

from the FOOTLIGHTS

JULY 2013

“Life shouldn’t be all work and no plays.”

<http://www.footlightsdc.org>

July 10: Footlights to discuss *Caesar and Dada*

“All comedy comes from the humane illumination of deformed objects.” – Hugo Ball (1915)

Hugo Ball was a key figure in the Dada movement, and the above quote from his diary aptly describes local playwright **Allyson Currin**’s handling of the characters and subject matter in her latest play, *Caesar and Dada*, currently in production at WSC Avant Bard. The play’s characters are members of the Theatre for Truth, which strives for the ultimate in realism under the leadership of its director, Franz Lichter. The location is Zurich, Switzerland – the epicenter of Dadaism. The stage has been set for the clash of two contrasting artistic ideologies, which is at first comedic, but ultimately results in chaotic tragedy.

The year is 1918 – the end of World War I. The actors in the Theatre for Truth are of different nationalities, and none of them has been left untouched by the war. Some of the actors have battle injuries on the outside and on the inside, and the Theatre for Truth has, in different ways, been a haven for all involved. However, this refuge is overseen by the dictatorial Franz who is on a constant offensive to establish that “realism is all” and allows no one and no sentiments to sway him otherwise. That is... until he meets Lily Brik, the young actress from Idaho.

“Each word is wish or a curse. One must be careful not to make words once one has acknowledged the power of the living word.” – Hugo Ball (1915)

With Lily’s introduction to the troupe, a slip in realism occurs when Franz casts her as Marcus Brutus in the troupe’s upcoming production of *Julius Caesar*. It is a “daring experiment” that sets off an explosive chain of events. Dominic, the Italian actor, has been out-manuevered of his dream role. Alfred, the British stage designer, yearns to use his experimental set design for this production instead of exiling it to his closet. Anna, the Russian actress, now worries that she will never play another good part again. Tristan, the Irish actor, sees himself betrayed by Lily in regards to the secret he shared with her about the war and her relationship with Franz.

Anna declares, “I want to kill Lily Brik.” Tristan initially takes Anna’s statement literally, but Anna clarifies that her declaration was not meant to be considered in those terms. Nonetheless, Anna’s words plant a seed in Tristan’s mind that will grow into a devastating catastrophe on opening night. Anna’s metaphorical idea will turn into a Dadaistic nightmare.

Our special guests are the playwright, **Allyson Currin**, and the director, **Lee Mikeska Gardner**. Allyson Currin is a dynamic speaker who visited with Footlights in 2010 to discuss her play, *Treadwell: Bright and Dark*. She is a DC-based playwright who has been honored for several of her plays by the Helen Hayes Awards, DC Theatre Scene and the Mary Goldwater Award from the Theatre Lobby of Washington, DC. Ms. Currin is also an actress and teaches at The George Washington University.

Footlights is pleased to welcome back as a guest speaker, Helen Hayes Award-winning actress and award-winning director Lee Mikeska Gardner – also a member of Footlights’ Advisory Board. This will be Ms. Gardner’s fifth visit with Footlights. We last heard from Ms. Gardner in our meetings on *Golden Boy* (Keegan Theatre), *Angels in America* (Signature Theatre production), *Stop Kiss* (Woolly Mammoth), and *Machinal* (TACT).

Footlights dinner-discussion of *Caesar and Dada* will take place Wednesday, July 10 at Alfio’s, 4515 Willard Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD, on the ground floor of the Willoughby Apartments in Friendship Heights, a short walk from the north entrance of the Friendship Heights Metro station. 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 ends at 9. Barbara Reithmaier will moderate our discussion.

The all-inclusive cost for dinner and the discussion is \$20. You will get a salad, bread, choice among six entrees, spaghetti, green beans, ice cream, and tea or coffee. The salad bar may be substituted instead of an entree if you prefer. Cash or check – no credit cards, please. Beer, wine, and cocktails are available from the bar. You may come for the discussion only for \$5.

Make your reservations with Phyllis Bodin, 301-986-1768 or phylbo@verizon.net. Reservations and cancellations will be accepted until noon of the day of the discussion.

Read *Caesar and Dada*: For those reserving for the dinner-discussion, electronic copies of the draft script are available. Copyright restrictions apply. The document is for distribution only to those attending the discussion. Contact Robin Larkin, robinlarkin@comcast.net or 240-669-6300.

See *Caesar and Dada*: The WSC Avant Bard production is currently running through July 14 at the Callan Theatre – Catholic University of America, 3801 Harewood Rd. NE, Washington, DC 20017. Tickets may be purchased at <https://www.boxofficetickets.com/bot/wa/event?id=224285>. Note that all WSC Avant Bard Saturday matinees are pay-

what-you-can, and can even be purchased in advance. Many of us plan to see the play on the July 13 matinee.

August 7: Steven Dietz's *Rancho Mirage*

Olney Theatre Center will produce the Rolling World Premiere of Steven Dietz's *Rancho Mirage* in late September. Olney's new Artistic Director, **Jason Loewith** will direct. Footlights is pleased to welcome him to a dinner-discussion of this play. We'll meet at Alfio's on Wednesday, August 7. Make reservations with Phyllis Bodin, phylbo@verizon.net or 301-986-1768.

So what is a Rolling World Premiere, anyway? The National New Play Network (NNPN) has selected *Rancho Mirage* as its 36th Rolling World Premiere. The play will have four independent productions at different theaters in the coming

year. Olney's is the first, followed by a production at New Rep (Jim Petosa's new home) and two additional theaters. (<http://www.nnpn.org/news/national-new-play-network-announces-36th-rolling-world-premiere-rancho-mirage-by-steven-dietz>)

Jason Loewith is the Executive Director of the NNPN. We look forward to learning more about this organization and the play he will direct.

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

- **Wednesday, July 10**, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of *Caesar and Dada* by **Allyson Currin**. Our guests are playwright Allyson Currin and director **Lee Mikeska Gardner**. At Alfio's, 4515 Willard Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD. Barbara Reithmaier moderates. The dinner-discussion is \$20; discussion only \$5. Reserve with Phyllis Bodin, phylbo@verizon.net or 301-986-1768. For an electronic copy of the play, contact Robin Larkin, robinlarkin@comcast.net or 240-669-6300.
- **Wednesday, August 7**, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of *Rancho Mirage* by **Steven Dietz**. **Jason Loewith**, Artistic Director at Olney Theatre, is our guest. At Alfio's. Robin Larkin moderates. Reserve with Phyllis.

Robin Larkin *for* **FOOTLIGHTS**
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