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Not I, Footfalls, Rockaby

By Samuel Beckett

A Royal Court Theatre and
Lisa Dwan Production

In association with Cusack Projects Limited

Performed by Lisa Dwan

Directed by Walter Asmus

BAM Harvey Theater

Oct 7—11 at 7:30pm; Oct 12 at 3pm

Approximate running time: one hour

Set design by **Alex Eales**

Lighting design by **James Farncombe**

Music by **Tom Smail**

Sound design by **David McSeveney**

Stage manager **Pandora Elrington**

Assistant director **Matthew McFrederick**

American stage manager **R. Michael Blanco**

Presented in association with Irish Arts Center

Season Sponsor:

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Not I, Footfalls, Rockaby

Beckett's *Not I* is an intense monologue, set in a pitch-black space lit by a single beam of light. A disembodied female mouth floats eight feet above the stage and delivers a stream of consciousness, spoken, as Beckett directed, at the speed of thought. Lisa Dwan was tutored in the role by Billie Whitelaw, who originally performed the part at its 1973 UK premiere and was personally coached for the part by Beckett himself.

Rockaby is probably the most famous of Beckett's last works. It explores loneliness and features a prematurely old woman dressed in an evening gown, sitting on a wooden rocking chair that appears to rock of its own accord. *Rockaby* was first performed in New York in 1980 starring Billie Whitelaw and then at the National Theatre (UK) in 1981.

Footfalls features May, wrapped in tatters, pacing back and forth like a metronome, on a strip of bare landing outside her dying mother's room. *Footfalls* was first performed by Billie Whitelaw, for whom the piece had been written, at the Royal Court Theatre as part of the Samuel Beckett Festival in 1976, directed by Beckett himself.

Not I, Footfalls, Rockaby UK tour is produced in association with Cusack Projects Ltd.

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The actor is appearing with the permission of Actors' Equity Association.

The American stage manager is a member of Actors' Equity Association.

BECKETT AT BAM

- 1977 *Waiting for Godot*, Schiller Theatre, Berlin; directed by Samuel Beckett
With Horst Bollmann, Klaus Herm
- 1978 *Waiting for Godot*, BAM Theatre Company; directed by Walter Asmus.
With Sam Waterston, Austin Pendleton
- 1998 *Krapp's Last Tape*, Royal Shakespeare Company; directed by Edward Petherbridge
(who also starred) and David Hunt.
- 2008 *Happy Days*, Royal National Theatre; directed by Deborah Warner
With Fiona Shaw
- 2008 *Endgame*, BAM; directed by Andrei Belgrader. With Max Casella, Alvin Epstein,
John Turturro, Elaine Stritch
- 2011 *Krapp's Last Tape*, The Gate Theatre; directed by Michael Colgan
With John Hurt
- 2012 *All That Fall*, Pan Pan Theatre; directed by Gavin Quinn
With Áine Ní Mhuirí, Andrew Bennett
- 2014 *Embers*, Pan Pan Theatre; directed by Gavin Quinn
With Áine Ní Mhuirí, Andrew Bennett
- Not I, Footfalls, Rockaby*, Royal Court Theatre and Lisa Dwan Production;
directed by Walter Asmus. With Lisa Dwan



LISA DWAN

Performer/Producer

Lisa Dwan has worked extensively in theater, film, and television, both internationally and in her native Ireland. Film credits include: *Oliver Twist*, John Boorman's *Tailor of Panama*, and *Bhopal—A Prayer for Rain* due for release this year. In 2012, she adapted, produced, and performed the critically-acclaimed one woman play *Beside the Sea* at the South Bank Centre and on tour and starred in Goran Bregovic's new music drama, *Margot, Diary of an Unhappy Queen* at the Barbican. She most recently performed in Ramin Gray's production of *Illusions* by Ivan Viripaev at the Bush Theatre.

WALTER ASMUS

Director

Walter Asmus was Beckett's long-time friend and collaborator, assisting him on many of his productions at the Schiller Theatre in Berlin and for TV in Stuttgart. His production of *Waiting for Godot*, which toured extensively internationally, including in 2008 a one-night-only tour of the 32 counties of Ireland, was widely described as the definitive production.

