

HURRY UP AND WAIT

Beckett at LCC's Blue Door

Lord knows, existentialism is old hat by now: It's practically taken for granted among the cognoscenti that God is dead, life is meaningless, language is a prison, we are alone, etc., etc. Used to be the muscular existentialist pose involved an angry brow knitted under a fedora, with cigarette ash dropping upon a tattered copy of Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*; now, every 13-year-old playing Grand Theft Auto with a belly full of Dr. Pepper knows that life is a bunk game, full of sound and fury signifying nothing. We are overdosed on information, and routed of belief. We are the straw people.

So, given that absurdity in the 21st century is no longer the exception but the rule, what do we post-moderns do with an artist like Samuel Beckett? And what to make of Beckett's grandest play, the eminently absurd *Waiting for Godot*, now showing at LCC's Blue Door Theatre under the smart direction of Brian Haimbach? Can we all, in a word, stop waiting for Godot and get on with it?

The answer is no.

Starring Caleb Hunter as Estragon and Jonathan Edwards as Vladimir — those vaguely lovable hobos of nihilistic despair — this version of *Godot* reaffirms the play's importance, not just as a founding work of existentialism but as a timeless comment on the human comedy. "If it seems like nothing is happening," Haimbach says of the play in his director's note, "you're right." Of course, something is always "happening" in *Godot*, even if what is happening is the cyclical futility of life as lived by



CALEB HUNTER AS ESTRAGON AND JONATHAN EDWARDS AS VLADIMIR IN *WAITING FOR GODOT*

MICHAEL BRINKERHOFF

two transients who do little but argue about and discuss their lot in life, which is an eternal waiting for something, anything, to happen.

The strength of Haimbach's production is that it gives us unreconstructed Beckett: stark, intimate and silly with the slapstick of perpetual despair and thwarted desire. The minimal set, anchored only by a tree and a bench, is the perfect landscape upon which the two main characters fritter and waste their days — which are, in the end, only repetitions of sameness.

Hunter and Edwards give nicely understated

performances, though at times their delivery is a tad wooden, as though the cerebral bite of Beckett's language runs dry in their mouths. Where both actors excel is in capturing the bawdy physical humor of which Beckett was such a fan, and which is a crucial counterpoint to the arid intellectual games the writer plays. This is no small achievement, and — along with solid performances by Jack Lemhouse as Lucky and Conner Lindsley as Pozzo — it makes this production more than worthwhile. ■

Waiting for Godot runs through Feb. 15 at LCC's Blue Door Theatre; \$5 students and seniors, \$8-\$10 general.

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