

from the FOOTLIGHTS

MAY - JUNE 2010

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

<http://www.footlightsdc.org>

May 20: Footlights to Discuss Allyson Currin's *Treadwell: Bright and Dark*

Our play for discussion on Thursday, May 20 will be *Treadwell: Bright and Dark* written by DC playwright **Allyson Currin** who was commissioned by The American Century Theater (TACT) to develop a play about the life of Sophie Treadwell (1885-1970), a playwright, actress, director, journalist and novelist whose professional career spanned almost 60 years.

TACT's website says: "Sophie Treadwell was a tenacious, prodigiously talented artist who pushed the limits for women in many facets of the professional world. Her daring career included triumphs on Broadway, such as her classic play *Machinal*; in journalism, with her exclusive interview with Mexican revolutionary Pancho Villa; and, in artists' rights, with a bold lawsuit against John Barrymore over his theft of one of her plays. Yet despite ground-breaking accomplishments, Treadwell battled insecurities and doubts throughout her life. *Treadwell: Bright and Dark* explores the outer courage and wit and the inner conflict and frustration that colored this American heroine's compelling life."

Playwright Allyson Currin will be joining us on May 20. Ms. Currin has been nominated twice for the Helen Hayes Awards' Charles MacArthur Award for Outstanding New Play, received the Mary Goldwater Award for excellence as a playwright, and has won top honors in several new-play festivals. Barbara Reithmaier will moderate our discussion.

We'll meet at **Alfio's**, 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.

Phyllis Bodin will take reservations. She may be reached at phylbo@verizon.net or 301-986-1768. The cost for dinner is only \$13 for a choice among 6 entrees, plus salad, bread, beverage and ice cream, and includes tax and tip. We suggest an additional \$5 contribution to Footlights.

Dinner is at 6:30 p.m. Please plan to arrive by 6:15. The program begins at 7:30 and ends at 9:30. You may come for the discussion only, if you wish. If you have to cancel, please let Phyllis know as soon as possible, and definitely by noon on May 20, so we have an accurate count for Alfio's.

Read *Treadwell: Bright and Dark*

We have draft copies of Allyson's Currin's play available for Footlights only. Send your request to Robin Larkin, 5800

Nicholson Ln, #L07, Rockville, MD 20852 (240-669-6300 or robinlarkin@comcast.net). Be sure to include your address.

See *Treadwell* at TACT June 5

Treadwell will be performed by TACT at Theatre on the Run, 3700 South Four Mile Run Drive, Arlington, Virginia. Footlights will see it on Saturday, June 5, 2:30 p.m. Tickets are \$14. Send your check, payable to Footlights, to Robin Larkin, 5800 Nicholson Ln, #L07, Rockville, MD 20852 (robinlarkin@comcast.net or 240-669-6300).

June 2: *Trumpery* – Charles Darwin Takes On Religion, Family Crises And Competition

Charles Darwin had a lot to take on as he prepared to publish *The Origin of Species*. He knew his masterwork would challenge received Western religion and deeply offend the devout (of whom he was one), he was coping with a family crisis, and a competitor was on the horizon. **Peter Parnell's** play *Trumpery*, which Footlights will discuss on Wednesday, June 2 with Olney Theatre artistic director **Jim Petosa**, one week before the play opens there, deals with all those issues.

The play covers the epic months when Darwin was preparing to publish his book in 1859. But he was also dealing with the death of his beloved daughter, his wife's descent into spiritualism, and with the unexpected – and shocking – letter he received from another scientist, the lesser-known Alfred Russell Wallace, announcing he basically conceived the same theory and reached the same conclusions. As Darwin had been working on his theory and evidence since the voyage of the Beagle more than 20 years before, this is quite a development.

The play also covers how revolutionary and controversial *The Origin of Species* was and still is. Just remember *Inherit The Wind*, which Footlights saw and discussed, and recent and current controversies over teaching evolution in schools in Pennsylvania, Kansas and Texas.

