

# from the FOOTLIGHTS

MAY 2014

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

<http://www.footlightsdc.org>

## May 12: Footlights to Discuss Mark St. Germain’s *Freud’s Last Session*

The playwright, Mark St. Germain, states right on the cover of his script, “Suggested by *The Question of God*, by Dr. Armand M. Nicholi, Jr.” The full title of the book by Dr. Nicholi adds, *C.S. Lewis and Sigmund Freud Debate God, Love, Sex, and the Meaning of Life*.

These most crucial questions of personal life are argued over 90 minutes of a play that imagines a meeting between the two men on the day that the United Kingdom declares war on Germany because of Hitler’s invasion of Poland. It is 20 days before Freud is assisted in taking his own life because of an agonizing, inoperable cancer of the jaw. He is 83; Lewis some 40 years younger.

Of course, this being a play, it is good to have some humor and to be interesting enough at all times to keep an audience caring about who the two men are in addition to what they are advocating.

It played off-Broadway for more than a year in 2011-12 and has been done in many parts of this country this year. There may be a lot to talk about when we meet Monday, May 12 with the two actors in the play, **Rick Foucheux** and **Todd Scofield**.

In 1939 when the play takes place at Freud’s home in London, psychoanalysis theory and practice was considered one of the most important scientific discoveries (inventions?) of modern times. It was thought to explain the inner workings of the mind, just as evolution explained the outer development of humans.

Lewis began teaching medieval and renaissance literature at Oxford in 1925, moving to Cambridge University in 1954. He wrote several books in the 1930s arguing for a belief in God and the virtues of Christianity that received little attention. Thus, he had nowhere near the stature of Freud when the imagined meeting takes place in the play.

During the Second World War, the British Broadcasting Corporation asked Lewis to speak about the spiritual world view. His talks become popular, but he did not become famous until the publication between 1949 and 1954 of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, a children’s series with a subtle Christian overlay. Then a book of his written earlier, in 1942, *The Screwtape Letters*, a satirical fiction about a student of Satan became popular in some Christian groups.

Dr. Nicholi has taught a seminar on atheism and belief for more than 30 years at Harvard College. He has used Freud

and Lewis to illustrate their opposing views on whether God is real and all that follows from an answer to that question. The Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) created a video in 2004 of Dr. Nicholi leading an invited group to discuss the question.

Our playwright went a step farther in imagining that Freud had invited Lewis to his home because he was intrigued to hear how an intelligent man could reasonably move from atheism to a belief in God. It is possible to see this as a debate and, therefore, who wins. Or you could conclude that the two men fight to a draw.

But, this is a play. How to interpret the script on reading it may be different from the interpretation we will see and hear on stage. How will the producer and two veteran, accomplished actors, whom we will be greatly privileged to hear May 12, portray the persons and ideas? They may have the power on stage to confirm us in our beliefs, or move us to one side or the other, or leave us in between.

We will meet at Alfio’s, 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](mailto:phylbo@verizon.net) or 301-986-1768.

*Freud’s Last Session* is available for \$8 at Dramatists Play Service ([www.dramatists.com](http://www.dramatists.com)) in print or ePub copy.

## May 18: *Freud’s Last Session* at Theater J

*Freud’s Last Session* by Mark St. Germain will be produced at Theater J May 14 - June 29. Footlights has \$15 tickets for the Sunday, May 18, 3 p.m. performance which includes a postshow discussion with director Serge Seiden. To get your ticket, call the Theater J Box Office at (800) 494-TIXS (8497) and mention the code ‘FOOTLIGHTS’ as you order your tickets to get special pricing. Or order tickets online at

<http://washingtondcjcc.org/center-for-arts/theater-j/box-office/> using the code 'FOOTLIGHTS.'

### **May 24: See August Wilson's *The Piano Lesson* with Footlights**

Olney Theatre Center is producing *The Piano Lesson* May 7 - June 1. Footlights will see it on **Saturday, May 24, 1:45 p.m.** The performance is in the intimate Mulitz-Gudelsky Theatre Lab. Olney Theatre Center is at 2001 Olney-Sandy Spring Road, Olney, MD. Tickets are \$27.50 and include a post-show discussion. Reserve with Robin, [robinlarkin@comcast.net](mailto:robinlarkin@comcast.net) or 240-669-6300. Send your check to Footlights, c/o Robin Larkin, 5800 Nicholson Ln, #L-07, Rockville, MD 20852.

### **June 24: Dinner-Discussion of Noël Coward's *Private Lives***

On Tuesday, June 24, 6:30 p.m. we meet for a dinner-discussion of *Private Lives* by Noël Coward. Our guest is **Drew Lichtenberg**, Shakespeare Theatre Company's Literary Associate and Resident Dramaturg. At Alfio's. Dinner including discussion is \$20; discussion only is \$5. Reserve with Phyllis Bodin, [phylbo@verizon.net](mailto:phylbo@verizon.net) or 301-986-1768.

### **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](mailto:footlightsdc-subscribe@yahoogroups.com).

### **Calendar**

- **Monday, May 12**, 6:30 p.m. dinner-discussion of *Freud's Last Session* by **Mark St. Germain**. Our guests are **Rick Fouchoux** and **Todd Scofield**. Jerry Stilkind will moderate our discussion. 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](mailto:phylbo@verizon.net) or 301-986-1768.
- **Sunday, May 18**, 3 p.m. performance of *Freud's Last Session* at Theater J, 1529 16th Street NW, Washington DC. Get your tickets for this performance using the code 'FOOTLIGHTS' for \$15. Includes postshow discussion with production director **Serge Seiden**.
- **Saturday, May 24**, 1:45 p.m. performance of *The Piano Lesson* by **August Wilson** at Olney Theatre Center, in the Mulitz-Gudelsky Theatre Lab, 2001 Olney-Sandy Spring Road, Olney, MD 20832. Tickets are \$27.50 and include a postshow discussion. Reserve with Robin, [robinlarkin@comcast.net](mailto: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.
- **Tuesday, June 24**, 6:30 p.m. dinner-discussion of *Private Lives* by **Noël Coward**. STC Literary Associate **Drew Lichtenberg** is our guest. Stephanie Olshan will moderate our discussion. 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](mailto:phylbo@verizon.net) or 301-986-1768.

Robin Larkin for **FOOTLIGHTS**  
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