

# The Hacklers Collection

## The Peacock Theatre June 1980

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**THE HACKLERS WOULD ESPECIALLY LIKE TO THANK:**

Esso Teoranta for their sponsorship and assistance to the Amateur Drama movement

Homemakers (Cavan) for their continual financial help

All those companies, associations and individuals who readily sponsored the week in the Peacock

The staffs of the Abbey and Peacock Theatres for their co-operation and advice

St. Patrick's College, Cavan, for the use of their Concert Hall, and Cavan Youth Club



Founded  
1980  
**CAVAN**



**THE HACKLERS**

**Winners 28th All-Ireland Amateur Drama Festival**

present

*Waiting for Godot*

by **SAMUEL BECKETT**

at

**THE PEACOCK THEATRE**

from Monday, 9th June

to Saturday, 14th June 1980

at 8.15 p.m.

PROGRAMME . . . . . 25p

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The following nights in the Peacock

Theatre were sponsored by:

June 9th, Monday:

HOMEMAKERS, Cavan

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HOMEMAKERS, Cavan

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**RAY O'CONNOR (Estragon)**

Ray is a Monumental Sculptor and was a founder member of The Hacklers. Besides playing pantomimes over the years, he played Charlie Then in Aisteoiri Drumlin's production of DA. He has twice been awarded scholarships to Gormanstown Summer School run by the Amateur Drama League.



**PADDY MURRAY (Vladimir)**

Employed by Homemakers, Cavan, Paddy Murray started early, winning an All-Ireland Gold Medal aged 10 in All-Ireland Schools Drama in the Gate Theatre. In the present production he won Best Actor at Ballyshannon Festival. He too took part in the Scouts Pantomimes in Cavan, and later acted with Ballintra.



**PADDY DILLON (Pozzo)**

One of the most well-known producers in the amateur circle, Paddy in his first serious acting role won Best Supporting Actor in Athlone. With Carrick-on-Shannon Breffni Players he produced numerous plays for Athlone and Loughrea. He is a Chemist and lives in Ballinagh, Co. Cavan.



**PAUL DOLAN (Lucky)**

A Teacher in Science at Cavan Vocational School, and a native of Corlough, this is Paul's debut on stage. He is dedicated to the Trade Union movement and has written for The Drumlin magazine on the many idiosyncracies of Irish political life.

# WAITING FOR GODOT

by SAMUEL BECKETT

★

## CAST

**ESTRAGON** ..... Ray O'Connor  
**VLADIMIR** ..... Paddy Murray  
**POZZO** ..... Paddy Dillon  
**LUCKY** ..... Paul Dolan  
**BOY** ..... Gene Finnegan

ACT 1—A Roadside, Evening.

Interval, 15 minutes.

ACT 2—Next day, same place, same time.

**Lights:** JOHN CONLON

**Make-up and Costumes:**

ANNE CUSACK, ROISIN O'CONNOR,  
ANNE O'NEILL

**Stage Crew:**

DAMIEN BRIEN, RORY O'MOORE,  
PAUL KELLY, JIMMY FOX

**Music:** FR. A. B. McGRATH

**Posters:** ALITA O'BRIEN

**Director:** DERMOT HEALY

### FOR THE PEACOCK THEATRE

**Stage Director:**  
CAROLINE FITZGERALD

**Stage Manager:** JOHN KELLS

**Lighting:** TONY WAKEFIELD

**Sound:** JIM COLGAN

**Peacock Administrator:**  
DOUGLAS KENNEDY



**GENE FINNEGAN (Boy)**

Again, this is Gene's first time on stage, though he helped this year with the production of the Cavan Youth Club concert. Over the past few years he has written and published poetry, short stories and songs.

## TECHNICAL CREW



**JOHN CONLON**

John has a life-long association with Drama, Pantomime and Concerts. He is responsible for lights and transport. An Antique Dealer, he is a member of the Cavan Drama Festival Committee and a tireless worker in the local community.



**ANN O'NEILL**

Backstage and make-up. Former member of Aisteoiri Drumlin, at present teaching in Vocational School, Bailieboro.



**ANNE CUSACK**

Anne works as a Confectioner and is responsible for costumes and make-up. She learned her trade alongside Nancy McArdle of Ballintra Players, who provided her with some of the costumes. She acted in Kill's production of Tarry Flynn.



**Paul Kelly, Damien O'Brien,  
Rory O'Moore**

All members of our backstage crew, Paul is a solicitor, Damien a carpenter, Rory O'Moore works with Cavan Vocational Education Committee.

**Roisin O'Connor**

Roisin acts as secretary for The Hacklers and helps with make-up and costumes. She played with Aisteoiri Drumlin and teaches in Bailieborough Vocational School.



**DERMOT HEALY**

Dermot Healy, who directs the play, has former associations with Ballintra and Kill. This is his first production. He edits THE DRUMLIN magazine, a journal of Cavan, Monaghan and Leitrim.

