Theatre Professor Directs Two Plays at World's Largest Arts Festival
by Miles Canaday

Theatre assistant professor Greg Ungar directed two plays by Samuel Beckett this summer at the Edinburgh, Scotland, Festival Fringe, the world's largest arts festival. *Not I* is a solo work that featured fellow DU theatre professor, Anne Penner, and a set design by DU undergraduate theatre majors.

“This role requires the actress’s face and body to be completely covered by a curtain except for the mouth, which is highlighted with lipstick and a spotlight,” said Ungar. “The text is a constant stream of ideas without a break, requiring both great stamina and thoughtful, well-executed delivery in order to convey a clear meaning.”

Ungar and Penner paired *Not I* with another Beckett work, *Rockaby*, which features an actress sitting in a rocking chair while the audience hears her thoughts via a recording. Although Ungar directed both plays, he noted that the rehearsals were very collaborative.

“When anne would record segments of *Rockaby*; we’d discuss declamation, meter, and meaning; then she’d re-record the segment and we’d repeat the process,” he said. Ungar’s goal is to bring a DU production to Edinburgh Fringe every year and eventually expand to include student productions.

Ungar acted with the New Swan Shakespeare Festival in Irvine, CA, this summer, in addition to several roles he played in Denver. “It’s incredibly important to keep my acting sharp,” said Ungar, who has PhD from the University of California, Irvine.

This fall, Ungar will direct Anton Chekhov’s *The Seagull* in the Byron Theatre at the Newman Center for the Performing Arts, the main production in the Department of Theatre for the year.

“This is an ambitious project for an all-undergrad cast, as it is not plot-driven and focuses on the moment-to-moment,” remarked Ungar. “*The Seagull* is much more about ‘atmosphere’ than the melodramatic, late-19th century plays that Chekhov was reacting against.”