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[Review: The Dumb Waiter \(TUTA Theatre Chicago\)](#)

[Scotty Zacher](#) | July 23, 2012 | [0 Comments](#)



The Dumb Waiter

Written by [Harold Pinter](#)

Directed by [Zeljko Djukic](#)

TUTA Studio Theatre, 2010 W. Fulton ([map](#))
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With 'Waiter', TUTA continues as an innovative leader in Chicago's theatre landscape



[TUTA Theatre](#) presents

The Dumb Waiter

Review by [K.D. Hopkins](#)

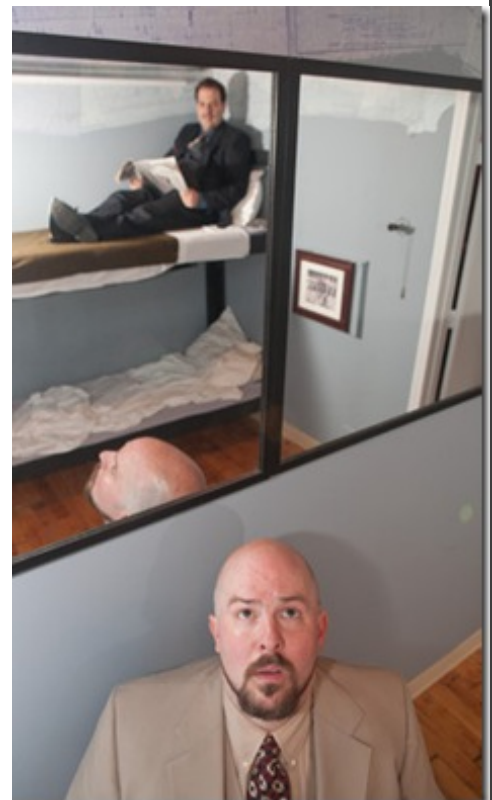
The Dumb Waiter is my third Pinter play I've reviewed this year. I have a deep appreciation for Pinter's style and disturbingly realistic take on the human condition. Written in 1957 in the midst of the [Angry Young Men movement](#) in the arts, Pinter was on the left in post war England, and had more in common with the American Beats. Nonetheless, Pinter wrote eloquently about the class war no matter the continent.

Ben and Gus are two hit men awaiting the instructions for their next target. They seem to be regular blokes, albeit in claustrophobic quarters. [Andy Hager](#) shines as Ben, the senior of the two hit men. He reads the paper and gives a running commentary on articles, all that outrage Gus ([Trey Maclin](#)). Hager has an undercurrent of danger in this character. Ben is the leader in all of the hits that he and Gus have done, and easily turns cold and impatient with his coworker. Hager imbues Ben with fidgety paranoia both comic and blood chilling.

[Trey Maclin](#) gives the character of Gus a dark touch of comic humanity. In one moment he is haunted by a woman that they killed, speaking of how messy it was, attempting to get Ben to agree with him. Maclin gives his character a disarmingly sweet countenance. He is more like a child thrown into an unsavory business. Gus is the one who brings snacks and the fixings for tea. He squirrels away an Eccles cake as if Christmas morning were coming. The argument over the Eccles cake is one of the funniest scenes in the play. Indeed, all of the discussion over food and tea are quite funny. Two hit men arguing over whether it is proper to say 'light the kettle' or 'put on the kettle' gives *The Dumb Waiter* a disarming humanity. Tea is one of those rituals that transcends class in English culture – everyone holds reverence for tea time whether on Royal Dolton or in a chipped mug.

Ben and Gus sweat it out in the cellar without knowledge of when the next deed will go down. It turns out that they cannot have tea because there is no money for the gas register. Then a series of sinister events throws the pair into a flurry of activity worthy of Laurel and Hardy, only much darker. There is a dumbwaiter hidden behind a picture of a cricket team. Gus' curiosity about who is pulling the strings is heightened as notes come down in the dumbwaiter ordering various foods. Hager and Maclin are spot on in physical reactions to the notes. They even get stuck in the dumbwaiter while trying to look in it. The performances are simply brilliant.

TUTA stages *The Dumb Waiter* in a sunken room. The audience stands over the



stage looking down on the action as if observing laboratory subjects. It is a creative way to highlight how those in charge tug the strings of those in subservience. Pinter's commentary on power and class is served well by this production. The simplicity of the set in addition to the unusual staging actually highlights the observer's place in the societal machine. The implication that there is always someone else calling the shots, no matter the friendships formed or advancement in work, is indeed chilling.

The questions inferred in Pinter's work resonate today. Are we all cogs in a machine? What lengths will you go to in order to win? Are we all prisoners to an invisible dumb waiter, waiting in anticipation of a future reward when there is no such thing? My mind still spins after watching this play.

With the manner they conceive and execute their productions, TUTA is a leader in cutting edge Chicago theater. Artistic Director [Zeljko Djukic](#) was just [awarded a Fulbright](#). Every aspect of this production is sharp. The sound ([Christopher Kriz](#)), the set ([Joey Wade](#)), the lighting ([Keith Parham](#)), and even the music enhance the artistic genius of Pinter's script. Once you experience the TUTA company, you will see why such an award is so richly deserved.

Rating: ★★★★★

The Dumb Waiter continues through [TUTA Studio Theatre](#), 2010 W. Fulton ([map](#)), with performances Thursdays-Fridays at 8pm, Saturdays at 5pm and 8pm. All performances are standing room only (so be prepared to get to know your fellow audience members). Tickets are a suggested donation of \$25, \$15 for industry and students. Ticket reservations can be made by phone (800-838-3006) or online through [BrownPaperTickets.com](#). More information at [tutato.com](#). (Running time: 65 minutes, no intermission)



artists

cast

[Andy Hager](#) (Ben), [Trev Maclin](#) (Gus)

behind the scenes

[Zeljko Djukic](#) (director); [Joey Wade](#) (set, props); [Natasha Djukic](#) (costumes); [Keith Parham](#) (lighting); [Christopher Kriz](#) (sound design); [William Robertson](#) (videography); [Lindsay Bartlett](#) (dialect coach); [Allison Raynes](#) (stage manager)

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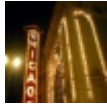
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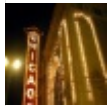
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Mary



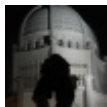
James



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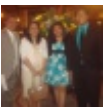
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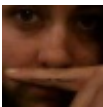
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- [Magic Prop Shop: this magical event is a must see. I saw some of the most amazing tricks that I have witnessed.](#)
- [Mr. Man's Mrs.: there was some very emotional and heart-felt dancing in this play. i was teary-eyed at one point. si](#)
- [Mr. Man's Mrs.: 4 stars well deserved!!](#)
- [David Rice: One quick correction. The role of the Prince of Arragon is played by Lane Flores, not Rene Ruelas.](#)
- [Scotty Zacher: Totally agree with you Darlene! This is the 4th year I've seen this Navy Pier show, and I was still](#)

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