

J. N. Redelinghuys

# Murphy vs Mr Endon



a chess game for  
2 chess players,  
2 pianists,  
and a narrator

This piece is a dramatisation and musical interpretation of the bizarre chess game played between the titular character in Becket's *Murphy* and a psychiatric patient, Mr Endon. Although the characters never sit down to a formal game in the novel, they are brought together here, though the two still do not acknowledge each other. The game itself is a dialogue between two polar ways of viewing the world: Mr Endon, although labeled as insane, moves the pieces into beautiful configurations, with an almost balletic sense of choreography. Murphy, with his relative sanity, attempts to understand and imitate Mr Endon, but is ultimately unable to, defeated by the slightest deviation from his logical understanding of chess. The two pianos accompany this dance, aiming to somehow interpret the piece's movements, whilst forming their own imitative duel.

### Dramatis personae

**Murphy** (dressed in a turtle neck; he plays the game with an analytical mind and moves the pieces carefully and deliberately).

accompanied by **Piano 1** (who plays in a confident, practiced, fluid style).

**Mr Endon** (a short person, dressed in pyjamas; he plays the game instinctively, and moves the pieces wantonly and quickly - he never regards the board in between moves).

accompanied by **Piano 2** (who plays in a highly emotive style).

The **Narrator** (dressed formally; an omniscient and charismatic persona who controls the game, comments on it, and acts as a link between the audience and the performers).

N.B. any of the above characters can be played by any sex or gender.

### Stage layout

(illustrated on next page)

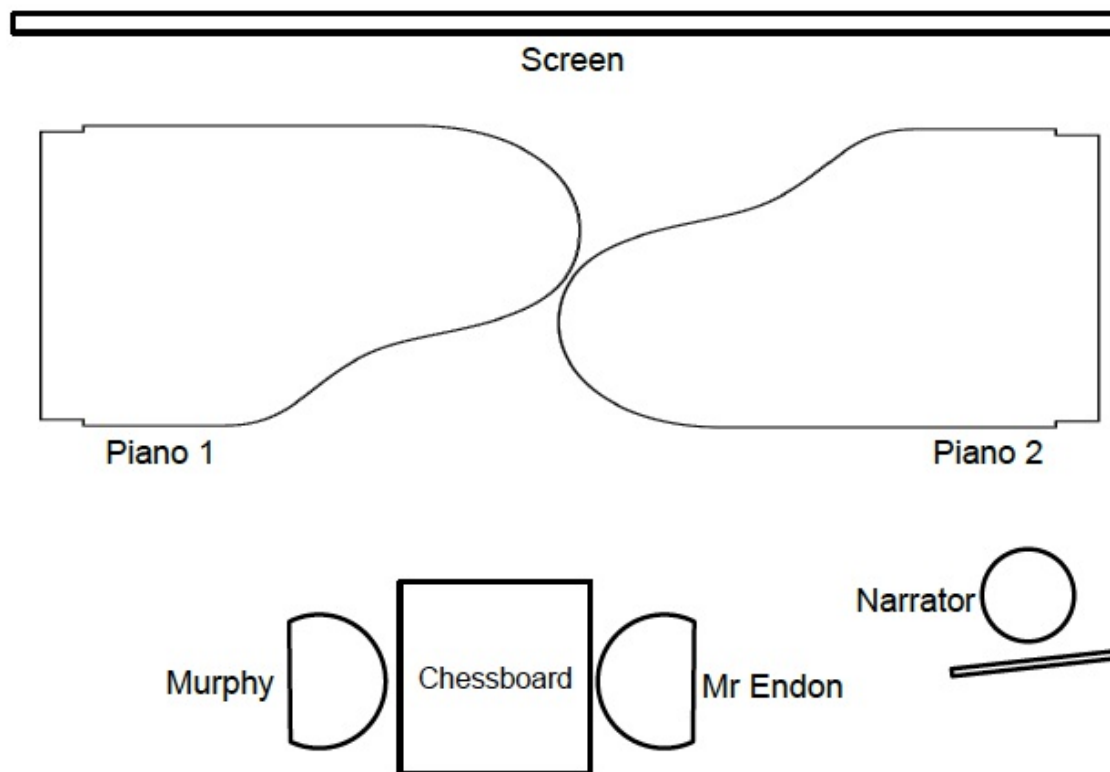
The initial layout is a table in the middle of the stage with a chess board on it, and chairs of any nature on either side (stage left and right). At this point the chess pieces are not laid out on the board but are sitting to one side.

A camera is positioned above the table, focussed on the chess board, and is projecting on to a screen a few metres behind the board. The camera should be angled slightly to show the height of the chess pieces.

Piano 1 is positioned stage right, piano 2 stage left. The pianos are angled approximately 30-45 degrees relative to the edge of the stage so that the audience primarily sees the pianists' backs, with a small glimpse of their hands and the keyboard.

