



MEDIA RELEASE

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Signal Kicks Off 4th Season with 2 Comedies of Menace: 'The Dumb Waiter' & 'The Zoo Story'

Double Bill of One Acts Play the Chopin Aug. 3–Sept. 3, 2006

CHICAGO, June 28, 2006 — Signal Ensemble Theatre (Ronan Marra, Christopher Prentice and Joseph Stearns, artistic directors) will open its 2006/07 season with a double bill of Harold Pinter's **THE DUMB WAITER** and Edward Albee's **THE ZOO STORY**, running in the studio at the Chopin Theatre, 1543 W. Division, August 3 – September 3, 2006. **Press opening is Saturday, Aug. 5 at 8 p.m.** Tickets may be purchased at signalensemble.com or reserved at 773-347-1350.

A pair of relentlessly suspenseful one-acts, **THE DUMB WAITER** and **THE ZOO STORY** explore the flipsides of killing time. Premiered in 1960, the plays concern the desperate need to communicate (or not) that drives us to violence and beyond. Echoes of *Waiting for Godot* reverberate through **THE DUMB WAITER** as two professional killers pass time waiting for their next macabre assignment. **THE ZOO STORY** depicts a clash of classes as a young vagrant recounts his visit to the zoo to a well-to-do family man and draws the listener into his own primal urges.

The cast of **THE DUMB WAITER** features ensemble member **Joseph Stearns** (Tony Lumpkin in *She Stoops to Conquer*, Pozzo in *Waiting for Godot*, Right Brain Project's *A Devil Inside*) as Ben and **Philip Winston** (Hastings in *She Stoops to Conquer*, Elton John's *Glasses*) as Gus.

THE ZOO STORY features ensemble member **Christopher Prentice** (Marlow in *She Stoops to Conquer*, Estragon in *Waiting for Godot*, First Folio's *The Tempest*) as Jerry and Stearns as Peter.

Directed by **Aaron Snook** (**THE DUMB WAITER**) and **Ronan Marra** (**THE ZOO STORY**), the designers are Marra (set), **Devon MacGregor** (costumes) **Julie E. Ballard** (lights) and **Anthony Ingram** (sound). MacGregor is the stage manager.

Awarded the 2005 Nobel Prize for Literature, **Harold Pinter** (**THE DUMB WAITER**) is the author of 29 plays including *Betrayal*, *The Birthday Party*, *The Caretaker*, *The Homecoming* and *Ashes to Ashes*, and 20 screenplays including *The Servant*, *Accident*, *The Go-Between* and *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. He has directed or acted in several of his own plays including *The Caretaker*, *No Man's Land*, *The Collection*, *Betrayal*, *The Birthday Party* and *Ashes to Ashes*.

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Born in Washington, D.C., in 1928, playwright **Edward Albee** (THE ZOO STORY) has become one of America's most distinguished playwrights. Best known for the Tony Award-winning *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, he has won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama three times, for *A Delicate Balance*, *Seascape* and *Three Tall Women*. His other plays include *The Death of Bessie Smith*, *The Sandbox*, *The American Dream*, *Tiny Alice*, *Box and Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*, *The Lady from Dubuque*, *Another Part of the Zoo*, *The Man Who Had Three Arms*, *Marriage Play*, *Fragments*, *The Play About the Baby*, *The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?* and *Occupant*. A 1996 recipient of the Kennedy Center Honors, Albee currently teaches at the University of Houston and regularly directs at the Alley Theatre.

Ensemble member **Ronan Marra** (Director, THE ZOO STORY), Signal's general artistic director, is a co-founder of Signal Ensemble. Directing credits with the company include Jeff-recommended productions of *Seascape* (Jeff Citation winner, Best Costume Design), *Waiting for Godot* and his own *Landslide* (Jeff Citation nomination, New Work), as well as *She Stoops to Conquer*, *Much Ado About Nothing* and his own *Learning to Fly*. He has also directed for The Gallery Players in New York City as well as several productions at his alma mater, Kent State University. As a playwright, Marra's plays have been produced in Chicago and abroad, and he has received awards for New Work at ITN Theatre and Neverland Productions in New York. Marra is a recipient of the 2006 Illinois Arts Council Finalist Award in Scriptworks.