ALEX EALES

Designer

For the Royal Court: *Not I/Footfalls/Rockaby* (and West End/Tour). As costume designer for the Royal Court: *Iron* (and Traverse/Schauspielhaus, Leipzig). Theater designs includes: *Regeneration* (Royal and Derngate, Northampton); *Into the Woods* (Théâtre du Chatelet); *Alles weitere kennen Sie aus dem Kino* (Deutsches Schauspielhaus Hamburg); *Fraulein Julie* (Schaubühne, Berlin; Barbican); *Reise durch die Nacht* (Schauspielhaus, Cologne; Berlin and Avignon festivals); *Brimstone & Treacle, Ghosts* (Arcola); *Design for Living* (Salisbury Playhouse); *Say It with Flowers, small hours* (Hampstead); *The Breath of Life* (Lyceum Theatre, Sheffield); *Dyled Eileen, Spring Awakening—the Musical* (Theatr Genedlaethol and tour); *The Devil Inside Him* (National Theatre Wales); *Wunschkonzert* (Schauspielhaus, Cologne; Berlin); *Jungfruleken* (Kungsliga Dramatiska Teatern, Stockholm); *The Swallowing Dark* (Liverpool Playhouse Studio, Theatre 503); *The Caucasian Chalk Circle, The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* (Watford Palace/ Tour); *At Break Of Day, Widows, R.U.R., Still Life* (Drum Theatre, Plymouth); and *The Country* (Belgrade Theatre at Warwick Arts Centre). Opera designs include: *Don Giovanni* (Royal Danish Opera); *The House Taken Over* (Festival d'Aix-en-Provence); *Così fan tutte* (Opera Holland Park); *Clemency* (ROH2 Linbury Studio; Scottish Opera); *Idomeneo* (English National Opera); *Tarantula in Petrol Blue* (Aldeburgh Music); and *The Crocodile* (Arcola).

JAMES FARNCOMBE

Lighting Designer

For the Royal Court: *Not I, Footfalls, Rockaby* (and West End/Tour); *Teh Internet is Serious Business, Love Love Love, The Village Bike, Wanderlust, Blest Be the Tie*. Other theater: *Edward II, Men Should Weep, People, The Magistrate, Double Feature, London Road* (National); *Juno and the Paycock* (National/Abbey); *The Ladykillers* (Gielgud/Vaudeville); *The Cherry Orchard, Three Sisters, The Changeling, The Glass Menagerie* (Young Vic); *The White Devil, As You Like It, A Mad World My Masters* (RSC); *The Rest Will Be Familiar to You From Cinema* (Hamburg Schauspielhaus); *The Duchess of Malfi* (Old Vic); *Fathers and Sons, The Recruiting Officer, Inadmissible Evidence* (Donmar); *The Overcoat* (Gecko); *Swallows and Amazons* (Vaudeville); *Juliet and Her Romeo, Far Away* (Bristol Old Vic); *Ragtime, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Lord of the Flies* (Regent's Park); *Ghost Stories, Desire Under the Elms, Twisted Tales* (Lyric Hammersmith); *Rapture Blister Burn, Longing, Taking Care of Baby, Osama the Hero, Single Act* (Hampstead). Opera includes *Le Vin Herbé* (Berliner Staatsoper); *The Flying Dutchman* (Scottish Opera); *The House Taken Over, Trauernacht* (Aix-en-Provence Festival), *How the Whale Became* (Linbury). Ballet: *Firebird* (Norwegian National Ballet, Oslo).

TOM SMAIL

Composer

For the Royal Court: *Not I, Footfalls, Rockaby* (and West End/Tour). Other theater includes: *A Scattering* (Robert Bathurst). Cinema includes: *The Verge, The Barn, A Car Stopped* (Firstlight Pictures); *Save the Tiger* (Limelight Productions); *Shrink* (Namesake Films); *Ghost Rig* (KCD Films). TV includes: *Daphne, Daniel Libeskind, The New Face of Leprosy, Amazon—Super River, Deadly Vipers, Penguins—Cool Bird in a Hot Spot, Birds Behaving Badly* (BBC); *Mervyn, The Whale That Swam to London, The Riddle of Einstein's Brain* (Channel 4); *Women at War, Blenheim* (History Channel); *The Mysterious Hanging Coffins of China* (Discovery). Radio includes: *Voices from Another Room, And It Came to Pass*, five Agatha Christie dramas (Radio 4); *The Moving and the Still* (Radio 3). Recent concert performances include: *Music in the Marble* (City of London Sinfonia); *Soliloquy for Strings* (Arch Sinfonia); *Jack and the Beanstalk, Red Riding Hood* (English Touring Opera); *Soon* (Tête-à-Tête Opera Festival); String Quartet No. 1 (Allegrì Quartet); *Somewhere Else* (Cerne Abbas Festival); *The Heart-in-Waiting, In the Bleak Midwinter, Sheep Like Stones* (St. George's, Hanover Square); *What is the Word, Instructions to Four Walls, Care-Charmer Sleep, As Shade to Shadow, Quo Vadis?* (Kapoor Chamber Concerts).