"*Trumpery* is a tightly focused study of Darwin, his family and his intellectual circles in the years just before and after publication of his earth-shaking, faith-shattering book about natural selection," Sara Krulwich wrote in the *New York Times* when the play premiered in 2007. "Filled with talk about botany, genealogy and paleontology, the play" ensures "the heart does not race when Darwin jovially announces that a friend will be stopping by to discuss 'the osteology of the ostrich.'" But Mr. Parnell also manages to conjure unexpected jokes from the unlikeliest of subjects. Barnacles, for example. He also puts firm flesh on Darwin and his

colleagues, who might have come across as fossils... *Trumperry* rarely feels like a simple lecture.”

And the play does treat the impact of the theory. “We watch the enormity of what Darwin is saying dawn on Thomas Henry Huxley, a young biologist and journalist,” wrote Martin Denton in NYTheatre.com. “Here is carefully reasoned proof that God did not create man, at least not from whole cloth. Here, in other words, is a refutation of more than 2,000 years of the collective wisdom and collective consciousness of Western civilization. This revolution in thought is evident” in Huxley’s face, “and for an instant, we have a sense of what it must have been like to have everything you were taught to believe challenged by hard evidence in just a few minutes’ time.”

Footlights will discuss all this with Jim at Alfio’s on June 2, with dinner starting at 6:30 and discussion beginning at 7:30. Make reservations with Phyllis Bodin at phylbo@verizon.net or 301-986-1768.

Read *Trumperry*

Copies of *Trumperry* are available at Backstage Books, 545 8th Street, SE, Washington, DC 20003. Phone 202-544-5744 or e-mail backstagebooks@aol.com.

Calendar

- Thursday, May 20, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of *Treadwell: Bright and Dark* by **Allyson Currin**, our guest speaker. At Alfio’s, 4515 Willard Ave., Chevy Chase, MD, 20815. Reserve with Phyllis, phylbo@verizon.net or 301-986-1768.
- Wednesday, June 2, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of *Trumperry* by Peter Parnell. Director **Jim Petosa** will be our guest once again. At Alfio’s. Reserve with Phyllis, phylbo@verizon.net or 301-986-1768.
- Saturday, June 5, 2:30 p.m., performance of *Treadwell: Bright and Dark*. A post-show discussion is included. Tickets are \$14. At American Century Theater, Theatre on the Run, 3700 South Four Mile Run Drive, Arlington, VA. Send your check, payable to Footlights, to Robin Larkin, 5800 Nicholson Lane, #L07, Rockville, MD 20852 (robinlarkin@comcast.net and 240-669-6300).
- Saturday, June 12, 2 p.m., performance of *Trumperry* at Olney Theatre, 2001 Olney-Sandy Spring Road, Olney, MD. Tickets are \$35 and include a post show discussion. Reserve with Robin.

Robin Larkin for **FOOTLIGHTS**

5800 Nicholson Lane, # L07

Rockville, MD 20852

See *Trumperry* Saturday, June 12, 2 p.m. at Olney

Footlights will see *Trumperry* at Olney Theatre, 2001 Olney-Sandy Spring Road, Olney, MD. Tickets are \$35 and include a post show discussion. Send your check, payable to Footlights, to Robin Larkin, 5800 Nicholson Lane, #L07, Rockville, MD 20852.

Remembering Beatrice Rouse

Our dear friend and Footlights board member Beatrice Rouse died last month. Tax deductible contributions in her memory may be made to the Washington Area Performing Arts Video Archive (WAPAVA, P.O. Box 7582, Arlington, VA 22207) or on their website, www.wapava.org.

Footlights has learned that contributions made to date will be used to record Quotidian Theatre’s magnificent production of *The Trip to Bountiful*, recently seen and discussed by Footlights.

About Footlights

For more information about Footlights, check our website, <http://www.footlightsdc.org>. To subscribe to our e-list go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/footlightsdc/join> or send any message to footlightsdc-subscribe@yahogroups.com.