

ANNENBERG CENTER

for the performing arts

PRESS RELEASE

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Renowned Gate Theatre of Dublin, Ireland brings celebrated Beckett classics to the Annenberg Center

(Philadelphia, October 27, 2011) —Dublin's acclaimed Gate Theatre returns to the Annenberg Center with a double-bill of two one-act plays at the Annenberg Center by the great Irish modernist writer, playwright and humorist Samuel Beckett. Deft humor meets the bleak and bizarre in stage adaptations considered to be two of Beckett's most important works, ***Endgame*** and ***Watt***, November 8-13, 2011, starring the world's leading Beckett interpreter, Barry McGovern. Performances of ***Endgame*** take place on Tuesday, November 8 at 7 PM; Thursday, November 10 at 7:30 PM; Saturday, November 12 at 2 PM; and Sunday, November 13 at 2 PM. Performances of ***Watt*** take place Wednesday, November 9 at 7:30 PM; Friday, November 11 at 7:30 PM; and Saturday, November 12 at 7:30 PM. Tickets for the performances are \$20-\$48. For tickets or for more information, please visit AnnenbergCenter.org or call 215.898.3900. Tickets can also be purchased in person at the Annenberg Center Box Office.

Endgame tells the amusing tale about the aged and blind Hamm and his servant Clov, co-existing in a mutually dependent and fractious relationship, with only Hamm's legless parents for company. Hailed as one of Beckett's most important works and written in the style associated with the Theatre of the Absurd, the play focuses on the themes of repetition, time, isolation and existence.

Called "ominous and funny" by the *Irish Independent* and "simply outstanding" by the *Guardian*, *Watt* is the extraordinary story of an itinerant character who journeys one day to go work in the remote country home of Mr. Knott. The bizarre adventures of Watt and his struggle to make sense of the world around him are told with elegant simplicity, immense pathos and explosive humor.

The world's leading Samuel Beckett interpreter, **Barry McGovern** has had a long history with the Gate Theatre. He has played Estragon and Vladimir in *Waiting for Godot*, Clov in *Endgame* and Willie in *Happy Days*. He has also played Lucky in *Waiting for Godot*, Krapp in *Krapp's Last Tape*, Harry in *Ember*, Fox in *Rough for Radio II*, Words in *Words and Music* and directed *All That Fall*. His one-man show *I'll Go On* (derived from the novels *Molloy*, *Malone Dies* and *The Unnamable*) was produced by the Gate in 1985 and has played worldwide, most recently at the 2008 Lincoln Center Festival. McGovern has lectured, written and given master classes on Beckett's work and is frequently asked to give readings of the poetry and prose.

McGovern speaks of these two works with the utmost respect: Of *Watt*, McGovern recalls the artistic process of adapting the piece to stage: "I wanted to get the whole thrust of the narrative such as it is, and maybe make people interested in reading the novel for themselves." Of *Endgame*, McGovern details his affinity for the work: "There's a special fascination for me of *Endgame*. It's the first play I did of his. I remember saying that to Beckett, that I wanted to do *Endgame* again, that it was my favorite play of his, and he said "mine too.""

The Gate Theatre has been, artistically and architecturally, a landmark building for over 250 years. Established as a theatre company in 1928 by Hilton Edwards and Micheál MacLiammóir, the Gate offered Dublin audiences an introduction to the world of European and American theatre and also to classics from the modern and Irish repertoire. It was with the Gate that Orson Welles, James Mason and Michael Gambon began their prodigious acting careers. The company performed last at the Annenberg Center in 2006 to sold-out houses with its acclaimed production of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*.

Today, in its 83rd year, the Gate has become unique in that it has had only two artistic directors. In 1983, the directorship passed to Michael Colgan under whose guidance the theatre continues to represent Ireland at the very highest level of artistic endeavor, receiving numerous invitations each year to major festivals on every continent. The Gate has a close association with the works of Samuel Beckett, the late Harold Pinter, Brian Friel and Conor McPherson to name but a few. Having presented many major festivals, both internationally and at home, the Gate continues to develop, nurture and promote the works of a diverse range of playwrights and is committed to delivering the exceptional quality productions that audiences have come to expect.

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This performance is part of the Annenberg Center's Theatre Series. Media support for Gate Theatre performances is provided by WHYY.

