

from the FOOTLIGHTS

SEPTEMBER 2012

"Life shouldn't be all work and no plays." <http://www.footlightsdc.org>

Footlights to Discuss *Invisible Man* on September 18

The ever-present issues surrounding race in America will be the topic when Footlights discusses the drama *Invisible Man*, a new play adapted by **Oren Jacoby** from **Ralph Ellison**'s award-winning 1952 novel.

Ellison opens his novel's prologue with the words, "I live rent-free in a building rented strictly to whites, in a section of the basement that was shut off and forgotten during the nineteenth century." The unnamed narrator is struggling as an African-American in a white world. His basement – shut off and forgotten – is the metaphor for the status of African-Americans after the close of Reconstruction and before the civil rights revolution. And, making the play and the novel both relevant to society today, many African-Americans will tell you that white society still shuts them off.

Yet, Ellison continues, "My hole is warm and full of light. Yes, full of light. I doubt if there is a brighter spot in all New York than this hole of mine, and I do not exclude Broadway." It's the light of truth about the American experience as seen through the eyes of its protagonist.

Court Theater at the University of Chicago collaborated with adapter Oren Jacoby and director Christopher McElroen, co-founder of the Classical Theatre of Harlem, to convert *Invisible Man*, a 600-page novel, into a play, while keeping its essence and its essential point. Court, whose productions helped inspire the two co-founders of Footlights to start the group, premiered *Invisible Man* earlier this year.

"I think the novel would interest audiences anywhere. But I do have to say that doing a play about race in America in the nation's capital during the run-up to this year's elections is hugely exciting," David Muse, artistic director of Studio Theatre, told The Washington Post's theater blog. Studio is co-producing *Invisible Man* with Boston's Huntington Theater. At Studio, the play runs from September 5 - October 14, before moving to Huntington.

Footlights will discuss the play and the book with two guest speakers: **Serge Seiden**, associate artistic

director of Studio and Dr. **Sandra Shannon**, professor of drama at Howard University, who has spoken to us before about the plays of August Wilson. Mark Gruenberg and Debbie Jackson will co-moderate.

We will meet on **Tuesday, September 18** at **Alfio's** restaurant in Friendship Heights, with dinner starting at 6:30 p.m. and discussion starting an hour later. Cost is \$13 (cash or check) for dinner - 6 choices of entrée - non-alcoholic beverage, bread and butter, salad and dessert. We also ask for a \$5 tax-deductible donation to cover expenses such as newsletters and meals and drinks for our speakers.

Alfio's is 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.

Make reservations with Phyllis Bodin, 301-986-1768 or Phylbo@verizon.net. If you have to cancel, please let Phyllis know by noon on the 18th, so that we have an accurate count of reservations for the restaurant. You may need to pay for your dinner if you do not cancel. You may come for the discussion only, if you wish.

Read *Invisible Man* Copies of Ralph Ellison's book may be found at local libraries or bookstores. You may order e-book copies, as well, from Amazon or Barnes & Noble. For an electronic copy of the draft script by Oren Jacoby please e-mail Robin Larkin - robinlarkin@comcast.net. [Please note the script is not for general distribution. It is for use by participants in the September 18 discussion.]

See *Invisible Man* A limited number of Footlights group tickets are available for the September 29, 2 p.m. matinee at \$49/ticket. A cast postshow discussion is included. Send your check, payable to Footlights, to Robin Larkin, 5800 Nicholson Lane, Apt. L07, Rockville, MD 20852. Checks must be received by September 8.

October 8: Gogol's *The Government Inspector*

In October, we discuss **Nikolai Gogol**'s satire, *The Government Inspector*, as adapted by **Jeffrey**

Hatcher. Our guest is one of the area's favorite actors, **Rick Foucheux**, who is appearing in the Shakespeare Theatre Company production of *The Government Inspector*, September 13 - October 28. Rick last visited Footlights when we discussed *The Rivalry*. We'll meet again at Alfio's. Make reservations with Phyllis.

Read the play Gogol's play may be found in libraries and bookstores. Read it online or download in e-book formats at <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/3735>. The adaptation play script by Jeffrey Hatcher is available from Dramatists Play Service for \$8 at <http://www.dramatists.com/cgi-bin/db/single.asp?key=4028>.

Footlights News

Longtime Footlights member Horst Brand died recently. We send our condolences to his wife Ruth. Also, we are sorry to report the untimely death of Don and Nancy Bliss's son Evan.

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.

Calendar

- **Tuesday, September 18**, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of *Invisible Man* adapted from the **Ralph Ellison** novel by **Oren Jacoby**. Guests are **Serge Seiden** and Dr. **Sandra Shannon**. Moderated by Mark Gruenberg and Debbie Jackson. At **Alfio's**, 4515 Willard Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD. Reserve with Phyllis Bodin, 301-986-1768 or Phylbo@verizon.net.
- **Saturday, September 29**, 2 p.m., performance of *Invisible Man* at Studio Theatre. Contact Robin Larkin, 240-669-6300 or robinlarkin@comcast.net. Tickets are \$49. Check must be received by September 8.
- **Monday, October 8**, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of **Nikolai Gogol's** *The Government Inspector*, adapted by **Jeffrey Hatcher** with **Rick Foucheux**, actor appearing in the Shakespeare Theatre Company's upcoming production. At **Alfio's**, 4515 Willard Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD. Reserve with Phyllis Bodin, 301-986-1768 or Phylbo@verizon.net. Jerry Stilkind will moderate the discussion.

Robin Larkin for **FOOTLIGHTS**
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