WELCOME to the student guide for Samuel Beckett’s radio play All That Fall that you will be attending at BAM. What follows in this guide are answers to some of the questions you may have about your upcoming trip to BAM, some historical background on the playwright, some ideas to think about when you see the production, and some fun and creative exercises that will help you appreciate the work you are going to see even more.

Let’s start with the questions you may have...

What is All That Fall about?
A full summary is provided on the next page, but in short, the play follows a seventy-year-old Irish woman as she travels from her home to the train station to meet her husband. Along the way she interacts with a variety of locals from the village. When she gets to the station she finds out that the train is delayed. It turns out that there has been a tragic accident.

What makes this such a unique production?
This is a radio play, so the play you will hear at the performance has already been recorded by a group of actors in Dublin, Ireland. You, along with the rest of the audience, will be sitting in rocking chairs listening to the recording exactly the way people used to back in the 30s, 40s, and 50s before the television was invented. While you sit and listen the lighting will shift so that it will feel like you are sitting in the sunlight, under the stars, and in the black of night, depending on what part of the play it is.

What can I learn from the production?
Samuel Beckett is the most written about playwright other than William Shakespeare. The reason that Shakespeare and Beckett’s works transcend time and resonate with us today 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. This is a great opportunity to hear one of Beckett’s plays and examine these themes in such a unique setting.

You will experience....

A performance by an adventurous Irish theater company.

The simplicity and beauty of radio drama, and the act of co-creating an artistic performance.

The complexity and mastery of Beckett’s use of language, silence, and sound.

A play that weaves elements of Existential philosophy, Absurdist theatre, and Modernism.

A play by one of the finest dramatic writers in history.

What’s inside this study guide?
Turn the page and you’ll see!
The 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

Summary

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, and walk him 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.

Setting

A rural village in Ireland

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, Áine Ní Mhuirí, Robbie O’Connor, Joey O’Sullivan, David Pearse, Daniel Reardon, and Judith Roddy
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 *Finnegan’s 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. As stated by John Banville in the *New York Review of Books* article, “The Painful Comedy of Samuel Beckett,”

“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.
The History
Chances are it will be difficult for students to imagine a world without Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, 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 telegraph, 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, suspense and so on, 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; The Hitchhiker and many others. 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.

Activity
Choose an old-time radio program from the following online archive (http://archive.org/details/oldtimeradio) and complete the table below while listening. To learn more about Radio Drama components review the table on the following page before beginning the activity.

LISTENING ACTIVITY NOTES

| WHO are the characters in this play? How would you describe the quality of their voice? What do they look like? |
| WHAT is happening? What are the major plot elements and actions in the play? |
| WHERE does the play take place? Describe it. |
| WHAT is the problem or conflict in the play? Is it resolved? If yes, how? |
| List all the background and action sound effects you hear in the play. |
## RADIO DRAMA COMPONENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Introduction</strong></td>
<td>A theme song or opening repeated at the start of every episode that lets listeners know that a specific program is starting.</td>
<td>Superman’s “Look up in the sky! It’s a bird, it’s a plane, it’s Superman.”</td>
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<td><strong>The Announcer</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>“When last we saw him, Superman was trapped in the warehouse, unable to save Lois Lane from the evil Boris Beeker.”</td>
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<td><strong>The Dialogue</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>“Look! That lamp is on fire! The flames are getting closer!”</td>
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<td><strong>The Sound Effects</strong></td>
<td>Atmospheric sounds used to help us create vibrant images in our minds as we listen and to enable us to understand the actions that are taking place. Background sound effects create the environment. Action sound effects indicate physical actions that are occurring.</td>
<td>Background sound effects for a radio play set on a ship might be 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, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Music</strong></td>
<td>Orchestrations used to create the mood or tone. In radio plays, music can be used to punctuate key moments, underscore emotional moments, and transition from one scene to the next.</td>
<td>String instruments underscoring a romantic scene between a couple in love.</td>
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<td><strong>The Sponsor</strong></td>
<td>The corporation who is paying for the program's air time on the radio in exchange for advertising.</td>
<td>“Today's production of Little Orphan Annie is sponsored by Ovaltine! Don’t forget to drink your Ovaltine every day!”</td>
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</table>
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.

Challenge Yourself: Exploring Existentialism

Choose an existentialist from the list below and to find out more about that person.

- Søren Kierkegaard
- Friedrich Nietzsche
- Martin Heidegger
- Gabriel Marcel
- Jean Paul-Sartre
- Simone de Beauvoir
- Franz Kafka
- Albert Camus
- Fyodor Dostoyevsky
- Jean Genet
- Eugene Ionesco
- Arthur Adamov

To Think About: Existentialism & Art

You don’t have to look far in popular culture to find music, films, television shows, novels, and other works of art that have existential themes running through them. Can you think of any other songs, movies, books, art works, poems, t-shirts, video games, etc. in contemporary culture that explore or express existential themes?
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.

**Elevenes:** Tea or coffee taken at midmorning and often accompanied by a snack.

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

To Think About: The Language

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

This is a significant line from All That Fall that Maddy Rooney says. Think about how this line ties into some of the themes that follow on the next page.
**Challenge Yourself:**

After you have seen the play, use the text of *All That Fall* and your memory of the production to complete the table below.

<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><strong>WEIGHTINESS, EXERTION, &amp; INERTIA</strong></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>
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<td><strong>ABSENCE / INVISIBILITY</strong></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 <em>All That Fall</em>?</td>
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<td><strong>DEATH</strong></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 Theatre of the Absurd) 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>
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<td><strong>STERILITY</strong></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 <em>All That Fall</em>? 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>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SYMBOLS &amp; METAPHORS</strong></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 <em>All That Fall</em>? 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>
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