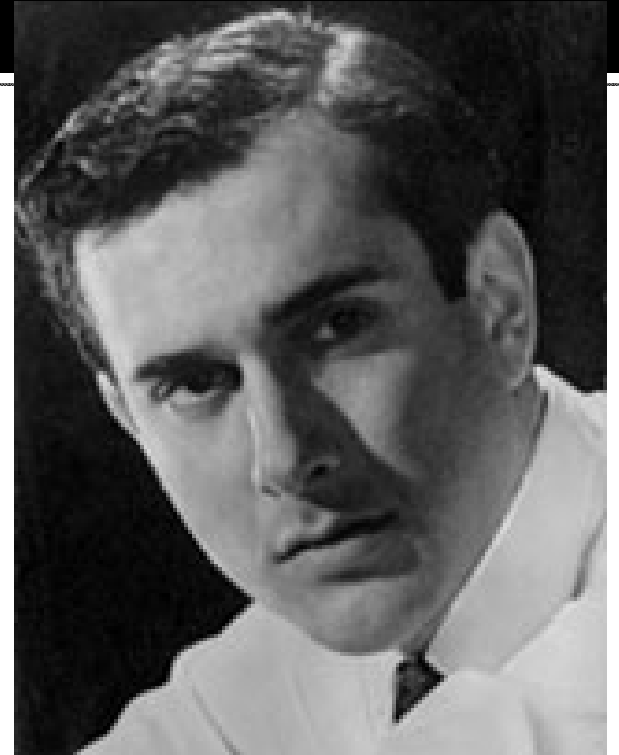


The Dumb Waiter



Keywords

- Comedy of Menace
- Absurdist drama
- Pinteresque
- Silent Violence
- Realism
- Dumb waiter
- Active Audience

Biography – most known for

- Critics have been known to call him 'Master of the Pause' or 'Comedy of Menace' after his first few plays *The Room*, *The Birthday Party*, and *A Slight Ache*. *The Dumb Waiter* is included.
- In his lifetime, he wrote 29 plays and 21 screenplays, and directed 27 theatre productions. He also received honorary degrees from 18 different universities.

Early Years

- Born October 10, 1930 in East London to Hyman and Frances Pinter, a working-class family.
- In 1940 and 1941, he was evacuated from his home during “the Blitz,” the bombing of London.
- Attended Hackney Downs grammar school 1944-1948. There he was inspired by his English teacher Joseph Brearly and was published in the school magazine at the age of 12.
- Studied acting at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in 1948.

Early Years of Acting

- His debut as a professional actor was in 1951, in which he performed in Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot."
- Toured Ireland and England with different acting companies under the stage name of **David Baron**, until 1959.
- On the side, he was married and yet known for living a frivolous lifestyle of betrayal and various affairs. He was also a very active political voice and very involved in Cricket.

Writing as a Career

- First poems were published in 1950 in a magazine entitled *Poetry London*.
- Began to dabble with playwriting in 1956, and his first one-act play *The Room* was produced in 1957, followed by *The Birthday Party* and *The Dumb Waiter*.
- By 1959, he had fully committed himself to the life of a playwright, while still acting more occasionally on the side.

Inspiration for the Absurd

- In 1953, Eisenhower was President and the two supposed “spies” – Julius Rosenberg and Ethel Rosenberg – were executed after an unfair trial. The Soviet Union and the tension of World War II inspired a question – What is reality?
- Realism, and exposing that there is no answer to what is real, was Pinter’s desire.

Absurdist Drama

- Absurdist drama was somewhat coined by Pinter. It essentially is a form of theatre that surrounds that characters and their ability to perform senseless actions, and often the characters are brought down to simple archetypes.
- It thriving during the 1950s, and although it is meant to portray something unrealistic, Pinter believed it to be real for it represented the every-day world, or at least his.