## THE HACKLERS

The Hacklers were started in January 1980 by Ray O'Connor and Dermot Healy. "Waiting for Godot" is their first production. They have no permanent hall for rehearsal, but St. Patrick's College, Cavan, have provided them with their concert hall over the last few months. Their first rehearsals were held in the diningroom of Milseanacht Breifne and the Cavan Youth Club. The group is based in Cavan town and was given early encouragement by Fr. Pete Casey and Fr. A. B. McGrath. Their first performance before an audience took place at Ballyshannon Festival, to whose committee members they are eternally grateful, and their second and only other festival appearance was at the Cavan Festival, whose committee kindly loaned their lighting equipment for The Hacklers' other performances and have also sponsored a night at The Peacock. Other individuals who helped the group include Michael Harding who arranged a performance at Maynooth University, Charlie Greene, carpenter, who made the moon, Fred Muller who felled the tree, Tom Hussey who took the photographs, Tony Doyle who collected at the gate, and Tommy Brides who filled the cup. The Hacklers were the first group in the history of the Esso Trophy to reach the finals with their first production. Winning was an extra bonus. But it was gained through the encouragement of the other groups on the Festival circuit (especially Tony O Dalaigh of Strand Players and Pete Ward of Kill) and through those festivals who open their doors to new groups.

## PATRONS OF THE HACKLERS

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Forthcoming Productions at the Peacock Theatre:

**16-28 June**  
Eamon Morrissey in his new one-man show  
**JOYCEMEN**

**Wednesday, 18th June, lunchtime**  
**ANDY IRVINE**

**Thursday, 19th and Friday, 20th June, lunchtime**  
**AN DELEN DIR**  
folk group from Brittany

**Opening Tuesday, 1st July**  
Eamon Kelly's new storytelling evening  
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## HONOUR TO ALL-IRELAND DRAMA WINNERS

# THE HACKLERS, CAVAN, INVITED TO THE ABBEY'S PEACOCK THEATRE

**A FEW records have been broken this year through the victory of The Hacklers, Cavan, in the All-Ireland Drama Festival in Athlone. As one drama critic pointed out "never before in the history of the Esso Trophy has a new group earned its place in the finals with its initial production". Never mind win. And the group were the first to win the Esso Trophy with an all-male cast, with a Cavan town production and with a play by Samuel Beckett.**

**Another critic had this to add. "And the Hacklers are certainly the first to bring an audience to its feet, and its senses with a Beckett play. For this was no reward for academic work well done; this was an award for entertaining the paying public as well".**

The Hacklers were formed in January 1980 through the efforts of Ray O'Connor and Dermot Healy, later they were joined by Paddy Murray, who received the best actor award at Ballyshannon, Paddy Dillon, who won best supporting actor at Athlone, Paul Dolan who "delivered the famous solo rhythmically and with supple movements, before collapsing like a tired child" and Gene Finnegan "the classic go-between who delivered his message truly".

The group were given early encouragement by Fr. Pete Casey, Very Rev. A. B. McGrath, P.P., Ballyhaise, and the Youth Club and St. Patrick's College, who made their halls available for rehearsals. 'Waiting for Godot' was chosen because it is a great play, it suited the actors and producer, and the set was simple to transport and erect.

Despite many disappointments, the group were eventually accepted at Festivals in Ballyshannon and Cavan, needing a first and second place in the Open Section to gain an All-Ireland nomination. Their first appearance before the public was at Ballyshannon where they came second and they won

in Cavan where Barry Cassin the adjudicator commented "This play was a courageous choice by the group and an excellent addition to the festival. The play was acted very well by a strong cast".

With John Conlon at the wheel, The Hacklers set out a few weeks later for the All-Ireland after a preliminary non-festival performance in Cavan which was sparsely attended and a successful show in Maynooth where Beckett's play was on both the French and English courses.

### Unstinted Praise

In Athlone, adjudicator, Alan Nicol, had unstinted praise for the production. He said, "The interplay was marvellous between this team of actors. The relationships were varied and established a remarkable hold on the audience". On the final night of the adjudication in Athlone, The Hacklers were 5/4 favourite for the Esso Trophy and second favourites across the road from the theatre in Des Earl's famous Festival pub. Old hands from Kill, Ballintra, Carrigallen, Cloonclare,

Aisteori Drumlin and Carrick-on-Shannon had filled the back of the hall for the announcements. First the cheers were for veteran producer/actor Paddy Dillon when his award was announced, but the cheers were loudest of all, when after a few tense moments as the chief contenders from Dublin were given third and second places, Hacklers, Cavan, were announced over-all winners.

"Many an experienced company, amateur or professional, has found Samuel Beckett's 'Waiting for Godot' a Beecher's Brook in the course to artistic success", Desmond Rushe commented in his review, "But the Hacklers took it in their stride".

