

from the FOOTLIGHTS

MARCH 2009

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

<http://www.footlightsdc.org>

***Native Son* by Paul Green and Richard Wright**

Footlights meets for our monthly dinner-discussion on **Thursday, March 26** at **Alfio's**.

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 turned a poor black man into a criminal and killer. The novel was a giant commercial success as a Book-of-the-month club feature. It came after years of poverty and struggle for Richard Wright, who refused to compromise his need to express the anger and fear arising from the hard lives of African-Americans.

In making a play of his novel, Wright collaborated with playwright **Paul Green** who won the 1926 Pulitzer prize for his play, *In Abraham's Bosom*. In 1936 Green wrote the words and Kurt Weill the music for *Johnny Johnson*. Green's historical pageant *The Lost Colony* is still regularly performed on Roanoke Island. Orson Welles directed *Native Son* on Broadway. It was his last work there before going west to direct *Citizen Kane*.

Richard Wright continued to speak out in such works as his autobiography *Black Boy*, published in 1945. By the late 1940s, he and his family moved to France. Wright performed as Bigger Thomas in a film version of *Native Son*.

The American Century Theater will stage *Native Son* from April 14 - May 9, 2009. Director **Bob Bartlett** will be our guest speaker at Footlights' dinner-discussion. Bob Bartlett recently directed Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into Night* at Quotidian Theatre Company and his *Ah, Wilderness!* at The American Century Theater. John Glynn will moderate our discussion.

Alfio's is located on the ground floor of the Willoughby Apartments, 4515 Willard Ave., Chevy Chase, MD, 20815 (Phone: 301-657-9133) – two blocks from the Friendship Heights Metro. Street parking is limited but valet parking is free at Alfio's.

To reserve a place, contact Mark Gruenberg at 202-898-4825 or press_associates@yahoo.com. The cost is only \$12 for a choice among 5 entrees, plus salad, bread, beverage and ice cream, and includes tax and tip. We suggest a \$5 contribution to Footlights. Please arrive by 6:30 p.m. for dinner. The program begins at 7:30 p.m. and ends at 9-9:30 p.m. You may come for the discussion only, if you wish. There will be extra chairs.

Note: If you must cancel your dinner reservation, please let Mark know by noon on Thursday, March 26, so we have an accurate count of reservations.

Reading *Native Son*

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.

See *Native Son* at TACT

Footlights will see *Native Son* on Sunday, April 19, 2:30 p.m., at The American Century Theater, Gunston Arts Center, Theater II, 2799 South Lang Street, Arlington VA, 22206. Tickets are \$14. There will be a discussion with the cast after the show. For tickets, send your check, payable to Footlights, to Robin Larkin, 5800 Nicholson Lane, # L07, Rockville, MD 20852.

Food for Thought

Native Son the novel and *Native Son* the play are very different. Perhaps in a play we need to sympathize with the characters, while in a novel it is sufficient to understand the characters and to accept their behavior as credible. Certainly in the play, the characters need to express their feelings while in a novel, the author can describe the thoughts and feelings of the characters without the need for the character to speak or show their true feelings. There is not enough time in a play for characters to be ambiguous, while in a novel, there is less need for consistency as long as the inconsistency is eventually made credible. *Agree?*

April Play: *Legacy of Light* by Karen Zacarías

Playwright Karen Zacarías will be our guest speaker when Footlights meets on **Tuesday, April 28** at **Alfio's** for our April dinner-discussion—6:30 for dinner, discussion at 7:30. Mark your calendar.

Arena Stage is presenting the world premiere of Karen Zacarías' newly commissioned play, *Legacy of Light*. In the play, Karen Zacarías introduces two brilliant women from different eras who are connected by the quest to create their scientific legacies while handling their maternal desires and obligations. Emilie du Châtelet is an 18th century physicist, and Voltaire's lover, whose unexpected pregnancy significantly impacts her scientific discoveries and her very life. Olivia Hasting Brown is a present-day astrophysicist from New Jersey whose inability to have children does not impede her desire to become a mother and the consequences her decision may bring. Millie Carrozzi is Olivia's surrogate, through whom the lives of both of these women

interact and intertwine. *Legacy of Light* reflects the struggle many women face to balance their intellectual and career aspirations with the responsibilities of motherhood.

Karen Zacarías is the founding Artistic Director of Young Playwrights' Theater. A local D.C. playwright, Karen has had three world premieres in 2008: *The Book Club Play* (Round House Theatre), *Chasing George Washington* (The Kennedy Center), and *Looking for Roberto Clemente* (Imagination Stage).

Footlights last met with Karen in March 2006 when we

discussed her play, *The Sins of Sor Juana*.

We will have draft copies of the play available for purchase to Footlights members at the March meeting.

Seeing *Legacy of Light*

We will see *Legacy of Light* on **Sunday, May 10 at 7:30 p.m.** at Arena Stage in Crystal City. Tickets are \$22. Send your check, payable to Footlights, to Robin Larkin, 5800 Nicholson Lane, # L07, Rockville, MD 20852. Let Robin know your check is on the way.

Calendar

- Thursday, March 26, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of *Native Son* by Paul Green and Richard Wright 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 *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.
- Monday, May 18, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of *Rock 'N' Roll* by Tom Stoppard. At Alfio's.
- Saturday, May 23, 2 p.m., performance of *Rock 'N' Roll* at Studio Theatre. Tickets: \$48.

Reservations: Dinner-discussions – Mark Gruenberg, press_associates@yahoo.com or 202-898-4825.

Performances – Robin Larkin, robinlarkin@comcast.net or 240-669-6300. Send your check, payable to FOOTLIGHTS, to Robin Larkin, 5800 Nicholson Lane, #L07, Rockville, MD 20852. Please indicate for which play or plays you want tickets.

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