Making his directorial debut, ensemble member **Aaron Snook** (Director, THE DUMB WAITER) is in his third season with Signal, where he played Leslie in *Seascape* (Jeff Citation nomination, Supporting Actor), Vladimir in *Waiting for Godot*, the Texan and Whitcomb in *Catch-22*, Claudio in *Much Ado About Nothing*. He assistant-directed and appeared in *She Stoops to Conquer*. Other Chicago credits include Nat in *Only the Sound* for Chicago Dramatists and Gene in *A Devil Inside* for the Right Brain Project. A graduate of Duke University with a double major in drama and English, Snook also studied with the American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco.

THE DUMB WAITER & THE ZOO STORY will play in the studio at the Chopin Theatre, 1543 W. Division, August 3 – September 3, 2006. Previews are Aug. 3 and 4 at 8 p.m. Opening is Saturday, Aug. 5 at 8 p.m. Regular performances will continue through Sept. 3 as follows: Thursdays through Saturdays at 8 p.m. and Sundays at 3 p.m. Preview tickets are \$10. Tickets for the regular run are \$10–\$15 and may be purchased online at signalensemble.com or reserved at 773-347-1350. The Chopin Theatre is accessible by the CTA Blue Line train (Division) and buses (70-Division, 56-Milwaukee, 18-Ashland).

Known for its ensemble acting and producing a diverse slate of plays that range from classics to new works, Signal Ensemble Theatre uses the actor as focal point to clearly execute the playwright's vision. Founded by its three artistic directors (Ronan Marra, Christopher Prentice, Joseph Stearns), the company began producing in 2003. Signal's production of *Seascape* won a Jeff Citation for best costume design.

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The 2006/07 Season at the Chopin Continues

CLOSER

by Patrick Marber

directed by ensemble member Ronan Marra

Chopin Studio

Nov. 19–Dec. 17, 2006 / Press Opening: Nov. 20, 2006

THE WEIR

by Conor McPherson

directed by ensemble member Christopher Prentice

Chopin Studio

February – March 2007

HAMLET

by William Shakespeare

directed by ensemble member Ronan Marra

Chopin Mainstage

April – May 2007

THE DUMB WAITER & THE ZOO STORY

FACT SHEET

WHAT: Signal Ensemble Theatre presents a double bill of **THE DUMB WAITER** by Harold Pinter and **THE ZOO STORY** by Edward Albee

LOCATION: Chopin Theatre, 1543 W. Division St., Chicago, in the Studio

DATES/TIMES: THURSDAY, AUGUST 3 – SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2006

PREVIEWS: 8/3 & 8/4

8:00 pm

PRESS OPENING: SATURDAY, AUGUST 5

8:00 pm

Thursday, Friday & Saturday eves

8:00 pm

Sunday mats

3:00 pm

DESCRIPTION: A pair of relentlessly suspenseful one-acts, **THE DUMB WAITER** and **THE ZOO STORY** explore the flip sides of killing time. Written in 1957 and 1958, respectively, the plays concern the desperate need to communicate (or not) that drives us to violence and beyond. Echoes of *Waiting for Godot* reverberate through **THE DUMB WAITER** as two professional killers pass time waiting for their next macabre assignment. **THE ZOO STORY** depicts a clash of classes as a young vagrant recounts his visit to the zoo to a well-to-do family man and draws the listener into his own primal urges.

WHO: Written by Harold Pinter (**THE DUMB WAITER**) and Edward Albee (**THE ZOO STORY**)
Directed by Aaron Snook (**WAITER**) and Ronan Marra (**ZOO**)
Cast: Christopher Prentice (Jerry, **ZOO**), Joseph Stearns (Ben, **WAITER**; Peter, **ZOO**), and Philip Winston (Gus, **WAITER**)
Production: Ronan Marra (setting), Devon MacGregor (costumes, stage manager), Julie E. Ballard (lights), Anthony Ingram (sound)

PRICES: Previews: \$10
Regular run: \$10-\$15

TICKETS: INFORMATION/RESERVATIONS: (773) 347-1350 or signalensemble.com

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