

# from the FOOTLIGHTS

JULY 2012

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

<http://www.footlightsdc.org>

## Footlights to Discuss *Beertown* in July

Join us for our **July 9** Footlights dinner-discussion when we meet to talk about **dog & pony dc's *Beertown***.

The brewery that *Beertown* was named for is long gone but civic pride and Midwestern values remain solid and the town is celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> Quinquennial Time Capsule Day as the play begins. It seems that every five years the Capsule is dug up, the contents examined, and citizens vote to add new items which reflect the history of their town. The problem: if a new one goes in, something must come out to make room. The solution: a town hall meeting at which locals can voice their opinion – and they do.

Although the town is imaginary, it has its own website – [Visitbeertown.com](http://Visitbeertown.com). And the evening will include a potluck dessert spread, music and dance, audience participation, and a chance to join in singing the famous *Beertown* Hymn. The play received a Helen Hayes nomination for Outstanding New Play when it opened last year at the Capital Hill Arts Workshop.

Peter Marks, Jane Horwitz, and Howard Shalwitz all raved about it. Previewing summer theater, 2012 for the Washington Post, Peter Marks said: "As a locally devised production that with charm and intelligence passes a magnifying glass over America's grass roots, *Beertown* is the approaching theater event I'm most excited about in Washington, where the warmest months have ceased to be a dull recovery period for the rest of the artistic calendar." In her review of *Beertown* during its premiere run, Jane Horwitz wrote that *Beertown* was "so gently satiric and utterly involving that you'll find yourself voting for and against issues before you even realize you've raised your hand." And from Howard Shalwitz: "It's one of the most important shows I saw in Washington in 2011, and very entertaining."

*Beertown* returns for a brief engagement in Woolly Mammoth's Rehearsal Hall (presented as part of the 7th Annual Capital Fringe Festival) from July 12 to 22 and at the Over the Line Festival at Round House Theatre Silver Spring on July 28.

Our speaker on July 9 is **Rachel Grossman** who directed the play as well as helped write it, and who appears as the Mayor's 16-year-old daughter in it. Rachel has been a busy lady since she last visited Footlights in February of 2009 to talk to us about Sarah Ruhl's *Eurydice* at the Round House in Bethesda and explain all those special

effects. Since her time at Round House as Director of Education and Outreach, she has co-founded dog & pony dc as well as been Managing Director of Washington Improv Theater. She spent two years as Woolly Mammoth's Connectivity Director, trying to establish more interaction between the story on stage and the audience. She has also worked with Shakespeare Theatre and Arena and was Associate Producer of the 2010 Source Festival. Pretty impressive... but can even the Mayor's daughter convince the residents of *Beertown* (and us) that the scrapbook she kept of her awesome visit to Washington, DC deserves a place in that Time Capsule?

Make reservations for July 9 with Phyllis Bodin at 301-986-1768, or [Phylbo@verizon.net](mailto:Phylbo@verizon.net). We will meet at Alfio's Trattoria, located on the ground floor of the Willoughby Apartments, 4515 Willard Avenue, in Chevy Chase, MD. The restaurant is just two blocks from the Friendship Heights metro station on the red line. Street parking is limited but valet parking is free at Alfio's if you drive. Dinner is at 6:30 and the discussion begins at 7:30 and must end by 9 or 9:30. Cost for dinner is just \$13, including tax and tip, for which you get salad, bread, a choice among six entrees, ice cream, and coffee or tea. Cash or check, no credit cards please. We appreciate a \$5 contribution to Footlights. Wine, beer, and cocktails are available from the bar. If you have to cancel, please let Phyllis know by noon on the 9<sup>th</sup>. You may come for the discussion only, if you wish.

**Read the play:** We have draft copies of the script available – not for general distribution – for those who reserve for the July 9 discussion. Contact Robin Larkin, 240-669-6300 or [robinlarkin@comcast.net](mailto:robinlarkin@comcast.net) to get a copy.

**See the play:** Footlights visits *Beertown* on Sunday, July 15, 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$15. Order your ticket from [www.dogandponydc.com](http://www.dogandponydc.com).

## In August: *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*

Footlights will meet at Alfio's on **August 20** to discuss **Rajiv Joseph's** play *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*. Director **Jeremy Skidmore** will be our guest.

A brooding (also dead) tiger haunts the streets of present day Baghdad seeking the meaning of life, as he encounters both homesick American soldiers and several Iraqis who are searching for friendship, redemption, and a Saddam Hussein family toilet seat made of solid gold.

*Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo* was a 2010 Pulitzer Prize finalist for drama, and also awarded a grant for Outstanding New American Play by the National Endowment for the Arts. Robin Williams starred as the tiger when the play opened on Broadway, and it has been called by far the most original drama yet written about the Iraqi War.

## Footlights News

\* We are sad to hear of the recent death of **Pearl Richardson** and send many hugs and good wishes to her husband Cy. Pearl and Cy have been faithful Footlights members for years.

\* **Jim Petosa** was unable to be with us on June 11 for our discussion of *Sleuth*, his last directing assignment at Olney Theatre. He asked that the following note be read:

You all have been a great joy to me over the years. From the first conversations about SHADOWLANDS, when I was able to share the potency of that play's resonance when filtered through my own experience of grief soon after the loss of my life partner, through last year's conversation about OPUS, each encounter with your

group has confirmed the power and possibilities of this beloved art form. Your group's passions for the experience of plays have been a source of genuine motivation to continue doing the work of providing you with productions and conversations about them.

My thanks to all of you and my hope that our paths will cross in some future conversation about some wonderfully illuminating play that provides insight into our understanding of the human condition.

If any of you are in NYC during the summer for PTP or in Boston at any time, do not hesitate to be in touch as I would love to have you experience a production at Boston University, New Repertory Theatre, or Potomac Theatre Project in the future!

Best to you all and much love, Jim

## About Footlights

To learn more about Footlights, visit our website: <http://www.footlightsdc.org>. To subscribe to our e-list, go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/footlightsdc/join>, or e-mail [footlightsdc-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:footlightsdc-subscribe@yahoogroups.com).

## Calendar

- Monday, July 9, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of **dog & pony dc's** *Beertown* with **Rachel Grossman**. At **Alfio's**, 4515 Willard Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD. Reserve with Phyllis Bodin, 301-986-1768 or [Phylbo@verizon.net](mailto:Phylbo@verizon.net).
- Sunday, July 15, 7:30 p.m., performance of *Beertown* at Woolly Mammoth's Rehearsal Hall, 641 D Street, NW, Washington, DC 20004. Purchase your ticket from [www.dogandponydc.com](http://www.dogandponydc.com). Tickets are \$15.
- Monday, August 20, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo* by **Rajiv Joseph** with **Jeremy Skidmore**, director of the upcoming Round House Theatre, Bethesda production. At **Alfio's**. Reserve with Phyllis.

Robin Larkin for **FOOTLIGHTS**

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