**Now the final laurels have been granted the group, with an invitation to a mini-Beckett Festival at the Abbey's Peacock Theatre where 'Waiting for Godot' will run from 9th June to 14th June at 8.15 nightly. Nobel-prize winner Samuel Beckett, who was schooled in nearby Enniskillen, will be directing two other of his own plays at this Festival of three Beckett works,**

**and this theatrical association in itself is a great honour for the Cavan group.**

Because of the considerable cost of mounting the production for a week in Dublin, it is hoped that Cavan associations everywhere and the Cavan Community will attend the performances, and that Cavan business people respond to the call for sponsorship of the production. It was through their respective communities that such great prize-winning groups as Ballintra, Carrigallen, Kill, Aisteori Drumlin, Cloonclare and Belturbet players were able to maintain their high standard and to extend their company from year to year.

Next time round, The Hacklers will need more players, more back-stage crew, technicians, if they intend to survive and sizeable funds to stage another show. Any enquiries to Roisin O'Connor, 25 St. Patrick's Tce., Swellan, Co. Cavan. And The Hacklers, Cavan, would like to thank all those individuals and associations who helped with the production of 'Waiting for Godot', and those who came forward unasked to sponsor the week in the Peacock.

# Cavan group in impressive debut

By DESMOND RUSHE

IT NEVER happened before in the history of the Ess Trophy that a new group earned its place in the All-Ireland Amateur Drama Festival in Athlone with its initial production. The Hacklers, Cavan, have done so, and their achievement was enhanced not alone by the play they selected but also by the way they performed it.

Many an experienced company, amateur or professional, has found Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot" a Bechers Brook on the course to artistic theatrical success. The Hacklers took it in their stride, and while they may not have cleared the obstacle with feet to spare, they certainly did not come to grief. They rose to Beckett's mightily obscure, elusive comi-tragic farce with assurance, and gave it a production of impressive quality, with director Dermot Healy exercising intelligent control.

There are elements in "Godot" which needed to be etched more vividly. One was the music hall

comedy aspect, and there should have been a higher degree of distinctiveness between the endlessly tired, crotchety and rather pessimistic Estrago, and the more hopeful and active Vladimir.

The parts were well played by Ray O'Connor and Paddy Murray, respectively, but they could have heightened the futility of their situation by an occasional more lively interplay of hilarity — one instance was the marvellous name-calling duel, and another the exchange of hard hats, which is straight out of Laurel and Hardy.

Paddy Dillon's Pozzo had great strength and authority, and Paul Dolan went through his rigmarole of a soliloquy with flying, if inevitably meaningless, colours, while Gene Finnegan did all that was asked of him as the Boy.

The lighting I found an irritating distraction with its pools of white largely concentrated on the extremities of the acting

# 'Waiting for Godot' is a comedy on nothing

"Waiting for Godot" by S. Beckett at the Peacock.

Four cheers for The Hacklers, the Cavan group who showed their wares at The Peacock last night.

They bravely put on a strange play by someone called Samuel Beckett — and richly earned the applause that greeted the final whistle.

"Waiting for Godot" has suffered greatly in the hands of solemn asses (perhaps I'm being unfair to the donkey) who look for almighty significance in its every word and gesture and movement.

I have attended productions where if you laughed at the wrong place you could be thrown out into the exterior brightness.

The joke, of course, is that there is no wrong place — "Waiting for Godot" is comedy or nothing.

And The Hacklers with good Cavan sense presented it as such — and amateurs though they are, they gave us the most enjoyable interpretation I have seen.

I suppose I shouldn't have used that word "enjoyable" — it indicates a frivolous approach.

The devotees of Beckett love to suffer — and the more tediously meaningless his offerings, the greater their ecstasy.

I'm sure that you could

easily play an "Ern Malley" on these good people.

You could pretend that Beckett had given you sole rights over a new play — and he might even connive.

And then you could get a copy of the latest official publications on the eradication of the warble fly and the danger presented by mites in pearl barley.

## HARMFUL ADULATION

And you could pick out phrases and sentences at random and put them in the mouths of semi-people — and, lo, a masterpiece.

And if some critic dared to suggest that the emperor had thrown off his clothes, some lover of freedom of speech would cry out that the critic should be suppressed.

And if I digress, it is not without cause: the adulation that has washed over Beckett since he broke through to fame has done him great harm.

"Waiting for Godot" remains his best attempt at communication.

It is far from being an original statement — but little the worse for that.

It expresses a long-familiar way of looking at life — but in an original ambience.

It takes irreverence to the

brink — and for an obvious reason.

It is not pretentious to see Beckett as a guerilla fighter against lethal certainties: he knew their evil fruit at first hand.

"Waiting for Godot" has suffered a myriad analyses and explanations — you might as well be explaining the workings of the wheelbarrow.