All of this layout should be lit, but the centre of the stage (the table and its surrounds) should be noticeably brighter than the pianos. It may be prudent to have lights on the piano stands if it proves too difficult to read the scores.

Although by no means essential, my personal preference for chess set would be a replica of Man Ray's 1920 chess set. Failing this, any set - traditional, abstract, plain, ornate etc. - may be used.



### General performance notes

The notation of the piece is structured similarly to the game in the novel, which uses standard chess notation: each bar represents one move (or narrator's comment). Each pair of White/Black movements is given a rehearsal mark: these are included as a formality, and are not to be read, but may be used like rehearsal marks if convenient.

The timing of the piece is indicated in two different ways, depending on the context. In cases where there are pauses inbetween moves, or when a narrator's comment moves directly into a chess move, the narrator dictates the timing, which is followed as soon as possible by the pianists and the chess players. In cases where the musical material flows between bars, the narrator should anticipate, and speak exactly on the beginning of the bar. In both cases, the chess players follow the narrator, and should only move once the narrator has spoken, and not appear to anticipate the order. In saying this, if co-ordination proves completely impractical, either the piano or the narrator anticipating the entry is permissible.

There are three types of pauses used. A comma should be felt as a breath in the music, generally not lasting more than half a second. The *approximate* duration of a round fermata is given above it, and exists outside of the surrounding meter. A square fermata is to be held until the narrator moves on to the next bar.

The pianists and the narrator should all have physical scores. The narrator's copy can be held, or placed on a lectern or music stand. Page turners may assist the pianists; if this is the case, the page turner should aid piano 2's action on page 20, comedically fumbling together to turn the score around. The chess players should not have full scores (they follow the narrator), but they may have a list of moves to which they refer; however, the audience must not see this list nor see the players glancing at it. The appearance should be of the players following the commands of the narrator.

### Narrator

The narrator reads all text in double quotation marks, and all the bold chess notation (excluding the move numbers in boxes). The chess notation should be read as if commanding the chess players to perform the move - the narrator is either a puppet master, or vocalising the players' thoughts. The pawn moves, e.g. **d3**, are read 'D-three'. The other moves e.g. **Rg8** are read 'rook-G-eight' or 'rook-to-G-eight' (switching between the two can help break any sense of monotony). The pieces are **King**, **Queen**, **Rook**, **Bishop**, and **kNight**. The text is timed to the beginning of every bar.

### Chess Players

The chess players perform the chess moves as read out by the narrator. A representation of the game can be found at [goo.gl/rY4Sv1](http://goo.gl/rY4Sv1). The two chess players should never interact with each other, acting as though the other isn't there.

### Pianists

The pianists (and their page turners) should be fairly inconspicuous in their action and dress, with the exception of piano 2's actions on pages 20 and 25. All accels./rits. should be as smooth as possible, without making the different rhythms obvious. An arrow with *attacca* indicates that the musical line should flow between the two pianists, as if being performed by one player on one instrument. 'Con Ped.' indicates an expressive use of the pedal must be used; a sustained pedal is indicated separately. Otherwise, incredibly judicious use of pedal may be used. The page turners may also help with the EBows. If a particular string cannot be reached, the EBow notes may be transposed up/down an octave.

Accidentals last for the duration of a bar.

N.B. piano 2's score should be printed upside down from page 21 to page 26.

Duration : c. 9'30"

# Murphy vs Mr Endon

based on a chess game  
devised by Samuel Beckett

J. N. Redelinghuys

Narrator

*[Standing in front of the table]*  
*[The Narrator introduces the match (e.g. "Welcome to this match between Murphy and Mr Endon held at [location]...")*  
*All performers enter and take their places. The chess set is already laid out, with White in front of Mr Endon, and Black in front of Murphy. The Pianist 1 sits at piano 2 and vice versa. Mr Endon passes out]*

Piano 1

Piano 2

*[Moves to the board]*  
*[Matter-of-factly] "Mr Endon always played Black. If presented with White he would fade, without the least trace of annoyance, away into a light stupor"*  
*[The Narrator turns the board around, and Mr Endon revives. Each pianist moves to the other piano (Pianist 1 now sits at piano 1 and vice versa)]*  
with EBow

Piano 1

*pp sotto voce* *poco*

Ped.

with EBow

Piano 2

*pp sotto voce*

Ped.

1

e4

1s

[Matter-of-factly]  
"The primary cause of all White's  
subsequent difficulties"

0.5s

Andante ♩ = c.100

1s

Very fast and rhythmically unstable.....

0.5s

mp

una corda *p legg.*

1s

0.5s

2

Nh6

1s

Nh3

0.5s

1s

Più mosso

string.....

0.5s

più *f*

3

*f*

tre corde

Tempo I

string.....

