

RED HERRING BACK WITH MORE BECKETT

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Dispatch Theater Critic

Red Herring Theatre Company has become central Ohio's daring leader in exploring Samuel Beckett's darkly comical and existential plays.

The company will present the rarely seen Krapp's Last Tape, which opens tonight. It has presented two acclaimed Beckett revivals: Endgame in 1994 and Waiting for Godot in 1995.

"I have an affinity with Beckett's style," said Artistic Director Michael Garrett Herring, who stars in the one-man one-act about an aging novelist who looks back at his life on his birthday.

Herring, 39, plays Krapp at 69 and (on tape) at 39. Each year, Krapp has made a tape of the events of the year. In the play, the 69-year-old plays the old tapes back before recording the new tape.

"Beckett's plays rely heavily on gesture and mime, which frame the text and accentuate the humor," Herring said. Known for his movement-theater approach, Herring studied corporeal mime for eight years with Tom Leabhart at Pomona College in Claremont, Calif.

Herring and director Katherine Burkman believe that this will be the first production of Krapp's Last Tape in central Ohio.

"It's wonderful to work with Michael because he shares my passion for Beckett," said Burkman, a Beckett scholar and emeritus professor at Ohio State University.

"It's a beautiful little one-man play, but very challenging because the only other characters are the voices of Krapp's younger selves. You're out there alone, acting with your other selves."

Burkman said she can appreciate the challenge facing Herring because she played Winnie in Women at Play's fall production of Beckett's one-woman play Happy Days.

Burkman and Herring have adopted Beckett's later approach to his 1958 play, which he directed many times in Europe.

"He kept changing the play as he went - even some of the words, but more than that,

the interpretation," Burkman said.

"The initial version ends with Krapp being drowned by the past. But as Beckett worked on the play, he had Krapp come to terms more with his life and impending death."

Beckett, widely considered one of the most significant and innovative playwrights of the 20th century, had an Ohio connection. He wrote *Ohio Impromptu* for a world premiere at OSU in 1981.

"Beckett was more deeply into the Angst of the 20th century than any other playwright, plus he had the most brilliant humor about it."

Red Herring Theatre Company has changed its summer studio schedule to include matinees. It has replaced its Thursday night shows the final two weekends with 4 p.m. Sunday shows July 20 and 27 - and will patrol the parking lot during all performances.

"We want to make sure our audience has a safe and enjoyable evening," Herring said.

Performances begin at 7:30 tonight, 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday - and through July 27 - at Red Herring's Studio space in the Milo Arts Center, 617 E. 3rd Ave. For tickets, call 291-8252.