It is a simple little play. And its message — if you will excuse the term — is that there are no fathers.

And the crowning irony is that so many now look up to Beckett as a father — he is a fallible poor saint.

The Hacklers have restored his humanity — and Dermot Healy's bold direction is mainly responsible.

He is well served by his players — and especially by Paddy Murray who is a marvellous Vladimir.

Roy O'Connor (Estragen) and Paddy Dillon (Pozzo) began tentatively — but went on to excellence.

Paul Dolan as Lucky moved well and stood well — but I would rather if he had spoken his famous speech more clearly.

The make-up and costumes are very good. The production runs for a week. Go and enjoy it.

CON HOULIHAN  
EVENING PRESS  
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# High praise for new drama group

THE unique distinction by a group formed in Cavan town this year and who made it to the national final first time around was acknowledged at the All-Ireland Amateur Drama Festival in Athlone last night. The adjudicator, Mr. Alan Nicol, had unstinted praise for the production by The Hacklers of "Waiting for Godot", by Samuel Beckett.

Mr. Nicol said the control of tempo was admirable. The director, Dermot Healy, did a great deal of homework on the script, but above all on its construction and rhythm. At the same time there were times when it clearly went against the actors but they rose to the occasion.

Godot ultimately depended on four and a half characters. The two clowns never left the stage and without them there would have been no waiting for Godot. The interplay was marvellous and the two clowns did keep control of the relationship of the comedy but they needed to be more thorough with this relationship. Between them the sparkle and the timing were all there, said the adjudicator. He said the cast showed solid teamwork and provided excellent theatre.

ANGLO - CELT  
9/5/80

**REMARKABLE TRIUMPH FOR**  
**CAVAN DRAMA GROUP**  
**WIN ALL-IRELAND TROPHY**  
**AT FIRST ATTEMPT**

History was made in the 28-year-old run of the All-Ireland Amateur Drama Festival which ended in Athlone on Sunday night last when Cavan group, The Hacklers, won the major award, The Esso Trophy, for their production of Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot."

This was a remarkable success for the Cavan quintette, two of whom were appearing on stage for the first time.

The group under producer Dermot Healy, which took the stage for the first time only five months ago, took the major honours. Paddy Dillon, the veteran of the cast at 62, won the prize for best supporting actor. He played the part of Pozzo.

The members of the cast were: Paddy Murray, Ray O'Connor, Paddy Dillon, Paul Dolan and Gene Finnegan.



Depicted above is a scene from "Waiting for Godot" by Samuel Beckett and staged by The Hacklers, Cavan, which won the premier award, the Dr. Lyons Cup, at Cavan Drama Festival. Their producer, Dermot Healy, also won the Producer Cup at the Festival. From left are: Paul Dolan ("Lucky"), Ray O'Connor ("Estragon"), Paddy Dillon ("Pozzo") and Paddy Murray ("Vladimir").

# New Cavan group wins Esso trophy

HISTORY was made in the 28-year-old run of the All-Ireland Amateur Drama Festival which ended in Athlone last night after a programme extending over 13 nights, when a group which took the stage for the first time only five months ago swept to victory.

The Hacklers from Cavan Town won the major award—the Esso Trophy—for their production of *Waiting For Godot* by Samuel Beckett.

Paddy Dillon of the same group who played the part of Pozzo was judged the best supporting actor.

Paddy O'Dwyer, for his part of Roy Wild in the Club Players, Dublin, production of "The Secret Affairs of Mildred Wild" by Paul Zindel, was named the best actor in the festival.

Two other awards went to the same group. Val O'Donnell was judged the best producer while Greg O'Driscoll got the award for the best stage manager.

The best actress award went to Eve Belton who played the part of Martha in the Dundalk Theatre Group's production of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*.

The award for the best supporting actress was won by

Janine Begley who played the part of Helen in the Charlestown Drama Group production of T. C. Murray's *Autumn Fire*.

The author's Guild trophy for the best presentation went to the Strand Players, Dublin who

presented *The Man of Mode*, by George Etherege.

The overall ratings were:

- (1) The Hacklers, Cavan;
- (2) Club Players, Dublin;
- (3) Strand Players, Dublin.



The top prizewinners at the All-Ireland Amateur Drama Festival which ended with the presentation of awards in Athlone on Sunday night. From left: Dermot Healy, with the Esso Trophy won by the Hacklers Drama Group, Cavan, for their presentation of "Waiting for Godot," Eva Belton, Dundalk Theatre Workshop, winner of the Best Actress award for her part in "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf," and Paddy Dwyer, who received the Best Actor award for his part in "The Secret Affairs of Mildred Wild," presented by the Club Players, Dublin. *IRISH INDEPENDANT 6-5-80*

## LOCAL GROUP WINS TOP AWARD

# UNIQUE OCCASION AT CAVAN DRAMA FESTIVAL

LOUD applause greeted the announcement by adjudicator Barry Cassin in the Town Hall, Cavan, on Sunday night, that he had awarded the Dr. Lyons trophy for the best play at Cavan Drama Festival to the recently formed Cavan town theatre group, "The Hacklers", for their production of Sam Beckett's "Waiting For Godot".

