

Press release, September 2021



WHY NOT THEATRE COMPANY

presents

HAPPY DAYS

by Samuel Beckett

Beckett's 60 year old masterpiece is still highly topical in times of climate emergency and corona.



Guest performance at Teatret ved Sorte Hest

Premiere: September 3rd 2021

A genuine classic manages to appeal to generation upon generation as it deals with enduring themes while still being able to reflect the present. HAPPY DAYS is among the best contemporary classics in theatre history. The eternal optimist Winnie executes her daily, mundane rituals in the hope of engaging her silent husband, Willie, as she just as slowly sinks deeper and deeper into the earth. The image is absurd, but extremely recognisable!

Why Not Theatre Company has invited stage director Peter Dupont Weiss to unfold Beckett's challenging play and take us on a meandering and poetic journey through playful absurdities and dark humour in order to delve into the very foundations of existence.

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Being human is absurd

At the heart of HAPPY DAYS we find the absurdist pivot that life is utterly meaningless, and our attempts to assign meaning are doomed to fail, as death - or impending death - is always present. Winnie wakes up every morning with a belief that the world is a good place and her little rituals keep her going through the day. Yet behind her fluttering chit-chat and constant attempts to engage her life-weary husband, Willie, we spot a vulnerability, an insecurity, and a sense of foreboding.

And Winnie is an expression of this hope, she is a survivor, who clings to her faith, her routines and the tiniest bit of contact with her husband to provide life with some meaning, despite the fact that the end is rapidly approaching.

Absurdism is able to portray human fragility, exhibit our power of imagination, and make us laugh at our own suffering. HAPPY DAYS is pain and joy at once, and you end up breathless, holding your own small existence between your hands.

Climate crisis, corona and art as a breath of fresh air

Absurdism was born out of a time of upheaval, post World War II, in a time when people had lost faith in authorities, God and the concept of a 'good person'. A world in crisis is also a world that is open to new thoughts and impulses. Today we are able to recognise trends from back then. We are facing colossal challenges on both climate and societal levels, challenges which can be hard for the individual to comprehend without losing heart. The future has become uncertain and blurred, creating a sense of unease which has only been heightened by pandemic restrictions proving that basic human rights, such as freedom of movement or assembly, can be removed in a split second. When the world becomes unmanageable, the absurdist universe suddenly seems incredibly tangible and easy to understand. We are able to mirror our own powerlessness in Winnie's engulfing mud heaps and we recognise Willie's struggle to drag himself merely a few feet in the course of a day. Art becomes a space where we can see our place within the larger context, and simultaneously a place where we are freed of it for a brief, joyous moment.

As Beckett would put it: "When you're in the shit up to your neck, there's nothing left to do but sing."

The performance lasts 1 hour and 35 minutes and is performed in English at Teatret ved Sorte Hest in the period September 3rd - 25th 2021. Tickets can be purchased via <https://www.teater tickets.dk/forestillinger/happy-days/>

Yours sincerely
Nina / Why Not Theatre Company

For further information, please contact:
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FACTS ABOUT HAPPY DAYS:

Cast: Sue Hansen-Styles and Nathan Meister

Director / Set Designer: Peter Dupont Weiss

Playwright: Samuel Beckett

Producer: Foreningen Why Not Theatre Company

Venue: Teatret ved Sorte Hest, Vesterbrogade 150, København V.

The performance is supported by: Københavns Kommunes Scenekunstudvalg, Hoffmann and Husmans Fond, William Demant Fonden, Knud Højgaards Fond, A.P. Møller Fonden, Beckett-Fonden.

In the afterlife, we'll sit around talking about the good old days, when we wished we were dead.

- Beckett

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About Why Not Theatre Company:

Why Not Theatre Company is a professional theatre association founded in 2011. Today it is one of Denmark's leading professional, English-speaking theatres. Our mission is to tell captivating stories that are relevant, engaging and inspiring. We delve into texts of high literary quality and tell thoughtful stories that enthrall our audiences. We play exclusively in English in order to reach a wide audience with an interest in international performing arts.

Why Not Theatre Company is known for successful performances such as *Vita and Virginia* at CaféTeatret in 2011 and *Teatret ved Sorte Hest* in 2016, *Wit* at Bådteatret in 2014, for which CPH-Culture named Sue Hansen-Styles "Best Female Lead of the year" and the production 'Best Foreign Theatre of the Year', *Secrets* at Halmlager and *The Cheyenne are Leaving* at Teatret ved Sorte Hest (2020), for which our in-house writer Tanja Mastilo recently won the Reumert award for "Playwright of the Year".

Sue Hansen-Styles - Actor and artistic director

Sue Hansen-Styles is an autodidact actor. Sue was born, raised and went to university in England, which she left in 1994. After seven years in Luxembourg and Brussels, where she played theatre, she moved to Denmark with her Danish husband. Here she worked for two years at DR as a journalist and newscaster at the 'News in English' editorial office.

In 2007, she started Why Not Theatre Company with Nathalie Johnston, who since moved back to England. Sue became Artistic Director of Why Not Theatre Company in 2011 and has starred in almost all of their performances since then.

Nathan Meister - Actor

Nathan Meister is a New Zealand actor who graduated from the New Zealand Theatre School Toi Whakaari in 2002. Since then, he has worked in film, television and theatre. Nathan has appeared in minor roles in major films such as *The Hobbit* (2012), *Avatar* (2009) and in Steven Spielberg's *Tintin: The Secret of the Unicorn* (2011) and was nominated in 2014 as 'Best Actor' at the NZ Film Awards for his role in *Realiti* (2014).

Nathan moved to Denmark with his wife and three children in 2013 and debuted for Why Not Theatre Company with *Secrets* in 2015, while he had the title role as Nikola Tesla in *Mr Tesla Played* and has since starred in *MAIREAD* and *The Cheyenne are Leaving*.

Peter Dupont Weiss - Director, Set Designer, Costumes and Props

Peter was trained as a stage director from the Statens Teaterskole 1995-99. He has been a house director and dramaturgy member at Aalborg Theatre (2001-03) and at Radio Drama, DR (2002-04).

Peter has had directorial assignments at Mammutteatret, Svalegangen, Teater Får 302, Husets Teater, Jomfru Ane Teatret, Bådteatret, Kaleidoskop, Aarhus Teater and Odense Teater. In November 2012, he directed "Midsummer" at CaféTeatret and in 2014 *Wit* for Why Not Theatre Company at Bådteatret.