DAVID McSEVENEY

Sound Designer

For the Royal Court: *Teh Internet is Serious Business*, *The Art of Dying*, *Not I*, *Footfalls*, *Rockaby* (and West End/Tour), *The Djinns of Eidgah*, *Routes*, *If You Don't Let Us Dream We Won't Let You Sleep*, *Constellations* (and West End), *Belong*, *Vera Vera Vera*, *The Village Bike*, *Clybourne Park* (and West End), *Ingredient X*, *Posh* (and West End), *Disconnect*, *Cock*, *A Miracle*, *The Stone*, *Shades*, *Seven Jewish Children*, *The Girlfriend Experience* (and Theatre Royal Plymouth; Young Vic), *Contractions*, *Fear & Misery*/*War & Peace*. Other theatre: *Blurred Lines* (National); *The Changeling* (Young Vic); *A Doll's House* (Young Vic; West End; BAM); *The Duke in Darkness* (Tabard); *The Winter's Tale* (RSC); *Stones in His Pockets* (Tricycle); *Victoria Station/One for the Road* (Print Room; Young Vic); *On the Record* (Arcola); *The Tin Horizon* (503); *Gaslight* (Old Vic); *Charley's Aunt*, *An Hour and a Half Late* (Theatre Royal Bath); *A Passage to India*, *After Mrs Rochester*, *Madame Bovary* (Shared Experience); *Men Should Weep*, *Rookery Nook* (Oxford Stage Company); *Othello* (Southwark Playhouse). McSeveney is head of sound at the Royal Court.

MATTHEW McFREDERICK

Assistant Director

As director, theater includes: *And of the Son* (Nun's Island), Beckett Shorts: *Breath*, *Rockaby*, *Catastrophe*, *Not I*, *Come & Go* (Brian Friel Theatre, Belfast). He has performed with Emerald Isle Theatre Company (European tour). McFrederick is a PhD student on the AHRC Staging Beckett project at the University of Reading, where he also teaches. He is currently a visiting scholar at the Harry Ransom Center in Austin with the AHRC International Placement Scheme.

PANDORA ELRINGTON

Stage Manager

For the Royal Court: *Open Court Festival*; *Not I*, *Footfalls*, *Rockaby* (West End/Tour); *Unusual Unions* (and Wilderness Festival); *Pub Quiz Gala*. Other theater includes: *Matilda* (RSC West End), *Legally Blonde the Musical* (Sonia Friedman Productions), *Billy Elliot the Musical* (Working Title Films). Charity events include: British Military Tournament at Earl's Court; Elton John's Grey Goose Ball; Our Greatest Team Athletes Parade for Olympics 2012.

R. MICHAEL BLANCO

American Stage Manager

R. Michael Blanco has been the stage manager at BAM for Karole Armitage's *The Predator's Ball*; Jonathan Miller's St. Matthew Passion and *Così fan tutte*; *Playing Shakespeare USA* with John Barton; Sydney Theater Company's *White Devil* and *Hedda Gabler*; Donmar Warehouse's *Uncle Vanya/Twelfth Night*; the RSC's *Don Carlos*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Hecuba*; Watermill/Propeller's *Merchant of Venice*; Vesturport Theatre's *Metamorphosis* and *Faust: A Love Story*; the Young Vic's *A Doll's House*; Chichester Festival Theatre's *King Lear*; and Pan Pan Theatre's *Embers*. At the Metropolitan Opera: Kirov Ballet, Bolshoi Ballet, and Robert Wilson's *Le Martyre de Saint Sebastien*.

ROYAL COURT THEATRE

Producer

The Royal Court is the writers' theater. It is a leading force in world theater, finding writers and producing new plays that are original and contemporary. The Royal Court strives to be at the center of civic, political, domestic, and international life, giving writers a home to tackle big ideas and world events and tell great stories. The Royal Court's extensive development activity encompasses a diverse range of writers and artists and includes an ongoing program of writers' attachments, readings, workshops, and playwriting groups. Twenty years of pioneering work around the world means the Royal Court has relationships with writers on every continent. The Royal Court opens its doors to radical thinking and provocative discussion, and to the unheard voices and free thinkers that, through their writing, change our way of seeing. "The most important theatre in Europe." (*The New York Times*).