It is the first time in the 35-year life of the festival that a local troupe won the top award and the achievement is even greater considering that it is about 20 years since a drama group from the town had an entry in the festival. Equally rapturous applause was given to the announcement that local writer, Dermot Healy, won the award for the best producer, for his staging of the play.

The win, well and truly signals the return of live drama to Cavan and no doubt others interested in the dramatic arts will be inspired to follow in the footsteps of "The Hacklers" who also won the silver challenge cup and best actor award (Paddy Murray) at Ballyshannon Drama Festival two weeks ago.

The news that "Waiting For Godot" had won the open prize was a fine finale to the week-long festival which, in the words of the adjudicator, gave local drama-goers an opportunity to see "a tremendous diversity of plays". These ranged from the highly talented Strand Players, Dublin production of the period comedy, "Man of Mode", on opening night, to the first staging of Eugene McCabe's "Heritage" by Kill Drama Group on Wednesday night and Butt Drama Circle's (Donegal)

presentation of "The Miracle Worker", a touching story about the trials and tribulations of blind and deaf Helen Keller and her teacher Annie Sullivan, on closing night.

This latter play won the confined section, with the Kill Drama Group's production being placed second in that category. The best 'set' of the festival went to the Cloonclare Players, Manorhamilton, who staged "The Crucible", by Arthur Miller, while the award for the best actor in the open section went to Eamon Rohan of The Strand Players for his role as Sir Fopling in "Man of Mode".

Announcing the best actor award the adjudicator gave special mention to the performance of Paddy Murray as 'Didi' in "Waiting For Godot" and John Donnelly of the Carrigallen Players for his leading role in "Da".

The award for the best actress in the open section went to Moll McGreevey of the Olivian Players, Dublin for her part as 'Angela' in "Abigail's Party". Praised for her performance was Eileen Ward of the Carrigallen Players for her portrayal of 'Ma' in "Da". The prize for the best actor in the confined section went to Paul McManus for his role as 'George' in "Heritage". The Festival Committee decided to designate the best actress award in this category as a special prize and awarded it jointly to Charlotte Scully and Kathleen McGowan for their roles as Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan respectively, in "The Miracle Worker".

The scholarship award to the drama school at Gormanston went to Kieran Quinn, the producer of "The Miracle Worker".

### "Tremendous Entertainment"

In his final adjudication, Mr. Cassin praised the standard of the plays staged during the week and said that those who had attended the festival had got 'tremendous entertainment'.

The festival had been well supported but it could be improved and he suggested that the committee should have something like a car sticker stating, 'Support your own festival', produced for future years.

He warned that staging something that was extraordinary or 'off-beat' didn't guarantee success. He also stated that no matter how attractive or

(Continued on Page Seven)

# Unique Occasion at Cavan Drama Festival

(Continued from Page One)

visual a set was, unless it served its purpose it wasn't satisfactory. The "three As" of the theatre were author, actor and audience. The author wrote the play and the audience received it. The actor was the transmitter from the stage. It was fundamental for a group to get its play across. This meant that an actor or actress needed to study and understand their part.

He was struck over the last couple of years by the deterioration in the standard of speaking by groups. They now had inaudibility, lack of clarity, inexpressive and slovenly speaking. No matter how clever a group might be technically, if their voices did not express their play they were not going to succeed.

There were now courses for advanced acting, advanced production and advanced setting but he felt it might not be a bad idea if the basics were gone back to. These were speaking with clarity and with expression. It was only by doing these that amateur drama would advance. He gave this advice in the light of his 27 years experience as a dramatist. There were many virtues in the theatre but the greatest of these was clarity.

### Good Choice of Play

In a run down of the different groups performances, he said that "Man of Mode", by the Strand Players, was a very good choice of play. Casting was good and it was presented simply with the group relying with great success on very fine costuming. The acting moved along at a very good pace though some of the characters could have been developed more. "Waiting For Godot" was also cast very well, with strong performances from the four main characters. The direction of the play was good and was sensitively handled by the producer.

"The Crucible", by the Cloonclare Players, was excellently presented but the delivery by the cast lacked sufficient expression and this harmed the play. "Heritage", by Kill Drama Group, was a very good choice. It was something new for a group and was worth doing. There were some splendid effects but there was an awkwardness in it which affected the first act and caused the episodic effect in the last act.

"Da", by the Carrigallen Players, hadn't a satisfactory presentation due to the use of a truck to move in and out

instead of a standing set. This caused a break of continuity in the play which also had some weak characterisation. "All My Sons", by the Bank of Ireland Theatrical Society, was a very testing play and there was one actress who was cast in the wrong role. The play was well understood by performers and producer but its general tensions didn't have sufficient impact.

