

[Text Size](#)

Monday, June 14, 2010

info@behindthefringe.com

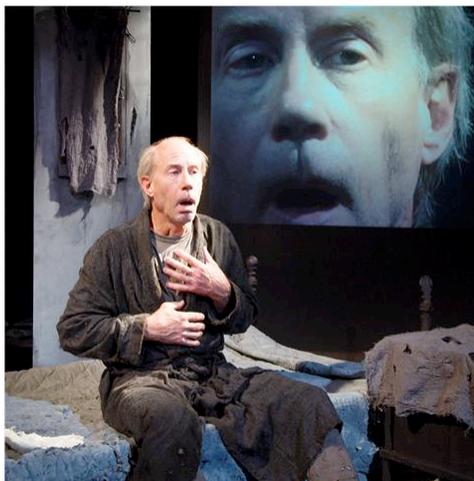
Findley Finds Happy Marriage With Beckett

Thursday, 13 May 2010

By Dylan Hinde

When Janice Findley discovered Samuel Beckett's *Footfalls* two years ago she felt like she had "put her finger in an electrical socket." She knew immediately that she had to direct it for the Seattle stage, even if it meant having to produce it herself.

An experimental narrative filmmaker for most of her professional career, Findley had discovered an experimental stage narrative that connected with her deeply. Utilizing her long association with Seattle's New City Theater she was able to co-produce *Footfalls*, and Beckett's *Rockaby* in 2009. Tomorrow sees the opening of the Irish dramatist's *Eh Joe* together with Harold Pinter's *Landscape* at New City in "Pinter & Beckett" running through May 29th.



Kevin McKeon in Samuel Beckett's EH JOE. Photo by Jyh-Lurn Chang

"As a director, I am jazzed by the idea that the audience is actually in the room with something real; something possibly dangerous, uncomfortable, alien or unspeakably beautiful," says Findley.

Findley and her company, Janice Findley Productions, are now producing theater as well as films. Throwing themselves into plays that delve into the deep recesses of human experience in what she calls the "Theater of Image." For Findley, *Footfalls* and *Rockaby*, reflected all of the elements that fuel her interest in theater production: beautiful, haunting texts that are equal parts sculpture, painting, formalist musical constructions and poetry.

"I work with a small group of very talented and experienced visual and theater artists to help me excavate the work and develop it in a way that is both truthful and electrifying," Findley explains. "To quote one of my audience members, I create on stage what is uncannily similar to a cinematic experience."

Findley says the play or source material she picks must impress her as being "brilliant." Her goal is to create a theater experience that leaves the audience feeling as if they'd been to another planet for an hour or two. Astonished with the reception to her Beckett productions -getting the best press reviews of her life and selling out all scheduled performances - Findley feels she has succeeded in her goal. "Audience members contacted me afterwards [and] were saying the images were in their dreams for nights following the performances," the director says.

Extraordinary

Findley's interests have always been drawn to non-traditional theatre and film and in work that

Findley Finds Happy Marriage With Beckett



Seattle
May 14th-May 29th

[Read more...](#)

Riding All Over the Tracks in Boxcar's Theatre



San Francisco
May 6th-29th

[Read more...](#)

What It Takes to Build Noah's Arkansas



New York City
April 21st-May 16th

[Read more...](#)

New Leaf Turns Over for Renewal and Reinvention



Chicago
April 15th-May 22nd

[Read more...](#)

Talent is as Talent Does



London
April 8th-April 24th

[Read more...](#)

pushes the boundaries of sensory experience and thought. So when it came time to mount another show, she knew she had to do more Beckett, feeling a real affinity for his work. But Findley was also told that she might have an interest in taking on a certain other writer as well.

"I had more than one person tell me that I should direct some [Harold] Pinter," remembers Findley. "I'm not sure why they suggested his work. But it made me curious and I immersed myself in all things Pinter."