List of Plays

- [The Room](#) (1957)
- [The Birthday Party](#) (1957)
- [The Dumb Waiter](#) (1957)
- [A Slight Ache](#) (1958)
- [The Hothouse](#) (1958)
- [The Caretaker](#) (1959)
- [A Night Out](#) (1959)
- [Night School](#) (1960)
- [The Dwarfs](#) (1960)
- [The Collection](#) (1961)
- [The Lover](#) (1962)
- [Tea Party](#) (1964)
- [The Homecoming](#) (1964)
- [The Basement](#) (1966)
- [Landscape](#) (1967)
- [Old Times](#) (1970)
- [Monologue](#) (1972)
- [No Man's Land](#) (1974)
- [Betrayal](#) (1978)
- [Family Voices](#) (1980)
- [Other Places](#) (1982)
- [A Kind of Alaska](#) (1982)
- [Victoria Station](#) (1982)
- [One For The Road](#) (1984)
- [Mountain Language](#) (1988)
- [The New World Order](#) (1991)
- [Party Time](#) (1991)
- [Moonlight](#) (1993)
- [Ashes to Ashes](#) (1996)
- [Celebration](#) (1999)
- [Remembrance of Things Past](#) (2000)

Awards and Honors

- [Commander of the Order of the British Empire \(CBE\)](#), 1966
- [Shakespeare Prize \(Hamburg\)](#), 1970
- European Prize for Literature ([Vienna](#)), 1973
- [Pirandello Prize \(Palermo\)](#), 1980
- Chilean Order of Merit, 1992
- The [David Cohen Prize](#), 1995
- Honorary fellow of [Queen Mary, University of London Laurence Olivier Special Award](#), 1996
- [Molière d'honneur](#), Paris, in recognition of his life's work, 1997
- [Sunday Times](#) Award for Literary Excellence, 1997
- [BAFTA](#) Fellowship, 1997
- Companion of Literature, [RSL](#), 1998
- The Critics' Circle Award for Distinguished Service to the Arts, 2000
- [Brianza Poetry Prize \(Italy\)](#), 2000
- [South Bank Show](#) Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Arts, 2001
- [ST Dupont](#) Golden Pen Award, 2001 for a Lifetime's Distinguished Service to Literature "Premio Fiesole ai Maestri del Cinema", Italy, 2001
- World Leaders Award (World Leaders: A Festival of Creative Genius, [Toronto](#)), 2001
- [Hermann Kesten](#) Medallion for outstanding commitment on behalf of persecuted and imprisoned writers, awarded by German [PEN \(Berlin\)](#), 2001
- [Companion of Honour \(CH\)](#) for services to Literature, 2002
- Diploma *ad Honorem*, Teatro Filodrammatici ([Milan](#)), 2004
- [Evening Standard Awards](#), 50th Anniversary - Special Award, 2004
- [Wilfred Owen](#) Poetry Prize, 2005
- [Franz Kafka](#) Prize, 2005
- **[Nobel Prize in Literature](#), 2005**
- [Europe Theatre Prize](#), 2006
- [Serbian Foundation](#) Prize, 2006
- [St. George](#) Plaque of the City of [Kragujevac](#), 2006

Comedy of Menace

- Coined from David Campton's play *The Lunatic View: A Comedy of Menace*.
- The combination of comedy – something predictable with a conflict and a resolution – with “menace” – implying a threat or violence with in the play.
- *The Dumb Waiter* successfully combines the two, creating a dark, violent comedy.

The Dumb Waiter

- First published by Eyre Methuen in 1960.
- First presented at the Hampstead Theatre Club on 21st January 1960 as a double-feature with *The Room*.
- Made into 2 made-for-TV movies, one in 1985 and another in 1987.
- There have been several adaptations since its opening, including its 50th anniversary in 2007.

