

Waiting for Waiting for Godot

A Comitravesty in One Act

By Mark Friedman

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Approximate performance time: 10 minutes

Characters:

Mercator

Donde

Man

Woman (off stage voice)

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Stage set up: Stage left is half a shallow thrust stage with a single dead tree on it. Back center is three rows of tiered theater seats or loose folding chairs. Stage right are three rows of tiered seats facing stage left. Two men (or two women) about the same age enter from the audience and sit in seats in the first or second row back center. The first man (stage right) is taller and more formally dressed. The second man is shorter and dressed less formally. They sit for 20 seconds in silence, looking around, looking at their programs.

MERCATOR: Hmmm...

DONDE: When do you think it will start?

MERCATOR: Will it ever start is the question.

DONDE: Yes.

They sit there for a full minute in silence, looking at their programs, shifting in their seats. (Adjust the length of the pause here. Not too much, but enough to make the audience uncomfortably conscious of itself waiting.)

DONDE: Mercator, what's the play about?

MERCATOR: Waiting, you idiot.

DONDE: Waiting?

MERCATOR: Yes, waiting. Waiting for Godot. That's the name of the play. What do you think it's about?

DONDE: I don't know. I guess I should have known that. Waiting, huh....

(Pause while Donde thinks.)

DONDE: If they're waiting for Godot, what happens when Godot gets there.

MERCATOR: He never does.

DONDE: He never gets there?

MERCATOR: Right.

DONDE: So what happens in the play?

MERCATOR: Nothing.

DONDE: Nothing?

MERCATOR: They all wait around for Godot and he never comes. That's the play.

DONDE: We're going to watch a play where people wait around and nothing happens?

MERCATOR: Yes, that's right. It's existential.

DONDE: Existential?

MERCATOR: Right. It's supposed to make you uncomfortable. Make you realize how meaningless your life is.

DONDE: Do we have to watch it?

MERCATOR: Yes, it's good for you.

DONDE: Good for me?

MERCATOR: Yes, it will make you a better person.

DONDE: How?

MERCATOR: It will help you see how bad your life really is. The reality of life is not obvious, you know.

DONDE: No, I guess not.

MERCATOR: *(fatherly)* You have to study it, Donde.

DONDE: OK.

MERCATOR: People are always waiting. People's lives are always meaningless. Look at us. We're waiting. We're not happy about it. But we're waiting. That's what the play is about.

(Pause while Donde thinks.)

DONDE: Mercator, I've always wanted to ask you something? What kind of name is Mercator?

MERCATOR: It's geography. My mother wanted me to know where I was all the time. I don't think she really knew what it meant. *(pause)* How did you end up with a name like Donde?

DONDE: My mother was real sick when she had me. When she woke up after I was born the first thing she said was, "Where am I?" The nurses started calling me Donde.

(Pause while Donde thinks.)

DONDE: Do you realize that there's no one else here.

MERCATOR: Yes, we seem to be the only ones.

DONDE: Wasn't it supposed to start by now.

MERCATOR: Yes.

DONDE: Why isn't anyone else here?

MERCATOR: Maybe they're waiting for more people before they start.

DONDE: Oh.

MERCATOR: You can't have a play with just two people, now could you?

DONDE: No, I guess not.

MERCATOR: Well that's right. So we'll have to wait for more people to come. Then they'll start.

DONDE: OK.

(Pause while Donde thinks.)

DONDE: So what do you want to talk about?

MERCATOR: Oh be quiet.

(Pause while Donde thinks.)

DONDE: I don't think my life is meaningless. My job is pretty good. And I had a date with Ramona last week.

MERCATOR: You had a date?

DONDE: Yes, it was a good date too. We went to a movie and we actually held hands. I got chills. I think I love her, Mercator.

MERCATOR: You can't be sure of that. How would you know that?

DONDE: I don't know. I just do.

MERCATOR: Well imagine two people in love in the middle of a huge desert and there's nothing for a thousand miles around and they're going to die. You and Ramona are going to die like that and so it's all meaningless.

(Pause while Donde thinks.)

