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## [Not So Futile](#)

Posted by **Bill Marx**, Friday, October 14th, 2005

Paradoxical as it may seem, it is somewhat heartwarming to see Molasses Tank Productions' "Acts of Futility" (at the Charlestown Working Theater through October 29). The hour long program is made of up six absurdist dribs and drabs from Samuel Beckett, a winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature who was a major influence on the latest recipient of the award, Harold Pinter. What with the realism of TV spreading like kudzu over the theater, the cool abstraction of Beckett comes as a bracing refreshment.

Along with providing mini-doses of Beckett's poetic despair, the MTP production teams the company with a local artist, sculptor Pat Keck, who had a hand in the production's effective set, costumes, and make-up, including a checkerboard floor, white-faced actors, and splashes of color. The show's music wasn't always what Beckett called for — the blues — but it wasn't seriously off-base.

The evening's pieces, written between 1956 and 1984, didn't include my favorite Beckett shorts. I have never taken to the comically (?) sadistic vision of either part of "Act Without Words"; "Catastrophe" is the most didactic playlet the dramatist ever penned. The MTP production is acted and directed with earnest dispatch. The youngish performers don't always give off the requisite smell of mortality, especially in "Come and Go," which is about three women wondering about which one will die first. "Ohio Impromptu" could have used more rhetorical nuance. But at its best "Acts of Futility" serves Beckett's poetry well: the evening ends with a well-staged version of "Breath," a last gasp that mingles relief and horror.

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