1s

0.5s

più *f*

3

*f*

3

Rg8

Rg1

Nc6

L'istesso  $\text{♩} = 60$

poco rit. ....

*mf*

*pp*

attaca

con Ped. *p dolce*

attaca

*pp*

Tempo I string... *pp*

con Ped. *p dolce*

senza Ped.

4

Nc3

2.5s

string. ....

poco rall. *ten.*

Più mosso

2.5s

attaca

*p*

(string). ....

*mf* 3 3 3 *f* 3 3 *mp*

slightly uncoordinated

2.5s

2.5s

0.5s **5**

Ne5

Nd5

Poco meno mosso

0.5s

ten.

*p* più pesante

Andante ♩ = 100

0.5s

*mp* poco pesante

"Apparently nothing better,  
bad as this is."

3s

Rh8

Very fast and rhythmically unstable.....

3s

una corda *p legg.*

3s Adagio ♩ = 50

*p*

con Ped.

*mf*



6

Rh1

0.5s

Nc6

0.5s

L'istesso ♩ = 50

Musical notation for Rh1, measures 1-2. Treble clef, piano (*p*) dynamics, L'istesso tempo. A slur covers the notes in both staves.

tre corde  
con Ped.

*mf*

*pp*

Andante ♩ = 100

0.5s

Musical notation for Rh1, measures 3-4. Treble clef, piano (*p*) dynamics, Andante tempo. *Andante* ♩ = 100. *senza Ped.* instruction. Dynamics range from *pp* to *mf* to *mp*. An *attaca* arrow points from the first measure to the second.

7

Nc3

1s

Ng8

8

Nb1

(quasi echo)

1s

accel. poco a poco

(sempre accel.)

Musical notation for Nc3, measures 1-2. Treble clef, piano (*p*) to pianissimo (*pp*) dynamics, (quasi echo) instruction.

*mp* cresc. poco a poco

*sf*

1s

accel. poco a poco

Musical notation for Nb1, measures 1-2. Treble clef, piano (*p*) dynamics, *accel. poco a poco* instruction. *Sost. Ped.* instruction. Dynamics range from *p* to *sf*.

9

Nb8

Ng1

*molto accel.*

**Presto assai**

*ff*

*tutta forza*

Sost. Ped.

(*accel.*)

*f*

*sf*

3.5s

"An ingenuous and beautiful debut, sometimes called ...

3.5s

**Very fast and rhythmically unstable. ....,**

3.5s

**Very fast and rhythmically unstable. ....,**

una corda

*p legg.*

una corda

*p legg.*

10

11  
1s

... the Pipe-opener"

e6

f3

"Ill-judged"

with EBow

Meno mosso

Very quick

1s

Ped.

tre corde

with EBow

Andante ♩ = 100

1s

Ped.

tre corde

11

0.5s

12

2s

Ne7

Ne2

Ng6

g4

L'istesso ♩ = 186

0.5s

poco rit.

2s

attaca

attaca

Quickly ♩ = 186

0.5s

2s

1s

1s

Be7

Ng3

d6

tempo giusto (♩ = 186)

1s

1s

*mf* *p*

a tempo con rubato (♩ = 186)

poco rit.

1s

1s

*sf*

*mp*

*mf*

*p*

*p*

*pp*

0.5s

Be2

Qd7

0.5s

Tranquillo ♩ = 120

rit.

ten.

*sf*

*p*

*pp*

*pp*

0.5s

quasi gliss.

*pp*  
Ped.

15

d3

Kd8

"Never seen in the Cafe de la Regence,  
seldom in Simpson's Divan."

3s

EBow

*mp* *mf* *p*

3s

*mf*

Ped.

16

Qd2

Qe8

Very quickly

*mp* *mf*

L'istesso

*mf*

attaca

17

2s 2s

Kd1

Nd7

18

Nc3

2s 2s

mp mp

Andante ♩ = 100 molto accel.

rit. 3

2s 2s

mp p mf

Andante ♩ = 100 molto accel.

[Alarmed]  
"The flag of distress"

Rb8

1s 1s

mf mp

Adagio ♩ = 60

1s 1s

mf mf

Adagio ♩ = 60

con Ped. mp

Rb1

Nb6

Meno mosso ♩ = 50

poco rit.

1s

Meno mosso ♩ = 50

poco rit.

1s

Quickly ♩ = 186

Na4

Bd7

L'istesso ♩ = 186

rit.

con rubato

rit.

21

b3

0.5s

Rg8

Meno mosso ♩ = 120

0.5s

*mf* Adagio ♩ = 60

0.5s

*mp dolce*  
con Ped.

22

Rg1

Kc8

2s

[Congratulatory]  
"Exquisitely played"

L'istesso ♩ = 60

2s

*p docte*  
con Ped.