DONDE: We could play in the sand before we died, couldn't we?

MERCATOR: Yes, but it's hot and there are snakes and no water. How much fun would that be?

DONDE: Snakes?

MERCATOR: Yes, snakes.

DONDE: I don't like snakes.

MERCATOR: So you wouldn't have any fun.

(Brief pause. Then there's a noise back stage like someone dropping a prop or a broom falling over.)

DONDE: Did you hear that noise?

MERCATOR: Yes.

DONDE: Maybe they're getting ready to start.

MERCATOR: Maybe.

DONDE: I have to go to the bathroom. Do you think there's time for me to go to the bathroom?

MERCATOR: No, it could start any minute. You don't want to walk back in after it's started.

DONDE: No *(squirming a little)*

(Pause while Donde thinks)

DONDE: I could be fast.

MERCATOR: No.

(Donde squirms a little more.)

DONDE: This play doesn't sound like that much fun. Why did we come to see it?

MERCATOR: We had to see it. It's a great play. If you want to understand your life you have to experience art. This play is great art.

DONDE: Like paintings?

MERCATOR: Yes, paintings are art. But theater is art too. And music and sculpture. They're all art. You see the artists are better people than we are because they see life for what it really is. And then they teach us what they learned. That's what art is all about.

DONDE: Why don't they just write it down so we can read it? If they figured something out that's important, why don't they just write it down?

MERCATOR: Well they do. That's why the play is written down.

DONDE: No it's not. You have to sit here and watch it. If you could just read it then people wouldn't need to come to see it. That would be a waste of time.

MERCATOR: Art is never a waste of time. If you want to be smarter and better than other people, you have to pay attention to art. You have to like it.

DONDE: What if I don't like it?

MERCATOR: Well you have to.

(Pause while Donde squirms some more.)

DONDE: Look, I'll be right back real fast. (He stands up)

MERCATOR: No wait here. *(Mercator tugs on his sleeve to make him sit down.)*

DONDE: No, I'll be real fast. *(And he moves fast down the aisle and off stage right.)*

(Mercator sits there looking at the program for a minute. Then he looks around and stands up like he's being sneaky. He takes a big stretch. After a minute, there is the sound of a toilet flushing, not too loud, from off right. Mercator looks off right and sits down real fast, taking his relaxed bored attitude, reading the program. Donde enters right.)

MERCATOR: That was pretty fast.

DONDE: Yes, I told you *(He sits down.) (Whispering)* Did anything happen?

MERCATOR: No, nothing.

DONDE: I want to go. This is boring.

MERCATOR: You can't go. They're going to do an important play. We paid for these tickets. You have to stay.

DONDE: But it's boring just sitting here. I don't think they're going to do the play. There aren't enough people. You said so.

MERCATOR: Yes, but they have to do the play. Theater people don't just cancel shows.

DONDE: But it will be embarrassing to be the only people in the audience. What if we don't like it? We'd be stuck here. We couldn't get up and leave. That would be terrible.

MERCATOR: Oh stop fussing and be quiet. More people will come and it will start any time now.

DONDE: OK.

(long pause)

DONDE: I don't think I like art.

MERCATOR: You don't like art! How could you say that?

DONDE: Well some of it's pretty and that's alright. And movies are good. But this kind of art just isn't any fun.

MERCATOR: Oh you have something better to do?

DONDE: Well, we could go to a movie, or we could walk down to the river. (pause) We could get an ice cream cone!

MERCATOR: It's too cold for ice cream.

DONDE: Yes, but we could get one anyway.

MERCATOR: How are you going to enjoy the play if you're thinking about ice cream?

DONDE: I don't know. I guess I can't learn anything if I'm enjoying myself, right?

MERCATOR: Right.

DONDE: Maybe we could get ice cream later.

MERCATOR: We'll see.

(pause, sound of a muffled argument back stage.)

DONDE: I think they're getting ready.

(the argument gets louder)

OFFSTAGE WOMAN: You expect me to go out there with two people in the audience? Two!

OFFSTAGE MAN: Look, calm down. Let's just think about this as another rehearsal.

