

from the FOOTLIGHTS

FEBRUARY 2009

"Life shouldn't be all work and no plays."

<http://www.footlightsdc.org>

Sarah Ruhl's *Eurydice* - February 23 discussion

Sarah Ruhl wrote her first play in fourth grade. It was not produced and she decided instead to become a poet. Her second play was written when she was a junior in college. It was produced, and she has not stopped since. She now speaks of herself as "a poet by nature and a playwright by trade." *Eurydice* is the fourth of her plays we've been able to see locally in the past several years, along with *Passion Play*, *a cycle*, *The Clean House*, and *Dead Man's Cell Phone*.

This modern retelling of the ancient Orpheus-Eurydice legend had its world premiere in 2003. It is told from Eurydice's viewpoint, with the help of talking rocks, letters delivered without benefit of the U.S. Postal Service, an elevator in which it is always raining and several other unusual features, and includes the addition of Eurydice's father as a principal character.

Footlights will meet at **Casa Fiesta, Monday February 23**, for a buffet dinner and our discussion. Footlights member Mary Ann Wren will moderate. Dinner is at 6:30 and discussion begins at 7:30. If you prefer, you may come for the discussion only. Casa Fiesta is at 4910 Wisconsin Avenue, halfway between the Tenleytown and Friendship Heights metro stops on the red line. There is usually plenty of nearby street parking. Dinner will cost \$15, including tax and tip.

Reserve with Mark Gruenberg, 202-898-4825 or press_associates@yahoo.com. If you have to cancel, please let Mark know as soon as possible, and definitely by noon on the 23rd.

Our guest speakers will be **Rachel Grossman**, Director of Education and Outreach for Round House Theatres, and **Jacqueline Lawton**, the dramaturg for *Eurydice*. They will help us decide whether the Orpheus-Eurydice tale is myth, legend, allegory, parable or just a really good story.

And that story continues to fascinate us: the Metropolitan Opera has just performed Gluck's exquisite 1762 opera *Orfeo ed Euridice* and our own Atlas In Series has recently produced Offenbach's joyful 1858 *Orpheus in the Underworld (Orphée aux Enfers)* with its memorable can-can music.

Food for Thought

The Orpheus-Eurydice legend has been around for 25 centuries, and still inspires poets, novelists, playwrights, movie directors, and composers, each of whom interprets the old story in a different way for different times.

Tennessee Williams in his *Orpheus Descending* omitted the snake which bit Eurydice as she danced barefoot at her wedding in the old story, but instead gave Orpheus a snakeskin jacket to wear. (And Marlon Brando wore it beautifully in that 1960s movie version, *The Fugitive Kind*.)

If you were updating the story for our times, when and how would you set it? I kind of like those 1960s: Remember the so-called hippie culture, the "make love not war" days, with all the barefoot weddings in meadows on the sides of distant mountains, no cell-phones to call for help if there is a real snake in the grass to bite poor Eurydice's foot, and enough shared LSD or other hallucinogenic to make a trip to hell and back believable. Sarah Ruhl chose the 1950s for her *Eurydice*. How about you? — Mary Ann

Eurydice at Round House Theatre

Footlights will join the Ushers at the Round House Theatre, 4545 East-West Highway in Bethesda for the Saturday matinee on February 28 at 3 p.m. Tickets are \$35 (\$1 less than Goldstar, and we are promised excellent center-orchestra seats). Please make checks payable to "Footlights" and send to Robin Larkin, 5800 Nicholson Lane, L07, Rockville, MD 20852.

Pre-Theater Luncheon at the Shangri-La

We will also join the Ushers for a pre-theater Indian-Nepali buffet luncheon at the Shangri-La Restaurant, 7345 Wisconsin Avenue, Bethesda – just a short walk from the Round House Theatre – at 1 p.m. on the 28th. The buffet has 4 vegetarian and 3 meat entrées. Although the selection varies, it usually includes tandoori chicken, butter chicken, a lamb dish, lentils, salad, rice, eggplant, zucchini, cauliflower and other veggies, plus dessert. Warm naan (bread) is brought to the table. The all-you-can-eat buffet plus tax and tip and a small group fee will cost \$18. Please RSVP by February 15 to Joel Markowitz at joel@ushers.us or 703 447-8805.

Reading *Eurydice*

Backstage Books, 545-8th Street, SE, (202) 544-5744, has copies of the play. Call before you go, however, to be sure they still have copies.

March Play: *Native Son*

Native Son by novelist **Richard Wright**, written in 1940, immediately established Wright as an important author and a spokesman on conditions facing African-Americans. *Native Son* is a ground-breaking portrayal of the forces that

turn a poor black man into a criminal and killer. Wright later collaborated with **Paul Green** on a stage adaptation of the book, which was directed by Orson Welles and ran successfully on Broadway in 1941-43. Rarely produced, The American Century Theater will stage *Native Son* from April 14 - May 9, 2009. Director **Bob Bartlett** will be our guest speaker when Footlights meets on **Thursday, March 26** at **Alfio's** for our March dinner-discussion. 6:30 for dinner and the discussion at 7:30. Reserve with Mark.

Seeing *Native Son*

We will see *Native Son* on Sunday, April 19 at 2:30 p.m. at the American Century Theater (TACT), with post-show cast discussion. Tickets are \$14. Send your check, payable to Footlights, to Robin Larkin, 5800 Nicholson Ln, #L07, Rockville, MD 20852. Let Robin know your check is on the way.

Calendar

- Monday, February 23, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of Sarah Ruhl's *Eurydice* with Rachel Grossman and Jacqueline Lawton, Round House Theatre. At Casa Fiesta, 4910 Wisconsin Avenue, NW (202-244-8888). \$15 buffet includes tax & tip. Reserve with Mark.
- Saturday, February 28, 1 p.m., luncheon at Shangri-La, 7345 Wisconsin Avenue, Bethesda, MD 20810 (301-656-4444). \$18, includes tax, tip. Reserve with Joel.
- Saturday, February 28, 3 p.m., performance of *Eurydice* at Round House Theatre, Bethesda. Tickets: \$35. Reserve with Robin.
- Thursday, March 26, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of *Native Son* by Richard Wright and Paul Green with guest Bob Bartlett, American Century Theater. At Alfio's, 4515 Willard Ave., Chevy Chase, MD (301-657-9133). \$12 dinner - choice of 5 entrées, includes tax & tip. Reserve with Mark.
- Sunday, April 19, 2:30 p.m., performance of *Native Son* at The American Century Theater, Gunston Arts Center, Theater II, 2700 South Lang Street, Arlington, VA 22206. Tickets: \$14. Reserve with Robin.
- Tuesday, April 28, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of Karen Zacarías' *Legacy of Light* with playwright Karen Zacarías. At Alfio's.
- Sunday, May 10, 7:30 p.m., performance of *Legacy of Light* at Arena Stage (Crystal City). Tickets: \$22.

Reservations: Dinner-discussions – Mark, press_associates@yahoo.com or 202-898-4825.
Performances – Robin, robinlarkin@comcast.net or 240-669-6300.
Luncheon – Joel, joel@ushers.us or 703- 447-8805.

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