

from the FOOTLIGHTS

SUMMER 2009

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

<http://www.footlightsdc.org>

July 21: A Passion for Justice: An Encounter with Clarence Darrow

Jack Marshall, Artistic Director and CEO of the American Century Theatre, and Paul Morella, renowned actor, have written a one-man play based on famed defense attorney Clarence Darrow. Paul Morella, presently winning rave reviews at Olney in Shaw's *The Millionairess* will perform this play at the Olney Theatre Center August 12 - September 6. Footlights is very pleased to have Paul Morella as guest speaker at our next dinner-discussion on **Tuesday, July 21**, at Alfio's.

A Passion for Justice presents Darrow in a forum he often enjoyed during his life, talking about his ideas and life to an assembled audience. In addition to revealing the life experiences that formed this unique mind and personality, the play shows Darrow in his greatest crisis—his sensational trial for bribery and jury tampering—his stinging defeats, and his legendary triumphs: the Scopes "Monkey Trial," the Leopold-Loeb "thrill murder" case, the Ossian Sweet civil rights trial, and many more, as the audience becomes the mesmerized juries that Darrow inspired like no other. The performance features Darrow's most emotional and explosive summations, his passionate pleas for mercy, and the famous showdown with William Jennings Bryan on the teaching of evolution.

Clarence Darrow is considered the greatest criminal defense lawyer in American history. His father was an abolitionist and his mother a women's rights advocate, and as a labor and then criminal lawyer Darrow defended labor organizers, conscientious objectors during wartime, American Communists during Red Scares, and spent three decades defending academic freedom, free speech, and personal liberties. He opposed capital punishment and Prohibition, and was noted for closing arguments which lasted for hours, all done without referring to notes. His most famous trials were Leopold and Loeb, the thrill killers who murdered 14-year old Bobby Franks, and the Scopes trial, the so-called "Monkey" trial, in which he argued against William Jennings Bryan that a state legislature had no right to prohibit the teaching of Darwin's theory of evolution in public schools. He also defended Eugene V. Debs, union leader, who was arrested for his participation in the Pullman Strike, when railroad workers were protesting a sudden 30% wage cut. He said later "I lost Scopes, lost Leopold

and Loeb, lost Debs, right? Why are people holding me up as some kind of idol? It's the battle, it's the effort, not the victory. It's bringing the public around to what you know is morally right."

Clarence Darrow was the author of four books, and is the subject of multiple novels, (most recently Caleb Carr's *Angel of Darkness*), biographies (Geoffrey Cowan's and Irving Stone's *Clarence Darrow for the Defense* among others), plays (such as *Inherit the Wind*), films (*Compulsion*, based on Meyer Levin's non-fiction novel about the Leopold-Loeb murder trial), and also several poems by his friend Edgar Lee Masters (*Spoon River Anthology*) with whom he once shared an office. Footlights has discussed *Inherit the Wind* and *Spoon River Anthology*.

Dinner on July 21 is at 6:30 p.m. 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, 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. 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. If you have to cancel, please let Mark know as soon as possible, and definitely by noon on July 21, so we have an accurate count for Alfio's.

We have a draft script of *A Passion for Justice* available. If you would like a copy, please send your check for \$5, payable to Footlights, to Robin Larkin, 5800 Nicholson Lane, #L07, Rockville, MD 20852. Please include your mailing address.

August 15: See A Passion for Justice at Olney Theatre Center

We will see Paul Morella in *A Passion for Justice* on Saturday, August 15 at 2 p.m. at Olney Theatre Center, 2001 Olney-Sandy Spring Road, Olney, MD. Tickets are \$35. Send your check by August 1 to Robin Larkin, 5800 Nicholson Lane, #L07, Rockville, MD 20852.

September 15: Harold Pinter's *Moonlight*

At our May Footlights' discussion of *Design for Living*, Akiva Fox, Shakespeare Theatre Company Literary Associate, made the provocative suggestion that Noël Coward's dialogue was the precursor to Harold Pinter's. Thinking of Coward's witty repartee as opposed to Pinter's tension-filled pauses, most of us were surprised, if not downright skeptical.

Now we can consider Pinter's dialogue anew. On **Tuesday, September 15**, Footlights will discuss *Moonlight*, Pinter's 1993 play. We will be joined by **Sarah Wallace**, associate literary manager/dramaturg at Studio Theatre. We'll meet at Alfio's at 6:30 p.m. for dinner. (See July 21 meeting details above for location, price and reservations.)

Many critics have given us their take on Pinter. For

example, Margo Jefferson (1995): "As a playwright, Harold Pinter runs the gamut from brilliant to accomplished. He inherited Beckett's prose of despair – minimalist and starkly cadenced – took it into the living rooms and bedrooms of England, and used it to make dramas of family treachery, class menace and psychological terrorism."

But only through our own dialogue do we sharpen our perspectives. Please join us for stimulating conversation and insights.

Get Well, Beatrice!

2009 has not been kind to Beatrice Rouse, Footlights Board Member. We send our condolences to her on the loss of her sister, and heartfelt wishes for a good and speedy recovery from surgeries. We miss you.

Calendar

- Tuesday, July 21, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of *A Passion for Justice* by Jack Marshall & Paul Morella. At Alfio's, 4515 Willard Ave., Chevy Chase, MD, 20815. Morella is our guest speaker. Reserve with Mark
- Saturday, August 15, 2 p.m., performance of *A Passion for Justice* at Olney Theatre Center, 2001 Olney-Sandy Spring Road, Olney, MD. Tickets are \$35. Reserve with Robin by August 1.
- Tuesday, September 15, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of *Moonlight* by Harold Pinter. At Alfio's, 4515 Willard Ave., Chevy Chase, MD, 20815. Sarah Wallace is our guest speaker. Reserve with Mark.
- TBA, performance of *Moonlight* at the Studio Theatre, 1501 14th St., NW, DC (at P St.).

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.

Robin Larkin *for* FOOTLIGHTS
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