

[Backstage Christchurch - Theatre Reviews](#)

[5 February 2021](#) · Published on Facebook

| NEW REVIEW |

After a rather damp premiere on the West Coast, Free Theatre Christchurch and Kiwi/Possum Productions have come to Christchurch to present their production of Samuel Beckett's Endgame.

[Backstage Christchurch](#) reviewer [Jordon Jones](#) was there and says: "Beckett's writing is brimming with poignant philosophy and grim humour jostling each other throughout. The Free Theatre and Kiwi/Possum collaboration of his work showed great sensitivity to both these aspects, finding a moving balance."

FULL REVIEW:

Endgame, by Samuel Beckett

[Free Theatre Christchurch](#), in collaboration with Kiwi/Possum Productions

Waldheim, Seven Oaks, 4 February, 2021

Reviewed by [Jordon Jones](#) for [Backstage Christchurch](#)

It often feels these days like the world makes less and less sense. Between the high dramatics of international politics, the lockdowns still happening across the globe, and the ever-present threat of climate change, it seems like an excellent time for a resurgence of absurdist theatre. This is certainly the view of local theatre company Free Theatre Christchurch and their West Coast counterparts Kiwi/Possum Productions, visiting from Blackball. The two groups have collaborated for the first time on a production of the play Endgame, written by Samuel Beckett, one of absurdism's most well-known playwrights.

Endgame was written in the wake of WWII, while the world was holding its breath in hopes of avoiding nuclear war. In his play, Beckett followed this anxiety to its natural conclusion, setting it in a post-apocalyptic wasteland. In this barren place, nothing ever happens; there is no change to tell one day from the next. It is not a play that is in a hurry. What is left to hurry to? Rather, it thoughtfully explores our innate desire for connection, our need to be heard and understood by somebody else.

The main focus is the tension between the characters Hamm and Clov (played by Paul and Emily Maunder respectively), who are presumably two of the last humans living. Hamm was once powerful, but the loss of his sight and mobility has made him dependent upon Clov, who yearns to leave but is compelled to stay. Although they both need each other, Hamm and Clov continuously push each other away. Paul Maunder convincingly emphasised Hamm's selfish, demanding traits, almost holding court in this last abject outpost of humanity. Despite all of Clov's frustrations, presented explosively by Emily Maunder, it is easy to see why he still doesn't dare to go. As irritating as Hamm can be, his company is still better than being alone—Clov's conundrum was made crystal clear in every little hesitation. "What's keeping me here?" cried Clov at one point. Hamm's reply: "The Dialogue."

The only other people we see are Hamm's parents (played by Frank and Elisa Wells), who each live in a corrugated iron box at the back of the stage. I was especially entranced by them, ghostly and trembling in their cells. Stuck dreaming of the past, reverting to a second childhood, they were admirable representations of nostalgia. The Wellses brought a lot of humour to the show, and were thoroughly absorbing despite only being visible from the shoulders up.

The venue for the Christchurch performance of *Endgame* was nothing if not evocative. Seven Oaks is tucked away in an unexpectedly quiet nook of the city, and has a touch of wilderness about it. The stage itself was set up inside an out-of-commission greenhouse that had only a few holes in it, and was framed with brittle, dried-out foliage. Walls of scaffolding inset with a doorway and a pair of angled window frames were all that was needed to convey an enclosed space, like an attic. Overall, the combined effects of the staging and the surrounding area proved to be suitably fitting to the piece.

Beckett's writing is brimming with poignant philosophy and grim humour jostling each other throughout. The Free Theatre and Kiwi/Possum collaboration of his work showed great sensitivity to both these aspects, finding a moving balance. I commend the cast, as well as director Peter Falkenberg and assistant director Marian McCurdy, for all the effort they've put into staging this very timely performance.