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Turn up and tune in to an excellent "All That Fall"

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9:10 PM MST



All That Fall by Samuel Beckett produced by Pan Pan Theatre
Ros Kavanagh

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Rating: ★★★★★

Originally broadcast in 1957, [Samuel Beckett's](#) first radio play 'All That Fall' has seen its fair share of argument during the past six decades. For a start, Beckett was adamant he never wanted it performed on stage, politely but firmly declining Sir Laurence Olivier when he asked to be allowed to do so. Now, almost sixty years on, Pan Pan Theatre have done just that, putting 'All That Fall' squarely on the Abbey stage, along with the audience. But is there much point in resurrecting a radio play intended to be performed in a genre that, while dominant in the 1950's, doesn't have the same urgency or significance it once had? Couldn't we just catch the podcast?

For Beckett, as for many of his generation for whom radio was the primary media outlet, radio

provided an experience that emanated from darkness, was often experienced in darkness and was steeped in immediacy. It required you to turn up, turn on and tune in. The interplay of voice, sound and silence focused the mind into listening actively and to imaginatively engaging, providing you didn't simply doze off in the rocking chair. In an attempt to both honour Beckett and to recreate and re-imagine this experience for a contemporary audience, Pan Pan Theatre have crafted something that oscillates between the understated and the exhilarating, the deeply dark to sensory light and surround sound overload, in a stunning, immersive production unlike anything seen or experienced in quite some time.

'All That Fall's' simple narrative, steeped in enough autobiographical detail to keep Beckett scholars busy for a little while, follows the elderly Mrs Rooney as she journeys to the train station to meet her blind husband, Mr Rooney, who is finishing work early for his birthday, unaware his wife wants to surprise him. On the way she meets and talks with several characters including a dung carrier, a racecourse clerk and the aptly named Miss Fit, before finally arriving at the station to find the train has been delayed. When her tight fisted husband finally arrives they decide to walk home together and dark things are questioned, ignored or hinted at. Throughout, themes of death, diminishment and decay emerge in an all too human, Godless universe, where God is avidly disbelieved in whilst being simultaneously ridiculed and reviled for not having existed in the first place.

Andrew Bennett, Áine Ní Mhuirí, Phelim Drew, John Kavanagh, Nell Klemenčič, Robbie O'Connor, Joey O'Sullivan, David Pearse, Daniel Reardon and Judith Roddy each lend their considerable vocal talents to 'All That Fall's' rich array of characters, with Pearse, Bennett and Ní Mhuirí being particularly memorable. Director Gavin Quinn, designer Aedin Cosgrove and sound designer Jimmy Eadie marshal all before them to craft an intensely immersive experience. Human voices speak, makes animal sounds or are silent. Cars, trains and tempests can be heard along with footsteps that sound like the ticking of a clock. Sound interplays with patterns of light, glowing, dimming or devastatingly glaring. Throughout, all is experienced from the private yet communal comfort of one of the blue grey rocking chairs, each with its black cushion decorated with a grinning skull, set upon the Abbey stage. With sound, light, text and space being re-imagined and re-presented to a re-positioned audience, the result is not just a new theatrical experience, but a new way of experiencing theatre that owes as much to installation art as to stage craft.

In 'All That Fall' sound is presence, light is presence, silence is also presence and each are made powerfully present. In the end, the very reasons Beckett did not want 'All That Fall' performed on stage are the very reasons which underpin Pan Pan Theatre's excellent theatrical production. In defying Beckett's wishes, Pan Pan Theatre have honoured Beckett's wishes. Stunning in its power and simplicity, one suspects Beckett would have been proud of this moving, memorable and deeply immersive production.

'All That Fall' by Samuel Beckett, produced by Pan Pan Theatre runs at [The Abbey Theatre](#) until February 20th

For information on times and tickets visit [The Abbey Theatre](#)



Chris O'Rourke

Theatre Examiner

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