

Major Writers of Absurd drama

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Date

Page

1. Samuel Beckett - (1906 - 89)

Samuel Beckett is an Irish dramatist and novelist but he long lived in Paris and wrote both in French and English with ease and facility. Most of his later works were originally written in French. He uses a deliberately formless language to present the meaningless void of experience as encountered by his characters. In fiction he scored success by *Murphy*, *Molloy* and *Watt* and in drama his masterpiece is *Waiting for Godot* (1953). It is an elusive tragic farce about two tramps - Estragon and Vladimir - for ever awaiting the arrival of the mysterious Godot, who will in some unexplained way make everything different but who never comes. The two tramps are still waiting for Godot when the play ends. Vladimir says, "Godot will come and we will be saved. If we drop him he will punish us."

Eugene Ionesco -

Eugene Ionesco is a Rumanian-born dramatist, writing in French. He is a leading figure in the Theatre of Absurd. He dealt with such subjects as the breakdown of language, the proliferation of objects and the absurd vulnerability of man, threatened from both outside and inside. His famous plays are *The Bald Prima Donna*, *The Lesson*, *The Chairs*, *The Victims of Duty*, *How to Get Rid of It*, *The Killer*, *Rhinoceros* and *Exit the King*, *The Bald Prima Donna*. *The Lesson* and *The Chairs* are among the most brilliant works in the whole Theatre of the Absurd. In *The Chairs* the inanimate chairs crowd out the imaginary world of the too old people. He used empty chairs to show man's empty existence.

• Arthur Adamov (1908-1970)

He was a Russian born dramatist who lived in France and wrote in French. It was in his autobiographical volume *L'Aveu* (1938-43) that he first expressed the deep sense of alienation which lies at the most of the Theatre of the Absurd. Among his famous plays are *La Parodie* (1945), and *Printemps '71* (1962). After 1955, he abandoned the absurd in favour of Brechtian Epic Theatre which perhaps accorded better with his Marxist policies.

• Jean Genet - (1910-86) -

He is a famous French novelist, dramatist and poet. Among his well known plays are *Deathwatch*, *The Maids*, *The Balcony*, *The Blacks* and *The Screens*. Genet has been classified both as a dramatist of the Absurd and as a follower of Art and in his ritualistic Theatre of Cruelty. The world of his dramas is marked with violence and unnatural passion. It is at once hierarchical and ritualistic. It rests to an explicit degree, on the inversion of 'normal' values and the rite, which is central to all the plays, not only involves death and a sacrificial victim, but celebrates the triumph of 'evil', in so far as evil can be construed as the converse of the values upheld by bourgeois society.

• Harold Pinter (1930-)

He is an English dramatist whose works are allied to the Theatre of the Absurd. He wrote a number of famous plays such as *The Room*, *The Birthday Party*, *The Caretaker*, *The Dumb Waiter*, *The Servant*, *The Home Coming*, *Landscape*, *Silence* and *Old Times*. "In his earlier plays Pinter evolved his own sort of Comedy of menace, having his characters humorously but horrifically menaced by mysterious outsiders; his later works

classmate
Date _____
Page _____

have become more psychological, and his most recent television plays, as well as his film script, *The Servant*, and his latest full-length stage play, *The Homecoming* (1965), show a further shift in to social comedy which still has about it a distinctive flavour of the Absurd.

Edward Albee - (1928 -)

He is an American playwright. His early one act plays are brilliant absurdist analyses of contemporary social and psychological tensions: *The Zoo Story* (1958), *The Sandbox* (1959) *Fam and Yam* (1960) and the finest, *The Death of Bessie Smith* (1960), on the hysterical nature of Southern sexuality and politics. This dislocations and rituals of the theatre of the absurd are used in his first full-length play, *Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962), for the mutual destruction and reconciliation game of a history professor and his wife. His next play *Tiny Alice* (1964) is a psychological fantasy of sexual and manipulation in High Camp manner. *Box-Mao-Box* (1968) is probably his most impressive work so far.

The future of absurdist drama is not bright. Absurdist drama, in fact, dated. "Most dramatists of the absurd have found it difficult to sustain a whole evening in the theatre without compromising somewhat: Donesco's full-length plays become more and more transparently allegorical, Beckett's get shorter and shorter, Adamov abandoned the absurd altogether in favour of Brechtian Epic theatre, Pinter has moved towards a fusion of the absurd with high comedy. Indeed by (1962) the movement seemed to have spent its force, though as a liberating influence on conventional theatre its effects continue to be felt."