

from the FOOTLIGHTS

MARCH 2014

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

<http://www.footlightsdc.org>

Footlights to Discuss *Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Mamma's Hung You in the Closet and I'm Feelin' So Sad*

Farce or Parody?

On **Wednesday, March 5** Footlights brings back The American Century Theater to discuss a funny and puzzling play – *Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Mamma's Hung You in the Closet and I'm Feelin' So Sad* by **Arthur Kopit**.

Why was a play about a domineering mother, her son and her husband's corpse so wildly popular when it played off-Broadway in 1962? Today it is still very funny but also gives perspective about American theatre in the 50s and 60s. Perhaps that is why American Century Theatre – "Dedicated to mining the treasures of 20th century performing arts" – finds it so intriguing.

Originally, some critics felt Kopit was reacting to the theatrical giants of the time. Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller wrote seriously about psychological issues and Freud's ideas dominated many mid-20th c plays. But Kopit is doing something different. Although his mother and son have a truly *sick* relationship, he uses their problems to make us laugh.

Kopit also reacted against other 20th c tendencies. Some critics think he was repudiating European theatrical influences (i.e. Ionesco and Beckett). Of course his play shares some characteristics with Theatre of the Absurd; his characters live in a world where meaningful action is impossible and communication leads nowhere. Yet, he seems to parody this entrapment.

Kopit was not just a flash in the pan. He has written plays over a long career including the libretto for *Nine*, a musical inspired by the Fellini film *8½* about a director facing an identity crisis, *Y2K* (now known as *Because He Can*) discussed by Footlights in June 2002, *Indians* and many others. He is still writing and speaking about theatre.

Joining our discussion will be **Jack Marshall**, Artistic Director of TACT and frequent Footlights guest and, new to Footlights, **Tyler Herman**, who will direct *Oh, Dad*. Footlights board member Charlotte Baer will moderate our discussion.

We will meet at **Alfio's**, located at 4515 Willard Avenue, Chevy Chase, Maryland, on the ground floor of the Willoughby Apartments, a short walk from the north

entrance of the Friendship Heights metro stop on the red line. Street parking is limited if you drive, but valet parking is free at Alfio's. Dinner is at 6:30; the discussion begins at 7:30 and ends at 9.

The all-inclusive cost for dinner and discussion is \$20. Dinner is a green salad, choice among six entrées, and spaghetti, green beans, bread and butter, ice cream, and tea or coffee. Alfio's salad bar may be substituted for the entrée if you wish. Cash or check – no credit cards, please. Wine, beer, and cocktails are available from the bar. You may come for the discussion only for just \$5.

Make reservations with Phyllis Bodin, phylbo@verizon.net or 301-986-1768. Reservations and cancellations will be accepted until noon of the day of the discussion. If you must cancel, please let Phyllis know as soon as possible since this is a seated dinner and the restaurant needs an accurate count for the place settings.

Read it. Find *Oh Dad* in libraries or order online (Samuel French, Amazon, etc.) or from your favorite bookstore.

See it. The play runs March 21 until April 12. Footlights will see *Oh Dad* at TACT on a date to be announced. Performances are at The Gunston Arts Center, Theater II, 2700 South Lang Street, in Arlington.

Footlights Sees Shaw's *Back to Methusaleh* at Washington Stage Guild

On **Sunday, March 16, 2:30 p.m.** we see a performance of *Back to Methusaleh* - our February discussion play - at The Undercroft Theatre which is in the ground (street) level of the Mount Vernon Place United Methodist Church at 900 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC. For directions, see stageguild.org/plan-your-visit/. Tickets are \$20 and include a post-show discussion. Reserve with Robin, robinlarkin@comcast.net or 240-669-6300. Send your check to Footlights, c/o Robin Larkin, 5800 Nicholson Ln, #L07, Rockville, MD 20852.

The Piano Lesson in April

Footlights turns its attention to another of **August Wilson's** Pittsburgh Cycle plays, *The Piano Lesson*, on **Thursday, April 17**. The Pittsburgh Cycle is his series of ten plays that charts the African American experience throughout the 20th century. *The Piano Lesson* – written

in 1990 – is set in the 30s. Brother and sister Boy Willie and Berniece clash over whether or not they should sell an ancient piano that was exchanged for their great grandfather's wife and son in the days of slavery. Olney Theatre Center is producing *The Piano Lesson* May 7 - June 1.

We are pleased to welcome *Piano Lesson* director **Jamil Jude** and **Jason King Jones**, Associate Artistic Director at Olney Theatre, as our guests. Footlights member Pat Peyser will moderate our discussion.

We will meet at **Casa Fiesta**, 4910 Wisconsin Ave NW, in DC between Fessenden and Ellicott Streets. Dinner is a buffet selection of Salvadoran food. \$20 covers the cost of dinner and discussion. Reserve with Phyllis, phylbo@verizon.net or 301-986-1768.

Calendar

- **Wednesday, March 5**, 6:30 p.m. dinner-discussion of *Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Mamma's Hung You in the Closet and I'm Feelin' So Sad* by **Arthur Kopit**. The American Century Theater's Artistic Director **Jack Marshall** and director **Tyler Herman** are our guests. At Alfio's, 4515 Willard Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD. Dinner including discussion is \$20; discussion only is \$5. Reserve with Phyllis Bodin, phylbo@verizon.net or 301-986-1768.
- **Sunday, March 16**, 2:30 p.m. performance of *Back to Methuselah* by **George Bernard Shaw** at Washington Stage Guild, at the Undercroft Theatre (ground level) of the Mount Vernon Place United Methodist Church, 900 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC. Tickets are \$20 and include a post-show discussion. Reserve with Robin, robinlarkin@comcast.net or 240-669-6300. Send your check to Footlights, c/o Robin Larkin, 5800 Nicholson Ln, Apt. L-07, Rockville, MD 20852.
- **Thursday, April 17**, 6:30 p.m. dinner-discussion of *The Piano Lesson* by **August Wilson**. Olney Theatre Center's Associate Artistic Director **Jason King Jones** and director **Jamil Jude** are our guests. At Casa Fiesta, 4910 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Washington, DC. Buffet dinner including discussion is \$20; discussion only is \$5. Reserve with Phyllis, phylbo@verizon.net or 301-986-1768.

Note: Footlights has previously discussed three of August Wilson's Pittsburgh Cycle plays – *Two Trains Running*, *Fences* and *Radio Golf*.

To see a list of all plays discussed by Footlights, go to <http://www.footlightsdc.org/PastPlays.htm>.

About Footlights

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

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