

# from the FOOTLIGHTS

OCTOBER 2012

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

## Footlights to Discuss *The Government Inspector* on October 8

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 as the Mayor in the Shakespeare Theatre Company production of *The Government Inspector*, through October 28.

As great as Nicolai Gogol's original play is, consider that this adaptation for the theater stars Nancy Robinette, Sarah Marshall, David Sabin, Floyd King and our guest speaker Rick Foucheux. Surely the stars being aligned is a sign that a wondrous sight will be ours to behold at the Shakespeare Theatre.

But, let us return for the moment to a provincial town in dear Mother Russia of the 1830s. Of course, except for a very few cities most of our vast land is provincial. "A hapless nobody is mistaken for a powerful government official by a gaggle of corrupt, small town officials," is a thumbnail description of the play by adapter Jeffrey Hatcher.

However, the "inspector" had better be careful because the officials show what a crafty bunch they are in the very first scene. For example, the town judge says the Tsarist government is preparing for war and the inspector has been sent surreptitiously to see whether the town is prepared for an invasion. The mayor argues that the town is years away from the border, it wouldn't be invaded. The judge retorts triumphantly: "It would be too obvious to invade at the border. A really crafty enemy would invade in the middle."

Hatcher wrote the adaptation at the request of Joe Dowling, artistic director of the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis in 2008. It has been done by Milwaukee Rep and now opens the 2012-2013 season of the Shakespeare Theatre Company. There have been innumerable other adaptations of Gogol's play in many different languages for theater, film and opera. Hatcher is a prolific writer of plays and movie scripts and may be best known for adapting the best seller *Tuesdays with Morrie* for the stage.

Gogol thought of doing a satirical play early in the 1830s but gave it up because he feared that the imperial censors would come after him. He started

work, however, on an idea suggested by Pushkin and published *The Government Inspector*, also known as *The Inspector General*, in 1836. (Pushkin had actually once been mistaken for a government inspector as a young man when traveling in the provinces.) The reactionary press was outraged and it was staged only when Tsar Nicholas I directly intervened to permit it to be seen.

A young government lowly clerk, Hlestakov, has gambled away the little money he had and unknown to the landlord cannot afford to pay the bill for his lodging at the local inn. The mayor calls on him, assuming that Hlestakov is the government inspector, and soon offers him "loans," as does every town official. Hlestakov doesn't realize for awhile that he that he has been mistaken for the inspector. It is this double mistaken identity that provides much of the hilarity of the first part of the play. But, when he finds out his unexpected authority he is able to out-fleece the officials that have been routinely fleecing the town's businessmen, flirt with the wives and daughters of town officials and run off with bags of money. But, that is not the worst that happens to the greedy officials. Read the play and come to the discussion to find out what is.

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>. 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>.

We are very pleased to welcome Rick Foucheux back to Footlights. Rick last visited when Footlights discussed *The Rivalry*. His many roles over a nearly 30 year career in DC-area theaters include Nat Miller in *Ah, Wilderness!* and Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman* at Arena Stage, Sir Toby Belch in *Twelfth Night* at the Shakespeare Theatre, Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof* at the Olney Theatre Center, Claudius in *Hamlet* at the Folger Theatre, and Erie Smith in *Hughie* at the Washington Stage Guild. He originated the role of the dead man, Gordon, in Woolly Mammoth's premiere of Sarah Ruhl's *Dead Man's Cell Phone*. He received the Helen Hayes Outstanding Lead Actor Award in 2000 for the title role in *Edmund* at the Source Theatre, and in 2006, for the role of

Mason Marzac in *Take Me Out* at Studio Theatre. Rick has been cast in Mamet's *Glengarry Glen Ross* at Round House Theatre later this season.

We meet on **Monday, October 8** 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 8<sup>th</sup>, 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.

### **James Joyce's *The Dead* in November**

Join us on **Monday, November 19**, at Alfio's, when we meet with Jack Sbarbori, artistic director, Quotidian Theatre, to discuss **James Joyce's *The Dead*** – the musical adaptation of Joyce's famous 1914 short story. It opened on Broadway on January 11, 2000, thus becoming the first musical of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and won rave reviews from critics. Quotidian Theatre begins its 2012-13 season with an ambitious production of this work, which the *New York Times* called "a reason to celebrate." The script is available at [www.samuel french.com/p/2165/james-joyces-the-dead](http://www.samuel french.com/p/2165/james-joyces-the-dead) for \$8.95.

### **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, 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](mailto:Phylbo@verizon.net). Jerry Stilkind will moderate the discussion.
- **Monday, November 19**, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of **James Joyce's *The Dead*** – a musical adaptation by **Richard Nelson** and **Shaun Davey**. Our guest is **Jack Sbarbori**, artistic director, Quotidian Theatre. At Alfio's. Reserve with Phyllis Bodin. Mary Ann Wren will moderate.

Robin Larkin for **FOOTLIGHTS**  
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