy Days*. Have students write an essay comparing *All That Fall* with one of these other selections.

Standards: CCR6-12 Reading 1-9; Writing 1-9; Language 1-6; Blueprint: Making Connections

**BECKETT ON FILM**

All 19 of Samuel Beckett’s plays were filmed with some of the best and brightest acting and directing talents of our time in a series called *Beckett on Film* produced by director Michael Colgan. Choose one or two films to view with your students. Standards: Blueprint: Making Connections

**Selected Bibliography**

BAM Education is dedicated to bringing the most vibrant, exciting artists and their creations to student audiences. The department presents performances and screenings of theater, dance, music, opera, and film in a variety of programs. In addition to the work on stage, programs take place both in school and at BAM that give context for the performances, and include workshops with artists and BAM staff members, study guides, and classes in art forms that young people may never have had access to before. These programs include Shakespeare Teaches, AfricanDanceBeat, AfricanMusicBeat, Dancing into the Future, Young Critics, Young Film Critics, Brooklyn Reads, Arts & Justice, and our Screening programs, as well as topically diverse professional development workshops for teachers and administrators.

BAM Education also serves family audiences with BAMfamily concerts, the BAMfamily Book Brunch, and the annual BAMkids Film Festival. In addition, BAM Education collaborates with the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation to provide an arts and humanities curriculum to students who perform on stage in BAM’s DanceAfrica program.

Humanities at BAM

BAM presents a variety of programs to promote creative thinking and ongoing learning. The Artist Talk series, in conjunction with mainstage programming, enriches audiences’ experience during the Next Wave Festival and the Winter/Spring Season. The Iconic Artist Talk series, launched as part of BAM’s 150th anniversary celebrations, features iconic artists and companies examining the evolution of their work at BAM over the years through on-screen projections of original footage and images from the BAM Hamm Archives. In September 2012, BAM launched On Truth (and Lies), a series hosted by philosopher Simon Critchley that explores the ambiguity of reality with prominent artists and thinkers, as a co-presentation with the Onassis Cultural Center NY.

Humanities at BAM also include year-round literary programs: Unbound, a new fall series presented in partnership with Greenlight Bookstore that celebrates contemporary books and authors from across the literary spectrum, and the ongoing Eat, Drink & Be Literary series in partnership with the National Book Awards, in the spring.

The department also hosts master classes, including the Backstage Seminar, a series of workshops on the process of theater-making with BAM’s production staff and guest artists.

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