CUSACK PROJECTS LIMITED

Producer

Pádraig Cusack is a theater producer and international tour consultant and is a director of Cusack Projects Limited, a company dedicated to international theater producing. He is currently associate producer for the National Theatre of Great Britain, international tour consultant for the Abbey Theatre, Dublin and International Advisor for Headlong Theatre (UK). He also advises the Royal Court, London; the Donmar Warehouse, London; Fabulous Beast, Ireland; Théâtre de la Ville, Paris; and Parco Theatre, Tokyo.





Lisa Dwan first performed Not I in 2005 in a production directed by Nathalie Abrahami at London's Battersea Arts Centre, and subsequently worked with Billie Whitelaw, who originated the role under Samuel Beckett's direction. Following are excerpts of Dwan's thoughts on preparing for the demanding performance with Whitelaw and director Walter Asmus, and on Beckett, adapted from a BBC interview done in September 2014.

Few know what it is to have your entire nervous system splayed open like that, Few know what it is to be suspended in *that* darkness, let alone the hideous difficulty of learning a text such as *Not I*, and to go on to perform one of the most difficult pieces ever devised. But there is one. One who knew more than most.

I met Billie Whitelaw in 2006 a few months after my first performance of *Not I* in London. Edward Beckett attended one of those performances and over a Guinness with me afterwards suggested it might be finally worthwhile to meet her "...now that I'd found my own way."

And as luck would have it a few weeks after that the BBC put us in touch for an in-conversation piece about the role.

...

We immediately swapped our trench stories. I told her how I strap my head into the banisters at home and babble away for hours training my mouth and diaphragm to speak at the speed of thought without moving a millimeter.

Billie's head by contrast had been strapped to a dentist's chair, where once she collapsed during rehearsals and Sam [Beckett] rushed over to her saying "Billie, Billie!

What have I done to you?, What have I done?!"... and coming to she replied, "I really don't know how to answer that Sam." "Never mind," he said "back you go."

"But I would have walked on glass for that man," Billie admitted.

She also admitted how she never felt she quite recovered from that role and that none of his other plays, including the ones he wrote for her—*Rockaby* and *Footfalls*—had taken its toll quite like *Not I*. "I lost a piece of me in there and it never got any easier," she told me, and in 1977 she declared, "I will not play that role again, I cannot, if I do then I shall go mad."

We agreed the hardest element of all—aside of course from the neck strain, the hernias, the stroke inducing stress of it and the development of pelican like jowls for spit collection since there is no time to swallow—is attempting to control and suppress one's own internal *Not I*. In the nightly terror that the piece always produces—the thoughts, like vultures, hover above his lean lines.

A year after our first meeting I received a call out of the blue from Billie. "I want to give you his notes, I have to give you his notes..." Now, I had no idea that I would ever play this role again so I wasn't quite

sure what had me standing in Billie's kitchen later that afternoon. I thought she might take out and dust off an old rehearsal manuscript but instead she told me to sit down at the table and "Begin!" As I started speaking she sat directly opposite and began waving her hand... conducting me. "Ta... ta... ta... tah... Ta... ta... ta... tah... I later learned that was exactly what Beckett had done to her... across her kitchen table.

Billie lifted the lid on all of his well-worn notes... especially, "Don't act—no color." She saw how I strained to hold back the tide of the Irish voices, the sounds, and the effect of what the very notion of "home" produced in me.

...

Unbeknownst to me Walter Asmus was in the audience at the Royal Court. He had flown over from Berlin. Afterwards he announced himself to me and offered to direct me in Beckett's other two—*Footfalls* and *Rockaby*—and put them as a trilogy with *Not I*.

I wasn't at all sure that performing these three together was even physically possible... but I agreed immediately and Walter and I headed to an isolated cottage in County Monaghan to work things out.

He often said when rehearsing *Not I*: "It's coming too easy to you—it needs to cost you more, we need to see you bleed up there."

...

I only later realized what he was doing by getting me totally technically aligned—with my tone pitch perfect, my arms outstretched to allow the breath into the voice until suddenly one day he let me go and I caught what I can only describe as an invisible current. I felt like a glider, and I needed that momentum to take me right to end of that piece... to face the loneliest truth of all; that I am my own other... "own other living soul."