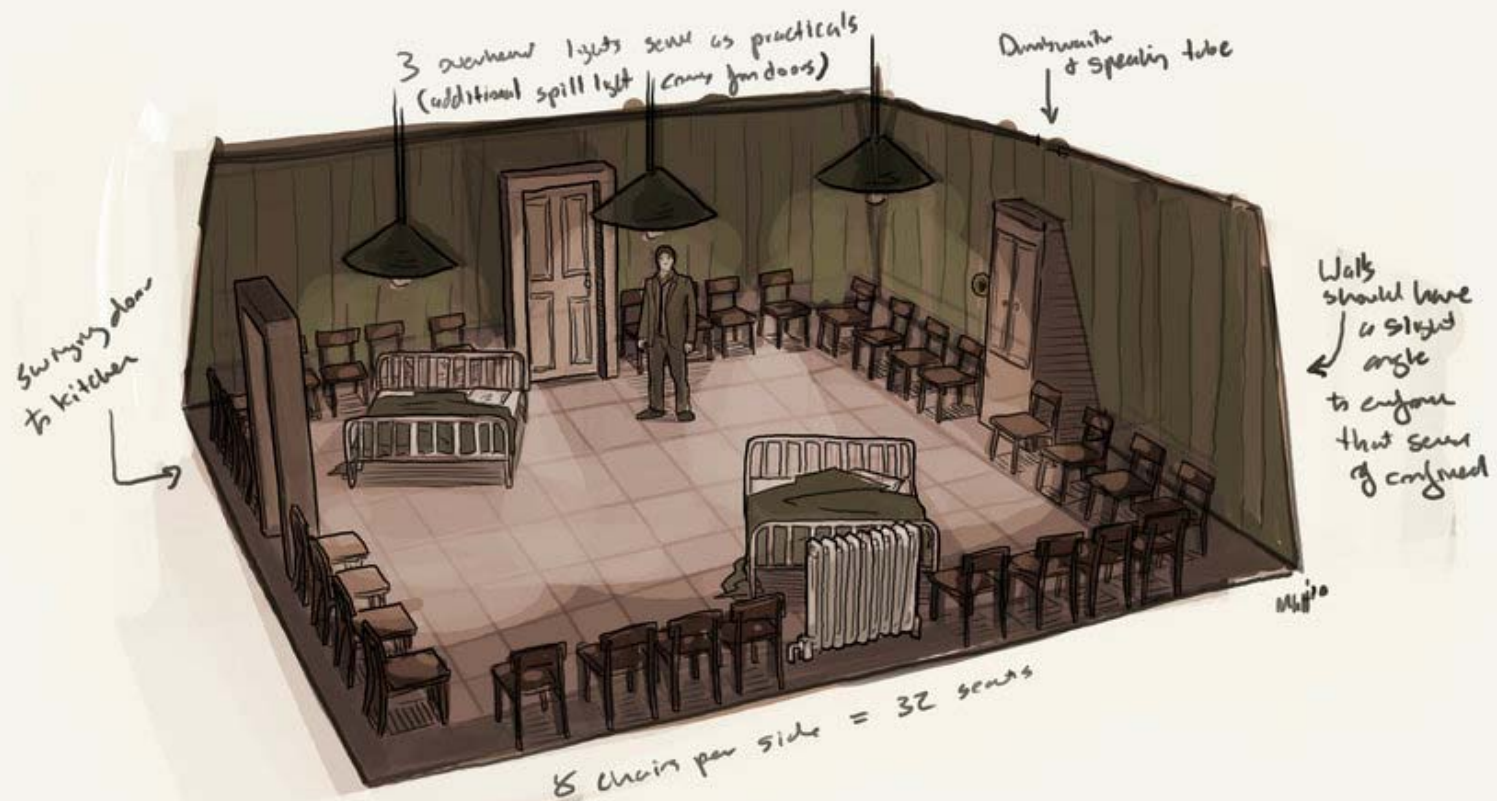
Reception

- Reviewed with mixed feelings – broke up the expectation of what theatre was.
- Though he disliked it, Pinter's work was given the title of "Pinteresque," for his style was so specific.

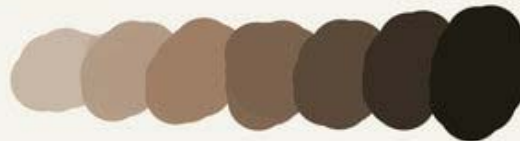
Structure

- One-Act play centering around two characters whose purpose is slowly revealed throughout the play.
- There is a lot of grey area, so the audience has an experience of being involved with the two men.

Set Design



HAROLD PINTER'S
THE DUMB WAITER
DUE: LAMOND SOHNSON
DESIGN: MATTHEW L. HILL



Characters

- Gus –
 - Audience intended to sympathize with him, for he appears to know just as much as we, the audience, know.
 - Submissive to Ben
 - Slightly more sensitive to humanity
 - Bored with routine
 - Questions authority, but still submits and accepts
 - Lower-class

Characters

- Ben –
 - The leader/elder of the two
 - Dominant and more violent, in both his actions and his silence
 - Ashamed of his lower-class status
 - Accepts all orders from Wilson
 - Knows more than Gus

Characters

- Wilson –
 - Although he never appears in the play, he is the underlying controller of the situation at hand, the reason they are there to begin with.
 - Potentially the one behind the dumbwaiter and the notes.
 - May be paranoid of betrayal

Main Themes

- Unknowing
- Contrasting violence with domestic issues
Kettle, 2609)
- Silence
 - The absence of knowledge
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yYVosbzEIJQ>

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Questions?