2s



23

24

1s

Bb2

Qf8

2s

1s

Kc1

1s

Tranquillo ♩ = 120

2s

1s

25

Be8

Bc3

"It is difficult to imagine a more deplorable situation than poor White's at this point."

Tranquillo ♩ = 120

rit.

26

Nh8

b4

L'istesso ♩ = 100

Andante ♩ = 100

27

Bd8

Qh6

"The ingenuity of despair"

Subito presto possibile

(R.H. black notes  
L.H. white notes)

Più tranquillo ♩ = 86

Na8

[Excited]  
"Black has now an  
irresistible game"

Qf6

• Very quickly

Musical score for page 28, measures 28-30. The first system consists of a treble and bass clef with a 'Very quickly' instruction and dynamics from *mf* to *f*. An *attacca* marking is present at the end of the system. The second system also has a treble and bass clef, with a 'Moderato' tempo of 120 and a 'Very fast and unstable . . . .' instruction. Dynamics range from *pp* to *ppp*, with a 'una corda' marking.

Ng6

Be5

Be7

♩ = 88 con rubato

Musical score for page 29, measures 31-34. The first system consists of a treble and bass clef with a tempo of 88 'con rubato' and a *mp dolce* dynamic. The second system has a treble and bass clef with a tempo of 120 and 'rit.' marking, followed by a tempo of 88 'L'istesso' and 'poco rit.' marking, with a *p dolce* dynamic. The 'tre corde' marking is present at the beginning of the second system.

**Nc5**

*[Sincerely]*

"High praise is due to White for the pertinacity with which he struggles to lose a piece."

**Kd8**

**Andante** ♩ = 100

*Red.* \_\_\_\_\_

*[Shocked]*

"At this point Mr. Endon, without as much as 'j'adoube', turned his King and Queen's Rook upside down, in which position they remained for the rest of the game."

*[Mr Endon performs the above action]*

Turn the score upside down in the same manner as Mr Endon.  
 From the next page onwards, Piano 2's part should be printed upside down.  
 N.B. although the music will be then readable, page turns will be backwards if the score is bound.

31

Nh1

[Congratulatory]  
"A coup de repose  
long overdue."

Bd7

Moderato ♩ = 120

*mf* *p* *mf sub.*

Più mosso ♩ = 144

*mp* *p*

32

1.5s

Kb2

Rh8

33

1s

Kb3

Bc8

1.5s 1.5s 1s 1s

Adagio ♩ = 60

♩ = 144

*con Ped.*

34

Ka4 1s 0.5s | Qe8

[Quickly]

"Mr. Endon not crying "Check!", nor otherwise giving the slightest indication that he was alive to having attacked the King of his opponent, or rather vis-à-vis, Murphy was absolved, in accordance with Law 18, from attending to it.

[A little slower]

But this would have been to admit that the salute was adventitious."

35

Ka5 1,5s | Nb6

36

Bf4 | Nd7

37

38

Qc3

Ra8

Na6

1s *quasi gliss.*

*mp* > *p*

*attaca*

*subito* ♩ = 186.

*f sub.*

*attaca*

*Adagio* ♩ = 60

*p*

*mp*

[Solemnly]

"No words can express the torment of mind that goaded White to this abject offensive."

1s

Bf8

*trill*

*sfp molto espress.*

*1s*

*Moderato* ♩ = 120

*mp* > *p dolce*

3

3

39

Kb5 1s

Ne7

40

Ka5 0.5s

Nb8

1s

*mf*

0.5s

*f*

*attaca*

*attaca*

1s

**Quickly** ♩ = 186

*mf*

*f*

♩ = 186

41

short, rushed

Qc6

Ng8

short, rushed

3s

3s

*ff*

*poco rit.*

♩ = 186

*ff*

*p*

3s



42

Kb5 3s

Kd7

25  
[Abruptly interrupt the pianist, and begin profusely apologising, possibly swearing, ending along the lines 'I meant to say...'  
Piano 2 releases the chord as the Narrator interrupts, and glares at the narrator.  
Mr Endon does not react, apart from repositioning the King]

3s

ff

attaca

3s

3s

f

43

Ke7 1s

[Flattering]  
"The termination of this solitaire is very beautifully played by Mr. Endon."

Ka5 4s

Kd8 5s

4s

ff

1s

sf fed up

5s

ff

Red.

*[Excrutiatingly long pause; all performers remain dead still.]*

"Further solicitation would be frivolous and vexatious, and Murphy, with fool's mate in his soul, retires."

*[Murphy lays down their King. Another very long pause the piece ends. During any applause and/or bowing, Murphy remains seated, unmoving, staring at the board. Murphy may only move after all applause has stopped and the other performers have exited, preferably with the stage lights down as the set is taken away.]*

*sustain until "retires"*

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