

Welcome to this introduction to **'Krapp's Last Tape'** written by Samuel Beckett, directed by Gary Oldman.

Opening the performance as a curtain raiser every night is **'Godot's To-Do List'**, a new Beckett-inspired short play by Jerwood New Playwright Leo Simpe-Asante, directed by **Aneesha Srinivasan**.

The audio described performance is on Saturday the 30th May at 1:30pm with a touch tour at 12pm. The performance of both plays lasts for approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes without an interval. The introductory notes will start 15 minutes before the performance which is audio described by Miranda Yates.

The Royal Court's website tells us, **'On his 69th birthday, a man sits alone and listens to the echoes of his younger self.'**

Please note: the production contains prolonged silence, low lighting, and themes of loneliness, ageing, memory, emotional pressure and regret.

The setting for *Krapp's Last Tape* resembles a dimly lit attic or storage room overflowing with boxes, papers, books and forgotten belongings gathered over many years, lived-in and neglected, as though the physical remains of an entire lifetime have been left to gather dust in the darkness.

The stage is open to us and is about twelve metres wide and deep. At the centre of the stage, towards the front, a well-worn wooden desk rests beneath a concentrated pool of warm amber light, from a battered cream enamel shade suspended a couple of metres above. Amongst the debris that litters the desk are notebooks, loose papers, and a couple of tape reels, but the primary focus on the desk is an old reel-to-reel tape recorder with visible spools and switches.

All around the desk filling much of the space in the rest of the room are uneven mounds made up of archive and storage boxes, wooden tea chests and other decaying cardboard boxes all stuffed with files and documents. And there are narrow cluttered pathways in between the mounds.

A metre or so behind the desk a battered balustrade surrounds a set of stairs that lead to the unseen space below. A little further back in the room another suspended light hangs down into the space, the single bulb at the end illuminated when a small cord attached to the cable is pulled. When this light is on we are able to determine more detail of the back of the space, over filled book cases, and more mounds of boxes and papers. In the centre at the back a tall cupboard is filled by stacks of boxed and labelled reel to reel tapes. But for much of the time the back of the space is shrouded in shadow giving the impression that the room continues far beyond what is fully visible

The dim, dusty and cluttered environment suggests a space of long-term solitude, filled by memory and habit. The often quiet even silent nature of the space heightens the sense of isolation and intimacy, and magnifies the detail of the sounds we hear like the click of switches, the whirring of tape reels, and rustling paper.

Krapp played by Gary Oldman is a white man in his late sixties, worn down by age, and isolation. His thinning grey hair has a greasy appearance hanging in uneven wisps around his face, and his greying beard is a little unruly. His watery blue eyes are pale and hooded, and beneath his fleshy cheeks, deep lines surround his mouth. Krapp's body is slightly stooped and heavy through the shoulders and stomach, and though his gate is steady it feels laboured and slow.

His clothes are well worn, chosen for habit and comfort rather than appearance, and blending with the tones of his environment. His stained pale cream shirt is collarless and worn open with a dark charcoal-grey waistcoat, and he wears a pair of dark trousers that are slightly too small, with a pair of suede lace up boots.

Godot's To-Do List which precedes Krapp's Last Tape, is a contemporary curtain raiser inspired by Beckett's work. The production uses the same cluttered environment with the addition of two items – one is a tall stool with a red upholstered seat and the other is a strange metal plant like structure about 50 cm tall, a little like a children's wire puzzle game, the plant symbolic of the tree seen often in Beckett's play *Waiting For Godot*.

Lighting for this piece is brighter and more open than in *Krapp's Last Tape*. The central character, **Godot**, is played by a Black actor in his late twenties with a solid physique, short cropped black afro hair and a neat, trimmed beard. He wears a smart pressed Black suit with a white shirt fastened by a black tie with small white dots. His shoes are polished black lace ups and he carries a black bowler hat. He has a quick nervous energy and an expressive face, his eyes often flit about wide and anxious scanning the space around him.

The other character known as **To-Do List** is played by a female actor as an unseen voice.

Cast and Production Credits

KRAPP'S LAST TAPE:

Krapp's Last Tape is written by **Samuel Beckett**.

Performed, directed and designed by **Gary Oldman**

Costumes are by **Guy Speranza**

The Lighting Designer is **Malcolm Rippeth**

The Sound Designer is **Tom Smith**

And Voice Recording Sound Engineer and Editor for Studio One is **Gary Canale**.

In GODOT'S TO-DO LIST the performers are **Shakeel Haakim** and **Flora Ashton**

The writer is **Leo Simpe-Asante** and the director is **Aneesha Srinivasan**.

This is the end of the introduction to **Krapp's Last Tape** and **Godot's To-Do List** at the Royal Court Theatre. If you have any questions or need further information please contact the box office on 020 7565 5000.