### Presentation of Awards

"Abigail's Party", by the Olivian Players, was well cast but flaws in the lighting gave it an uninteresting effect. Characterisation and interpretation by the players was very good. "The Miracle Worker", by Butt Drama Circle, had some very good acting performances. The overall impact of the play was very good.

After Mr. Cassin had announced the awards, Mr. B. Sullivan, Festival Chairman, called on Rt. Rev. Msgr. P. J. McManus, Adm., V.G., Festival President, to present the prizes.

When the presentation ceremony concluded, the Festival Chairman thanked the different audiences and the patrons for their support. He complimented 'The Hacklers' for their very fine win and he urged them to keep up the good work. He also expressed the hope that there might even be a second group from the town performing at next year's festival.

# THE HACKLERS RISE

IT MIGHT be a good idea. Dermot Healy and Ray O'Connor decided over a couple of jars one night last January, if Cavan once again had a drama group after a lapse of something like 20 years.

It was, and so **The Hacklers** drama group was born out of that conversation between Healy, a writer and editor of the occasional magazine **The Drumlin**, and O'Connor, a monumental sculptor.

Both men had worked with Tommy McArdle's estimable **Ballintra Players**, although Healy emphasises that none of his parts ever called for more than a few lines. But they knew they had to start at the beginning, and they started with a name. They took it from a popular local ballad — "the hackler is a man of all trades much put upon by the local constabulary," says Healy.

Then they agreed on a play. **Waiting for Godot** would be their first production with Healy, who had never directed before, as producer and O'Connor as Estragon.

The choice of play promised that **The Hacklers** would be an unusual group. Even **Samuel Beckett** would find what happened next very strange indeed for the **Hacklers** short history is the stuff of the fanciful treatment normally reserved for teenage centre-forwards in the pages of **The Hotspur** or **The Wizard**; more modern organs like **Striker** or **Shoot** would reject such yarns as unbelievable.

The **Hacklers** story is unbelievable. In summary it reads like this: they performed the play for the first time at the **Ballyshannon Festival** on April 20 and came second in the open section; three days later they performed it at the **Cavan Festival**, which they won. These results gave them their tickets to the **All-Ireland** finals in **Athlone** where the fairy tale was completed when they became the first all-male cast to win the premier award.

Traditionally the **All-Ire-**



★ **Lucky (Paul Dolan), Estragon (Ray O'Connor) and Pozzo (Paddy Dillon)** in **Waiting for Godot** which opens at the **Peacock** on Monday.

land winners play the **Peacock** for a week in June and the **Hacklers'** turn comes on Monday when their astonishing success story should launch a midsummer week of rare interest. Dermot Healy and his colleagues can look forward to their **Peacock** engagement as the crowning glory but they can also look back with considerable pride on a tremendous achievement.

But back to last January: With a title, a play, a director and an **Estragon**, Healy and O'Connor set about completing the cast with a view to mounting a few small productions. They recruited **Paddy Murray**, who's in the hardware business, as **Vladimir**; **Paddy Dillon**, a chemist who had many successful years as producer with the **Carrick-on-Shannon Players**, as **Pozzo**; **Paul Dolan**, a science teacher, as **Lucky**; and **Gene Finnegan**, an 18-year-old poet as **Boy**.

"We started rehearsals in my mother's cafe, **Milseanach** we **Breifne**," says Healy, "and we decided to try a few festivals to see if we could get any reaction." They got very little at first for, having applied to ten festivals, they were only accepted in **Ballyshannon** and **Cavan**, where they got in by just one vote.

"The indifference was to be expected," Healy recalls. "A new group starting out on **Beckett** is like going out to play golf on crutches. The

boys didn't know what was going on at the start. They'd often say 'there's not a word about it' in rehearsals, meaning they had no faith in it either."

"Others believed in it, though, and one priest, **Fr. Pete Casey**, sent us £50 in the post when he heard we were doing **Godot**. It was a great help.

Fortunately the post arrived and so, too, did the **Hacklers** at the **Ballyshannon** festival for their first performance in front of the audience. "We kept plugging away in rehearsals," Healy recalls, "and gradually I felt it locking together. **Damian O'Brien** did the sets and **Ann Marie Cusack** did the costumes and a whiteface make-up which helped the boys to come out. No one could tell who was who.

No one could tell what to expect when they returned to **Ballyshannon** for the closing night although Healy can't have altogether seen the dark. The adjudicator had been highly complimentary. "And," says Healy, "I was at least satisfied that we hadn't made an intellectual haymes of the play," because a few people apologised for being snobs and said that **Godot** was the best thing in the festival.

The adjudicator didn't quite agree, but he placed the play second in the open section and third overall, named **Murray** as the best actor and gave Healy the production award.