What was of interest to Findley during her immersion was how much Pinter loved and was influenced by Beckett's work. In particular, she saw that influence in a Pinter play called *Landscape*. "It was mysterious and beautiful," says Findley. The companion piece she then chose was to do a staging of Beckett's television work *Eh Joe*. The two works, she feels, really seemed to fit together in many ways. There are many imagistic similarities and there's the theme of lost relationships between men and women. And each of the locations contains individuals who seem unable to exit or are in a sort of stasis.

"In a more general sense," Findley enthuses, "one thing that Pinter's and Beckett's plays share is that you know you are in the room with something truly extraordinary." An evening of Pinter and Beckett, Findley hopes, will leave her audience feeling excited, provoked, befuddled, frightened; moved in some way by experiencing something that they can't put into words.

"I see [Beckett's] work as humanist and as a radical innovator of theatrical conventions," Findley claims. "His work communicates to me that in our struggles in this world, we are not alone. His theatrical innovations fascinate me. When producing *Footfalls* and *Rockaby*, I felt like I was putting together an environmental sculpture with musical, rhythmic elements giving off waves of human compassion."



McKean and Mary Ewald in Pinter's *LANDSCAPE*

Artistic community

Commonly recognized as one of the top professional theatre towns in the country, Seattle is a hothouse of creativity, with a reputation for vibrant new work. The theatre scene that exists here is unlike most other cities and compares favorably with its counterparts despite its inferiority in size.

"Seattle is a very unpretentious, beautiful city," Findley explains. "It is also a book, film and theatre-loving town. I suppose because of our drizzling rain -people turn out in droves to sit inside theatres."

The city has been a large part of Findley's success, due in large part to the city's communal, bohemian spirit, which it has long been identified with. Seattle's theater community is a good prism to see this through. The significant stage work going on right now goes hand and hand with the city's attempt to try and develop a real critical mass of theaters and artists, aside from the mark the city made on the world at the height the grunge-rock era of the late 1980s and early 1990s.

However, between the energetic artistic endeavors that are abound and the slow recovery from the national economic upheaval that has battered arts institutions, Seattle is at a timely crossroads. Hit pretty hard by the post-9/11 economic slump and the fall of the dot.coms, Seattle seems to be a "boom-bust" town that's been fighting uphill battles for a better part of the last decade.

"There are tremendous business concerns facing theatres currently," Findley points out. "The

Latest Features

- [The Play is the Thing for Original Works Publishing](#)
- [Findley Finds Happy Marriage With Beckett](#)
- [Riding All Over the Tracks in Boxcar's Theatre](#)
- [What It Takes to Build Noah's Arkansas](#)
- [New Leaf Turns Over for Renewal and Reinvention](#)
- [Talent is as Talent Does](#)
- [Down to the Bare Bones at The Old Red Lion](#)
- [Shakespeare and the Coen Brothers Had a Baby](#)
- [Fighting the Fight with Fo](#)
- [A Rogue Return for Gemma Wilcox : "Shadows in Bloom"](#)



Subscribe to our newsletter

E-mail

economy in the U.S. has made things even more difficult. Seattle is unable to provide much aid financially to theatre or other art forms, as they have their own budget problems to contend with.”

But true to its history, Seattle intends to see itself through the hard times and emerge stronger for it. And Findley is more than happy to keep working, because as she sees it, there will always be a need for what she and her community does. “There’ll always be theatre and there will always be a need for theatre,” Findley believes. “History bears that out.”

So Findley will keep working and the possibilities of what’s to come keep her ready, willing, and able to go on for some time to come. “I’m very excited by our ... production of *Landscape and Eh Joe*,” Findley says. “It’s shaping up wonderfully. [And] I’ve got two of the most terrific actors, Mary Ewald and Kevin McKeon –both riveting performers. Next up may well be a film project. And I hope, lots more Beckett!”

Pinter & Beckett can be seen at the New City Theater in Seattle, May 14th–May 29th. For more information click [here](#).

dylanhinde@behindthefringe.com