INSIGHTS – Performance Enhancement Events for Gate Theatre

11/8:

6:30 PM - "What keeps us going? The dialog." Pre-show talk by **Jim Schlatter**, Ph.D., Chair, Penn Theatre Arts Program focusing on Beckett's use of the pair in his theatre.

Post-show talkback with the **cast** and **Enid Reid Whyte**, M. Phil, Irish Theatre and Film (Trinity College, Dublin) and Manager of Pig Iron's newly-opened School for Advanced Performance Training.

Post-performance 40th Anniversary toast

In celebration of our 40th Anniversary, we'll be providing several opportunities for audience members to get to know each other and the Annenberg Center staff throughout the season. To kick off this celebratory season, we'll be toasting the past 40 years of excellence and our exciting future with festive sparkling cider. Please join us immediately following this performance!

11/9:

7 PM - Pre-show talk with **Jean-Michel Rabaté**, Ph.D., Professor of English & Comparative Literature and Vartan Gregorian Professor in the Humanities at Penn and President of the American Samuel Beckett Studies Association.

Post-show talk with *Watt* director, **Tom Creed** and Professor **Jean-Michel Rabaté**.

11/10:

7 PM - Pre-show talk by **Cary Mazer**, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Theatre Arts at Penn.

Post-show Q & A with the **cast** and Professor **Cary Mazer**.

11/11:

Post-show discussion of Beckett's themes and Q & A with actor, **Barry McGovern**.

INSIGHTS – Performance Enhancement Events

The Annenberg Center offers a range of exciting and informative pre- and post-performance events that are free for all ticket holders. Featuring discussions led by Penn faculty members, area experts and guest artists, these events are designed to illuminate the work on stage. For more information, visit AnnenbergCenter.org/INSIGHTS.

40th Anniversary Season

For the past 40 years, the Annenberg Center has dedicated itself to the advancement of a diverse and thriving cultural community through the pursuit of excellence, innovation and intellectual engagement in the realms of music, theatre and dance. To celebrate the momentous occasion, the Annenberg Center has put together one of the most expansive seasons ever—a nod towards the colorful history of presenting the best of the best from all corners of the globe. With highly acclaimed artists from six continents, audiences can take a journey around the world without leaving their seat. From Zakir Hussain of India and Chunky Move of Australia to the Gate Theatre of Ireland to the Spirit of Uganda from Africa, audience members will see the world in a whole new way.

The Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts

The University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts has been the region's leading multi-disciplinary performance venue for theatre, dance, jazz, world music, new music and children's programming since its inception in 1971. The Annenberg Center's curatorial vision emphasizes four primary values: artistic integrity, cultural diversity, curatorial balance and a willingness to take risks. By presenting world-renowned and cutting edge artists and companies that express adventuresome perspectives on contemporary issues, timeless ideas and diverse cultures, the Annenberg Center promotes critical thinking and dialogue among its audiences, creating a uniquely rewarding arts experience.

The Annenberg Center has achieved national recognition for its outstanding, 29-year Dance Celebration series—presented in partnership with Philadelphia's Dance Affiliates—touring theatre series, and for its superior offerings for children, including both its Student Discovery Series and the acclaimed 28-year Philadelphia International Children's Festival, the oldest festival of its kind in the United States.

Through a generous grant from The Wallace Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, the Annenberg Center showcases outstanding local artists each year through its exciting and diverse By Local series.

Throughout its history, the Annenberg Center has presented innovative and critically-acclaimed theatre productions with some of the biggest stars of stage and screen including Liv Ullmann and Sam Waterston in *A Doll's House*, *A Streetcar Named Desire* with Glenn Close, Jessica Tandy in Beckett's *Not I*, and Tennessee Williams' *Sweet Bird of Youth* with Irene Worth and Christopher Walken. University of Pennsylvania alumnus and noteworthy Broadway producer and director Harold Prince staged many of his plays at the Annenberg Center before taking them to Broadway.

Generous support for the 11/12 Annenberg Center season is provided by The National Endowment for the Arts, The Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, The Philadelphia Cultural Fund, The Philadelphia Foundation, The Wallace Foundation, PNC, The Philadelphia Phillies and The University of Pennsylvania. The Sheraton Philadelphia is the exclusive hotel sponsor.

For additional press information or to set up interviews, please contact:

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