And so to **Cavan**, where a victory would give them a place in **Athlone**. "It was our last chance because we had no other booking so we had to win against a group which had finished ahead of us in **Ballyshannon**. I thought we were finished when the adjudicator, **Barry Cassin**, disagreed with our interpretation, but he allowed it to stand and judged it on its own merits. I really respected him for that. Anyway, we won, and we were off to **Athlone**." Healy also collected the production award.

Lighting plays a vital part in Healy's production. "Both **Ray** and **Paddy** were experienced panto players and much of the production is based on panto techniques with the players walking out of one spot into another. I learnt a lot from **Becket** and the way he raises the most cliched language to imaginative status. Once we got going I was surprised that it was such an easy play to direct. All the movement is in the lines and you've just got to feel it out, move and stand still between the pauses."

THEATRE: **Graham Sennett**

EVENING  
PRESS  
7-6-80

# 'Waiting for Godot' at the Peacock

By David Nowlan,

*Irish Times* Drama Critic

THE HACKLERS of Cavan made history when, with their very first production, they won the supreme trophy at the 28th All-Ireland Drama Festival in Athlone this year. Now, in what has become an excellent annual tradition, that production has arrived at the Peacock Theatre in Dublin for a one week run.

It is Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot," that great modern classic, perhaps one of the most successful and most often performed plays of the past three decades, once beautifully summed up (by Vivian Mercier, I think) as the play in which nothing happens—twice. For the Hacklers last night, the nothing happened better the second time around. The first act was beset by an edginess which begot a shuffle and a shapelessness and a verbal uncertainty that was almost fatal for Beckett's fastidious mood setting. But in the second act the main strength of this production was realised in the persons of Ray O'Connor's Estragon and Paddy Murray's Vladimir. With little physical or vocal contrast between them (which was a pity) they managed to get their act together and establish that capacity to survive comic adversity with dignity, to bridge that waiting moment between birth and death with the sort of resignation and determination that belong properly to a Laurel and a Hardy.

Paddy Dillon's Pozzo was, perhaps, a little too mannered in his acting style, and Paul Dolan's Lucky had the misfortune almost to lose his frenetic monologue in an unnecessarily fussy piece of production by Dermot Healy. John Conlon's lighting was also too fussy without being wholly effective. Faces—especially those in white-face make-up—need to be seen at all times. This is by no means a perfect Godot: it lacks an overall strength and simplicity. But it is worth a visit.

# Mature Cavan 'Godot'

By JOHN FINEGAN,  
Herald Drama Critic

FROM Cavan Town to the Peacock have come the award-winning Hacklers (placed first in the All-Ireland Amateur Drama Finals in Athlone last month) with a production of Samuel Beckett's 'Waiting for Godot' that has many new touches which would have interested the author had he revisited Dublin, as was originally hoped, for the current season of his plays.

When the curtain rises, Estragon, the more insecure of the two tramps waiting for their unknown visitor, is seated symbolically on what appears to be a small raft, to which he runs whenever a crisis looms. The faces of the pair are chalk-white.

The single tree has many more branches than in previous presentations and when it sprouts leaves they are bright red in colour. The tyrannical Pozzo has enormous, mop-like epaulettes on his greatcoat and his slave, Lucky, when asked to dance, claws the air like a prisoner in a cage, without once moving his feet.

This is an astonishingly mature first production, directed by Dermot Healy, for a company that was formed only this year. There are five accurately-realised performances by Ray O'Connor and Paddy Murray as the tramps; by Paddy Dillon as Pozzo and Paul Dolan as his servant; and by Gene Finnegan, looking like an oversized boy scout, as the messenger from Godot. In particular, Murray's portrayal has absorbed the humanity of Vladimir in a performance both funny and touching.

The famous poetic passage, 'Like leaves . . . like ashes,' was, I felt, underplayed last night by the tramps, and the lighting often seemed erratic, but by and large it is a satisfying production of a difficult play.

As noted at the earlier Beckett plays, young people were in the majority in the audience. *EVENING HERALD* 11.6.80



# Cavan group wins top drama prize

THE HACKLERS, from Cavan town, won the major award, the Esso Trophy, at the 28th All-Ireland Amateur Drama Festival in Athlone last night, where they presented "Waiting For Godot", by Samuel Beckett.

Paddy Dillon, of the same group, who played the part of Pozzo, took the prize for the best supporting actor. Paddy O'Dwyer, who played the part of Roy Wild in the Club Players' production of "The Secret Affairs of Mildred Wild", was named the best actor in the festival.

Two other awards went to the same group. Val O'Donnell got the prize for best producer while Greg O'Driscoll took the award for best stage manager.

Best actress was Eve Belton who played the part of Martha in "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf," staged by the Dundalk Theatre Workshop. The award for best supporting actress went to Janine Begley who played the part of Ellen with Charles-town Drama Group in T. C. Murray's "Autumn Fire."

