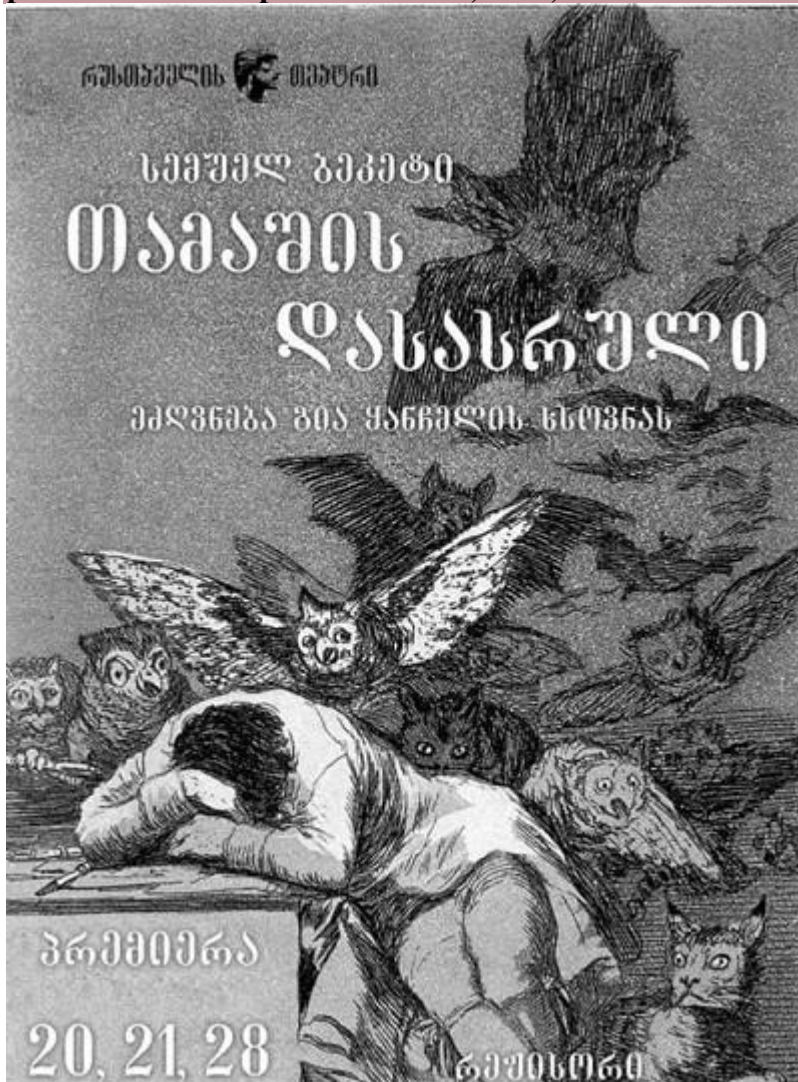


# The Game Is Over

Marina (Maka) Vasadze

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***Endgame*. By Samuel Beckett. Director: Robert Sturua. Designer: Miron Shvelidze. Choreographer: Kote Purtseladze. Cast: Davit Uplisashvili, Goga Barbakadze, Nana Pachuashvili, Levan Berikashvili, Gabriel Barbakadze. The premiere was held on February 20, 2020, at the Rustaveli Theatre, Tbilisi, Georgia. The world TV premiere of the performance took place on June 7, 2020, on TV IMEDI.**



“The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters” (1797–99)

The poster features Goya’s etching

Robert Sturua starts work on a play by modifying and editing the text. This time he has translated Samuel Beckett’s play together with Nino Kantidze and created the stage text. Watching the performance of *Endgame*, one can recognize phrases from *Waiting for Godot*,

from *the Book of Revelation* and phrases by Sturua himself. In the performance the same texts, the same actions are not repeated with the frequency of Beckett's play; however, Sturua retains Beckett's rhythm and musicality. The texts of all four characters are shortened. The feeling of suffocating hopelessness becomes more emphasized, and the feeling of collapse of the gloomy world, the apocalypse, more horrible. Sturua's production is a warning to mankind about the end of the world. Its form goes beyond epic and non-epic genres, and even beyond the maestro's polystylistic theatrical language itself.



Hamm (Davit Uplisashvili) and Clov (Goga Barbakadze) “philosophize.” Photo: Tina Kazakhishvili

In editing the text, the director emphasises Beckett's biblical allusions. At the end of the play, in a devastated environment, a little boy appears on the distant horizon, leaning against a stone. Hamm orders Clov to kill the boy. He addresses the darkness. He wants the world to be destroyed because he knows “the game is over,” and he does not want to end as a loser. The boy-hope must die. Sturua's main concept is this episode. He has turned the boy into Christ. The performance begins and ends with the appearance of Christ.

By depicting Goya's etching "The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters" on the poster, the director and the designer tell the audience: disregard for the mind, given by God, generates monsters and foreshadows the apocalypse.