When I looked up—Walter was weeping.

...

One of the gifts of the sensory deprivation in *Not I* is that I don't even feel like a human being half the time up there and that's just so liberating. Who's going to want all that from me? We tend to view ourselves and our world in bite-sized chunks—what we think we can cope with. We create pithy, palatable realities shaped by our small prejudices and fears.

Beckett blows all that up and offers instead the most enormous landscape where we must bring everything we are and could possibly be to it. No other writer I have ever come across has ever asked or offered so much.



Lisa Dwan in *Rockabye*. Photo: John Haynes

SAMUEL BECKETT CHRONOLOGY

- 1906 Samuel Barclay Beckett born on Good Friday, April 13, in Foxrock, Dublin, the second son of William and Mary Roe Beckett.
- 1920—23 Educated at Portora Royal School, Enniskillen.
- 1923—27 Studies French and Italian at Trinity College, Dublin. In BA examinations placed first in class in modern literature. Spends 1926 summer vacation in France on a bicycle tour of the chateaux of the Loire.
- 1928 Exchange lecturer at École Normale Supérieure in Paris. Meets James Joyce.
- 1930 First separately published work, a poem, *Whoroscope*. Appointed assistant lecturer in French, Trinity College.
- 1931 Performance of his first dramatic work, *Le Kid*, a parody of Corneille, at the Peacock Theatre. *Proust*, his only major piece of literary criticism, published. Resigns his lectureship in Trinity.
- 1932 Lives for brief periods in Kassel, Paris, London, and Dublin.
- 1933 Death of his father.
- 1934 Publication of *More Pricks Than Kicks*.
- 1935 *Echo's Bones*, a cycle of 13 poems, published.
- 1937 Moves to Paris. In November, testifies in Dublin at the libel trial of Oliver St. John Gogarty.
- 1938 Stabbed on the street by a Parisian pimp named Prudent. *Murphy*, his first novel, is published in London after 42 rejections.
- 1942 French Resistance group in which Beckett is active is betrayed to the Gestapo. Beckett escapes and flees to Roussillon, near Avignon, where he remains for the next two years.
- 1945 Awarded the Croix de Guerre for his work in the Resistance movement.
- 1946 Begins writing the trilogy of novels *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, and *The Unnamable* in French.
- 1949 Finishes writing *En Attendant Godot* (*Waiting for Godot*).
- 1950 Death of his mother.

Not I, Footfalls, Rockaby

- 1953 World premiere in Paris of *En Attendant Godot* at the Théâtre de Babylone.
- 1954 *Waiting for Godot*, translated by Beckett, is published by Grove Press, New York.
- 1957 World premiere of *Fin de Partie* in French at the Royal Court Theatre, London.
- 1958 World premiere of *Krapp's Last Tape* in London.
- 1959 Receives an honorary degree from Trinity College, Dublin.
Embers, a radio play, wins the Italia Prize.
- 1961 World premiere of *Happy Days* in New York.
- 1963 World premiere of German translation of *Play* in Ulm.
- 1964 *Film* made in New York starring Buster Keaton.
- 1968 *Come and Go* performed for the first time in English at the Peacock Theatre, Dublin.
- 1969 Awarded Nobel Prize for literature.
- 1972 World premiere of *Not I* at Lincoln Center.
- 1975 Directs *Waiting for Godot* at Schiller Theatre, Berlin, assisted by Walter Asmus.
- 1976 *That Time* and *Footfalls* performed in London.
Ends and Odds published in London and New York.
- 1978 Publication of *Mirlitonades*, a collection of short poems.
- 1980 Publication of *Company*, a novella.
- 1981 World premiere of *Rockaby* in New York, and *Ohio Impromptu*.
- 1982 *Catastrophe*, dedicated to the imprisoned Czech dramatist Vaclav Havel, is performed in France. *Quad* is premiered on German television.
Ill Seen Ill Said is published in London.
- 1983 *What Where?* is premiered in New York.
- 1984 *Collected Shorter Prose, 1945—1980* is published in London.
- 1986 *Samuel Beckett: The Complete Dramatic Works* published in London.
- 1988 "What is the Word" is published, Grand Street, New York.
- 1989 *Stirrings Still* is published in London and New York and as *Soubresauts* in Paris. Beckett dies in Paris on December 22.