The Authors' Guild Trophy for the best presentation went to the Strand Players, Dublin, who presented "The Man of Mode" by Sir George Etherege.

Overall awards: 1, Cavan; 2, Club Players, Dublin; 3, Strand Players, Dublin. I-PRESS 4,580

# New group wins drama award

HISTORY was made in the 28-year-old run of the All Ireland Amateur Drama Festival which ended in Athlone last night after a programme extending over 13 nights, when a group which took the stage for the first time only five months ago swept to victory.

The Hacklers from Cavan Town won the major award — the Esso Trophy — for their production of *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett. Paddy Dillon of the same group who played the part of Pozzo was judged the best supporting actor.

Paddy O'Dwyer for his part of Roy Wild in the Club Players, Dublin production of "The Secret Affairs of Mildred Wild" by Paul Zindel was named the best actor in the festival.

Two other awards went to the same group. Val O'Donnell was judged the best producer while Greg O'Driscoll got the award for the best stage manager. The best actress award went to Eve Belton who played the part of Martha in the Dundalk Theatre Group's production of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolff*.

The award for the best supporting actress was won by Janine Begley who played the part of Helen in the Charlestown Drama Group production of T.C. Murray's *Autumn Fire*. The author's Guild trophy for the best presentation went to the Strand Players, Dublin who presented *The Man of Mode* by George Etherege.

The overall ratings were:

(1) The Hacklers, Cavan; (2) Club Players, Dublin; (3) Strand Players, Dublin.

EVENING  
6/1/80 PRESS

# WINNERS ANNOUNCED

## CAVAN ASSOCIATION DUBLIN "CLAIM TO FAME" AWARDS



**DERMOT HEALY**

THE Cavan Association, Dublin has had the biggest "poll" ever following its request for nominations for the "Claim-to-Fame" awards.

In the cultural section, the winners were the very talented and successful Cavan Drama Group "The Hacklers" who won for themselves and for Cavan the coveted All-Ireland amateur title this year with their production of "Waiting for Godot." The Cavan Association award will be received by their producer, Mr. Dermot Healy.



**SIMON DEIGNAN**

For his dedication, commitment and life-long service to the G.A.A. the voters decided that Mr. Simon Deignan who contributed so much to the Cavan teams which fashioned the County's most glorious football years, should receive the sporting "Claim-to-Fame" award. The awards will be presented at the Associations Dinner-Dance which will be held in the Green Isle Hotel, Naas Road, Dublin on Tuesday 2nd December.

Tickets are selling out fast and applications must be received by Thursday next 27th November.

ANALO-CERT : 21/11/80

# CAVAN TAKES HOME THE TOP DRAMA PRIZE

Five Cavan amateur actors, two of them appearing on stage for the first time, last night won the 28th All Ireland Drama Festival.

The Cavan Hacklers won first place at the close of the 13 night programme in Athlone, with their production "Waiting for Godot" by Samuel Beckett.

Group backstage member, John Conlon commented; "This is the first All Ireland title to come to Cavan in any shape or form in the past twenty years."

Sixty five year old Paddy Dillon, the most experienced group member, won the prize for best supporting actor.

The group was formed only five months ago by their producer, Dermot Healy.

Paddy O'Dwyer for his part of Roy Wild, in the Club Players production of "The Secret Affairs of Mildred Wild", was named the best actor in the festival.

Two other awards went to the same group. Val O'Donnell took the prize for best producer, while

Greg O'Driscoll took the award for best stage manager.

Best Actress was Eve Belton, who played the part of Martha in "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf", staged by the Dundalk Theatre Workshop. The award for Best Supporting Actress went to Janine Begley, who played the part of Ellen, with Charlestown Drama Group in T. C. Murray's "Autumn Fire".

The Authors' Guild trophy for the best presentation went to the Strand Players, Dublin, who presented "The Man of Mode" by Sir George Etherege.

Overall awards—1, Cavan; 2, Club Players, Dublin; 3, Strand Players, Dublin.

*EVENING  
5.5.80 PRESS*

ANGLO-CELT

16/5/80



Picture shows the outstandingly successful Cavan drama group, The Hacklers, who recently won the premier award in the All-Ireland Drama Festival in Athlone, the Esso Trophy, with their production of Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot." The Esso Trophy is in centre of picture and the Cavan Festival premier award, the Dr. Lyons Cup, on right of Esso trophy. In front (from left) — Anne Cusack, costumes and make-up; Alita O'Brien, artistry; Rosin O'Connor, make-up. Middle row—Gene Finnegan, Paddy Dillon, Ray O'Connor, Dermot Healy (producer), Paul Dolan, Paddy Murray, members of the cast. Back row — Rory O'Moore, Paul Kelly, prompters; Damien O'Brien, stage management. Inset bottom left, John Conlon, lighting; bottom right, Jinmy Fox, sound.