The performance retains the setting described in the play's stage directions, with the exception of some details. For example, there is a gray gate at the back of the stage (instead of a window), and an angel with a trumpet is depicted at its top.



Clov (G. Barbakadze) at the gate. Photo: Tina Kazakhishvili

Beyond the gate, using light-and-shade, there is sometimes heaven, sometimes hell, from which Christ or satanic shadows appear. An old-fashioned telephone is added to the props (the phone call is also mentioned in the play). It is used twice, in the middle of the action and almost at the culmination. Hamm calls the "superior" and requests an explosion.



Hamm (D. Uplisashvili) and Clov (G. Barbakadze) contact “the superior.” Photo: Tina Kazakhishvili

The director often designs the lighting himself: grades of colors, endless space with the moon and stars, the stuffy atmosphere of a dungeon and a huge ocean wave on the stage.

For many years, the music for Sturua’s performances was written by Gia Kancheli. This time, the maestro himself has created the musical score—with excerpts from Gia Kancheli, Schumann, Bach, Tchaikovsky, Schubert, Elgar, Gershwin, as well as the Greek orthodox chant *Kyrie eleison*. The melodies are refrains to the episodes or characters and express mood. Robert Sturua dedicated the production to the memory of Gia Kancheli (1935–2019).

Davit Uplisashvili’s Hamm and Goga Barbakadze’s Clov are clowns. Hamm is the senior clown. Clov is the “junior” clown, enslaved by the “senior.” Towards the finale, Clov, trying to free himself from Hamm’s “slavery,” resembles a disguised secret service agent of the 1940s or 1950s. In the finale he is a clown again. The “clownish” nature of these two characters derives from Beckett’s play.

In Beckett's play, Hamm's and Clov's mission to destroy life has an ironic shade. A flea that crawls into Clov's pants is quickly destroyed as it can prolong life. Hamm says to Clov: "But humanity might start from there all over again! Catch him, for the love of God!" Sturua is more grotesque, Hamm's address openly "threatens" God.

Sturua exaggeratedly expresses Clov's love of order. In one episode, he turns Clov into a servant of dictator-usurpers; moreover, Clov himself turns into a clown with these qualities. The song by Zarah Leander, favourite singer of the Third Reich, "Davon geht die Welt nicht unter" is played. Clov marches like a soldier and utters the phrase that has become a motto: "Order first of all!" The director's hint is clear: this is where mankind is heading! Thunder is heard. Frightened, Clov runs to Hamm, sits on his lap and hugs him. Once again he asks for help from the oppressor.



Nell (Nana Pachuashvili), a woman suffering from life. Photo: Tina Kazakhishvili

Hamm's parents, thrown into a trash can by Hamm, are grotesquely sentimental, stupid scumbags in Beckett's play. In this performance, Nell is a more "positive" character. Despite a minor part, the actress Nana Pachuashvili accurately conveys the task set by the director and creates a memorable image of an old, tired woman suffering from life. Levan

Berikashvili's Nagg is turned into a clochard as a result of Hamm's revenge. Hamm became a despot and a heartless man mostly because of Nagg. Berikashvili plays a foolish, selfish, sneaky old man, still in love with his wife, at the same time grotesque and boring.



Nagg (Levan Berikashvili), a clochard. Photo: Tina Kazakhishvili

The director uses freeze frame and fade along with other cinematographic techniques in the performance, and, in the finale, he also uses a technique of interaction with the audience. Hamm: "It's my turn"—addresses the spectators: "I could help you as a neighbour. I could not save you, just as you could not save me. You have no bread? Eat cakes! (Ironically) Love will save you! But you enjoy earthly joys!"—He points to his penis with his hand. "What do you want?!"—he quarrels with the Bible—"I felt the end from the very beginning." He falls, as if fainting—"Help." Clov walks onstage and addresses the audience: "Good evening. Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*. End of the world or the performance? I feel sorry for him"—he points at Hamm.

Sturua begins and ends the play with the appearance of Christ, and he has thus linked the message, form, structure. In the finale, with the chant in the background, a boy (Gabriel Barbakadze) dressed in white—Christ—enters, takes the Bible, which at the beginning of the performance was placed on the proscenium. Hamm orders Clov: "Shoot, kill him like

a dog, they will propagate and nothing will help us!” Clov: “I can’t!” He hesitates, but like any true slave, he fires the gun with which he was going to kill Hamm. He shoots, shoots at kindness, purity, love, faith, the future of the world. Mankind has again doomed the Saviour, the Son of God, to death. The boy-Christ waves his hand in disappointment.



Clov shoots at the boy-Christ. Photo: Tina Kazakhishvili

Darkness falls on the stage, music builds to a crescendo. At the same time, a terrible and amazing picture unfolds. A huge wave rises on the stage: behind it the ghosts of Hamm, Clov, Nagg and Nell appear. Again darkness, light—all the characters of the play are on the stage. The game is over, the Apocalypse of Our Days is over.



An apocalyptic wave closes the show. Photo: Tina Kazakhishvili

Shortly after the premiere, COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic.

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