OFFSTAGE WOMAN: You're crazy. This is embarrassing. I won't do it. (*muffled sound of door slamming*)

OFFSTAGE MAN: (*shouting after her*) Yes, you will!

DONDE: I think they're ready.

MERCATOR: No they're not. They're arguing.

DONDE: (*thinking*) Yes, but maybe that's how actors get ready. They argue.

(*Mercator just stares at him.*)

MERCATOR: We'll wait here as long as it takes. We bought tickets. It's a great play and I want to see it. They have to do it.

DONDE: (*Looking around, he stands up.*) Mercator, let's go. (*Mercator pulls him back into the seat.*)

MERCATOR: No I'm staying right here in this seat until they show me the play.

DONDE: I'm tired of waiting.

MERCATOR: It's good for you.

DONDE: Waiting is good for me?

MERCATOR: Yes, waiting, art, suffering. It's all the same. it builds character. If you build enough character, you become a great person. Don't you want to be a great person, Donde?

DONDE: OK (*defeated*).

(*pause*)

DONDE: I'm going. (*he stands up again.*)

MERCATOR: No, you're not. You can't leave me here as the only person. Then they really will cancel the show and it will be all your fault.

DONDE: I don't care. I'm going. (*he moves down the aisle out of reach of Mercator.*)

MERCATOR: (*trying not to shout*) You're not going. Get back here.

DONDE: I'm going to get some ice cream. Do you want to come?

MERCATOR: (*in a rage, shouting*) NO! No ICE CREAM!

DONDE: I'll see you later, Mercator.

MERCATOR: *(loud whisper)* Donde, if you don't get back here, I'll....

DONDE: You'll what *(with some innocence)*.

MERCATOR: I'll stop being your friend.

DONDE: *(hesitates, worried for a second)* No you won't, Mercator. You'll always be my friend. I'm going to get some ice cream. I'll wait for you down by the river. *(He exits stage right)*

MERCATOR: *(calling after him, loud again)* Donde!

(No response. Mercator looks around, self consciously, and sits down. He looks at the program. He starts to hum absent mindedly. There's another sound backstage. After another pause a man enters onto the stage. He's still in makeup and part of his costume from the play, either Vladimir or Estragon.)

MAN: I'm sorry sir, but we've had to cancel the show.

MERCATOR: *(disbelief)* The show is cancelled?

MAN: Yes, I'm sorry.

MERCATOR: But I was really looking forward to seeing it.

MAN: I'm sorry. Maybe you can come another time. But we're not doing this show tonight.

MERCATOR: OK. *(pause)* Is it OK if I sit here for a minute?

MAN: OK, just for a minute.

(Man takes the tree from the stage and exits backstage. After a long minute he reenters carrying a ring of keys.)

MAN: Sir, I'm afraid you're going to have to leave. We're going to close the theater pretty soon.

MERCATOR: I won't be here long.

MAN: I mean right now, sir. We're going to close the theater right now. I can't leave you in here. I have to lock up.

MERCATOR: But I don't have any place else to go.

MAN: That's too bad. *(pause)* Why don't you go get some coffee? There's a shop right down the street. You could sit there as long as you want. They have ice cream.

MERCATOR: *(Absently)* Yes, that's a good idea. *(pause)*

(Mercator gets up and moves to the end of the aisle near the stage. And comes out in front of the stage.)

MERCATOR: Do you think I could sit on the stage for just a minute? I always wondered what it would be like to be on a stage.

MAN: *(Shrugs his shoulders)* OK, but be quick about it. Then we're turning out the lights and you have to go.

Mercator grabs a loose audience chair and puts in on the play stage facing down right. He takes a minute to position it just right. The man sits in a chair, first row, stage right, watching Mercator, waiting for him. Mercator sits in his chair on stage grandly, like a great actor sitting down. He looks around. He seems proud of himself. Then he slouches in the chair, deflated, and stares straight ahead, waiting. He looks at his program. Sighs. Drops his head. The man claps slowly, four or five times, almost taunting, but does not get up. The sound of snakes comes up softly. The lights go out.

END