

## Long wait for Godot is finally over

Turns out he's at Theatre Network, with as many questions as answers

**Liz Nicholls**

The Edmonton Journal

*Wednesday, September 24, 2008*

### ALIAS GODOT

Theatre: Theatre Network at the Roxy Theatre, 10708 124th St.

Directed by: Bradley Moss

Written by: Brendan Gall

Starring: Julien Arnold, Brian Dooley, Christopher Schulz, Collin Doyle, James Hamilton

Running: Thursday through Oct. 12

Tickets: 780-453-2440 or Tix on the Square (420-1757)



CREDIT: Ian Jackson/ EPIC Photography  
Alias Godot at the Theatre Network.

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EDMONTON - In *Alias Godot*, which riffs on the most influential play of the 20th century, we finally get to meet the man we've all been waiting for.

Samuel Beckett's *Waiting For Godot* gave us two tramps hanging out endlessly on a country road, waiting for the mysteriously elusive Godot. He never showed up. Till now: *Alias Godot* finds him in handcuffs, getting a going-over by a couple of cops, then a couple of operatives from the anti-terrorism squad.

Bradley Moss's production stars Julien Arnold as Godot, Brian Dooley as Vincent and Christopher Schulz as Edward, James Hamilton as Rocko and Collin Doyle as Linus.

So, Five Guys Talking.

We dropped in at Theatre Network last week where the all-star, all-male five-member cast of *Alias Godot* was on a dinner break, and chewing the fat -- about Canadian playwright Brendan Gall's "comic-tragedy," about having an existential crisis post-9/11, about being in an all-guy cast, about male bonding.

We listened in.

So what are the reference points of this play. Movies? Thought we'd consult with you; you're the experts in pop culture.

Hamilton: A little bit of Reservoir Dogs, a little bit of Usual Suspects.

Doyle: Tango & Cash. Any police-type drama.

Hamilton: A cop-buddy sort of feeling between Vincent and Eddy, between Linus and Rocko, that sort of dynamic. Good cop/bad cop, torturing each other.

Doyle: They (Dooley and Schulz) are sort of like NYPD Blue or The Wire. We're sorta like 24. They're doing the cop show; we're doing the government show. ...

As well as pop culture, there's the most famous play in the world, well, of the 20th century....

Schulz: It's amazing how easily they mesh.

Hamilton: It's all about finding the mystery.

Dooley: Or the solution, if there is one. (Gall) plays around with direct parallels (to Samuel Beckett). But the narrative is pop-contemporary: cops trying to shake down a suspect, a possible terrorist, for reasons that are not really clear.

Schulz: It not only parallels Godot, but it also explains where the guy was, why he didn't show up. This play is where he was, a sort of parallel universe.

So what is the question of Waiting For Godot, anyhow?

Doyle: Isn't it just waiting for something to happen, good or bad? For meaning?

Hamilton: Why are we here? What is our purpose?

Dooley: Well, it was written after the Second World War.

Doyle: ... when everyone was sort of scrambling.

Dooley: Existential bleakness: people were wrestling intellectually with that. And I don't think that's changed very much...

Schulz: ... except this one is post-Sept. 11.

Hamilton: Everybody's been left with so many questions; they don't know where they stand anymore.

Dooley: No question, there's a steady stream of paranoia through this play.... Good and bad are blurred.

Schulz: There's no real defined villain and hero. Especially since we're all onstage at the same time, all looking totally ridiculous, in whatever era of outfit we're wearing.

What about the playwright?

Doyle: Brendan Gall? He's the guy from the commercial for gum, Trident, where he wears his underwear, did you know that? Same guy.

Schulz: Which proves that just because you do commercials ...

What's it like to play The Man?

Arnold (laughing). I love the idea of it ... and the weird little references to Beckett's own life. (Godot) is kind of naive. And he seems to have magic powers. A gentleman farmer. A gentleman French farmer. Pretty fun to play. You get to be the naive one in the midst of all this worldliness, or at least put-on worldliness. It's always fun to play innocence as an obstacle. To take everything literally.

Dooley: Funny even to think of him showing up at all. Even he doesn't know who he is.

Schulz: That's what's so frustrating to the cops. He's trying to figure it out as much as we are.

Arnold: I can't wait to put it on my resume. Godot. "What? You played Godot?"

What if there had been cellphones in Waiting For Godot?

Hamilton: It would have been a much shorter play.

So how does male bonding work? Everyone wants to know.

Hamilton: The first day we got together, oiled up and wrestled for about 15 minutes. To find out who the alpha was and we went from there. ... (general laughter)

Schulz: It might change from day to day.

Dooley: But definitely not Julien Arnold. He takes his job as Godot very seriously: ... Interesting: we represent every decade -- 50s (points at himself), 40s (at Julien), 30s (Collin and James), 20s (Chris).... We do know, however, Julien has developed a poker addiction. First day, showed up with his little book. ... I assume no responsibility.

Hamilton: We had a classic male moment first day of rehearsal; we went to Boston Pizza for lunch

Schulz: And I'm thinking who's gonna order first? Beer? No beer? Is it going to be this kind of show? Or that kind of show? I looked around, it's my turn: "Oh, I'll have iced tea."

Arnold: that's so cute.

Is there such a thing as male energy in a play? Do guys yell at each other more?

Dooley: It's a louder process. (Laughter).

Doyle: Feelings don't come in to play as much. You just say "if you did this onstage it might be funny."

Can you be less, er, polite, than when there are women in the cast?

Dooley: Absolutely.

Hamilton: We're disgusting.

Dooley: There's a locker-room feel to it.

Hamilton: It's not like an Iron Dog, primal scream thing. More like a bowling team. ... A lot of fun.

Arnold: Yeah, quite. ...

Dooley: Well, that was really convincing.

Arnold (laughing): I haven't told you guys this. ... It's really been hard.

Hamilton: Poor Jules; he's been tossed around.

So how would you describe this play?

Arnold: It's a lot more accessible than the original. ... I don't know about you, but it doesn't have the sniff of ... if people think, oh, it's associated with that play I had to read in English 201 or whatever. They won't be disappointed. It's so entertaining. A laugh riot, really; a lot more fun than the original. But not fluff: It does have something about post-9/11 existential...

Dooley: ... aspects of the human condition.

Arnold: '50s existentialism now seems a little, well, we're a little over that now: get over yourself, Sartre.

Dooley: Rest assured, the terms "meta-textual" and "semiotics" were never mentioned in rehearsal. Or "process."

Doyle: Speaking of male bonding, Julien has been eating a can of beans every day.

Hamilton: An entire can of beans. So the blocking shifts daily. ... (Laughter)

Doyle: That's what you notice about all-male casts. Boy people.

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