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After more than 50 years and countless humanities courses, "Waiting For Godot" continues to resist all efforts to figure out what it means. Or to make it mean anything at all.

Redwood City's Dragon Theatre drafts Samuel Beckett's timeless (in the sense that it's forever in stasis) farce for their "second stage" season. The second stage season is mostly like the regular season, but a bit more eccentric.

The small Dragon stage sits almost completely bare except for some ambiguous, coffin-shaped objects floating overhead. The only furniture is a squatting bench that looks a bit coffin-y itself. Here, thoughtful Vladimir (Jim Johnson) and petulant Estrogon (Ronald Fietchmeier) pass the hours with nothing at all.

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What are they doing? Just waiting for the titular Godot to show up. Which, of course, he never does.

Who is Godot? Why do they want to see him? How long have they been at it? We don't know. They don't know. All anybody knows is that they're waiting. They've been waiting since 1953, and it's not hard to imagine that every new "Godot" is just a continuation of the old one, like a thespian's Mobius strip.

Occasionally, the luckless slave Lucky (Robert Sean Campbell) and his self-important master Pozzo (Michael Champlin) shamble through the scene. They may or may not be the same people every time. They may or may not remember any of the previous encounters. They may or may not be completely off their heads.



If you go to "Godot" looking for answers, the play (directed by Jeanie Smith) is fresh out. All it's got is bizarre folk humor, the cast's dogged commitment to all get by somehow, and the fleeting idea that maybe there's a sort of natural dignity about Estrogon and Vladimir's vigil. Except there probably isn't.

Free from academic analysis and left to caper in its natural setting onstage, "Godot" is mostly about people's relationships. Johnson is wonderful, natural fun to listen to, shuffling along in his inoffensive, Jack Lemmon style. It's almost a comfort to hear him say, "Nothing to be done." Coming from Johnson, you accept it.

Fiethmeier at first sounds unsure of himself, as if his whining were affected. (Which, of course, it is.) He's much better suited for physical comedy than existential angst, and clowns effortlessly when shuffling hats or dropping his trousers.

Why do the two men hang together? Why don't they ever ditch the absent Godot? Why doesn't imperious Pozzo ever ditch his intransigent slave, who, for that matter, never revolts? Because there's nothing else. They're the whole show. There's nothing to change.

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It's never really touching. It's never quite profound. But neither is it meant to be. Smith's show is not meant to be quite much of anything, except funny and consistently pleasing and just plausible enough. Which it is.

For two hours, the Dragon stage becomes a little window onto a non-world and its people. Once we're gone, you can't help but imagine they're still there, as they have been all this time.

"Waiting For Godot" runs through Oct. 2 at the Dragon Theatre, 2120 Broadway in Redwood City. For tickets and information, call 650-493-2006 or visit [DragonProductions.net](http://DragonProductions.net).

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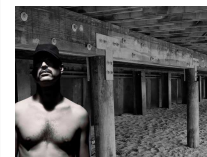
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