

# Endgame

*Crips vs BLOOD*

**W**alking out of an absurdist Samuel Beckett play and pondering the meaning and subtext is typical. Is this play about the end of the world, the state of humanity, atomic destruction or the absurdity of life? All of these things? These questions haunt and tickle viewers of *Endgame*, playing through Nov. 20 at Lord Leebrick Theatre.

The play features Hamm (Ralph Steadman), blind and unable to stand, his eternally bipedal servant Clov (Tom Wilson), unable to sit, living in a mysterious end-of-days scenario. Steadman plays to Hamm's unlikeability, a cranky, dying, steampunk Santa Claus, while Wilson hams up Clov's simpler dialogue with physical comedy and excellent timing.

Peter Anthony Holden and Diane Johnson are fantastic as Nagg and Nell, Hamm's legless, trash can-inhabiting parents. Their witty repartee centers on their lives before whatever disaster has befallen the world and shows just how much physical comedy and blocking can be accomplished inside a rubbish bin.

*Endgame* is an absurdist choose-your-own-philosophical-adventure of sorts. Clov repeatedly threatens to leave but doesn't know where he'd go; the world outside is so ruined that even the sea has disappeared and there are no other people left. Perhaps Beckett's clearest clue into the meaning of the play is its name, taken from chess, coupled with the repetitive movements and words of its actors.

Critics have suggested that *Endgame* is a nuclear disaster scenario or a reflection of Beckett's relationship with James Joyce. But Beckett dismissed these notions, instead insisting that the play is a *tabula rasa* for viewers to create their own meanings.

Despite all the cerebral back-and-forth wrapped up in viewing *Endgame*, it's still a darkly funny show. As Nell says, "Nothing is funnier than unhappiness," and misery is certainly a central character in the play.

The Lord Leebrick production's director Joseph Gilg writes that he follows Beckett's direction to leave it to viewers to provide meaning and context to the production, quoting Beckett's letter to America's first director of the show, "If people want to have headaches among the overtones, let them."

**EW**

*Endgame* plays through Nov. 20 at Lord Leebrick Theatre, 540 Charnelton St.; lordleebrick.com or 465-1506.



## Sheldon Theatre Stages Controversial Laramie Project

Matthew Shepard was brutally beaten and murdered due to the anger and ignorance of his community. Now the drama students at Sheldon High School revisit the events of the prairie town in 1998 to come to their own truth about tolerance.

"The gay students in the cast and crew really feel supported and validated," says director Nancy Anderson, "and the conservative students have had their eyes (and) minds opened. ... We're not really asking anyone to change their beliefs, just be tolerant and accepting."

Let's support these students as they take on tough issues. — Anna Grace

The Laramie Project runs 7:30 pm Nov. 11-12 at Sheldon High School; \$12, \$8 stu. & sr.