

from the FOOTLIGHTS

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2015

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

<http://www.footlightsdc.org>

November 17: Sarah Ruhl's *Stage Kiss*

Guest: Dawn Ursula

Footlights has discussed two of playwright **Sarah Ruhl's** works: *Eurydice* and *In the Next Room, The Vibrator Play*. Many of her other plays have been produced locally, such as *Dead Man's Cell Phone*, *The Clean House*, and *Passion Play*. We can expect that **Stage Kiss** will be just as quirky and as entertaining as all the others have been. Aaron Posner will direct this play-within-a-play, about an aging 1930s melodrama which is being revived, two stars who have a past history with each other, brought together again in a play about two people with a history.

Footlights is fortunate indeed to have the amazing actress **Dawn Ursula** as our guest speaker when we meet on November 17. Mary Ann Wren will moderate.

Ms Ursula, who will play both She (the star) and Ada Wilcox (the woman in the play-within-the-play) in *Stage Kiss*, was born in Brooklyn, and got her BA in Sociology from the University of Virginia and her MFA from the Academy for Classical Acting - the collaboration between The Shakespeare Theatre and George Washington University (and says in all modesty that she received an 'excellent' rating on combat with four of the five stage weapons she was tested on for her final exam). Her television credits include *The Wire* and her stage credits in D.C. and in Baltimore would fill three pages. She is a company member both at Woolly Mammoth and Baltimore's Everyman Theatre. Her performances are award-winning and she will likely take home an armload of them from what reviewers have called her powerhouse solo in *Queens Girl in the World*, which just closed at Theater J, in which she played multiple characters including a 12-year old girl.

Sarah Ruhl's *Stage Kiss* is available from Amazon and Samuel French. Performances will run from December 2 to 27 at the Round House Theatre in Bethesda.

Reserve now for Footlight's dinner-discussion of *Stage Kiss* on **Tuesday, November 17** at Alfio's, located at 4515 Willard Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD, 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. (Note: if you know you must leave before 9, please try to sit near the door so you can exit quietly.)

The all-inclusive cost for dinner and discussion is \$20. Dinner is a green salad, choice among six entrees, 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, please – no credit cards. Wine, beer, cocktails are available from the bar. You may come for the discussion only for just \$5.

Make reservations with Phyllis Bodin, at phylbo@verizon.net or 301-986-1768. Reservations and/or cancellations will be accepted until noon on November 17. If you must cancel, please let Phyllis know as soon as possible since the restaurant needs a complete count. This is a seated, table-service dinner, not a buffet. We may be charged for no-shows and expect you to cover our cost.

November 30: Marcus Gardley's *The Gospel of LovingKindness* Guest: Ari Roth

Footlights meets on **Monday, November 30** at Alfio's to discuss playwright **Marcus Gardley's** answer to gun violence. Our guest is frequent Footlights' speaker **Ari Roth**, Founding Artistic Director of the newly-formed Mosaic Theater Company.

The play is set in the Bronzeville section of Chicago in 2012. That year there were 500 murders in the city. There have been 419 so far this year. In Washington, the bloody tally is 88 for 2012 and 134 this year.

Marcus Gardley grew up in Oakland, California, another city known for its killings. As he spent more time in Chicago, he said, he felt surrounded by the violence he had known since childhood, that he seemed to hear daily of another shooting. He first felt powerless, then he wrote a play.

Manny, is a talented 17-year-old who sings for President Obama at the White House. He persuades his mother, Mary, to buy him an expensive pair of sneakers. Another black youngster, Noel, kills him three weeks later in the neighborhood on the South Side of Chicago for the sneakers as an initiation into a local gang. Manny's mother becomes an activist trying to bring the community together

to stop the killing through acts of lovingkindness. *Gospel* is loosely based on a real incident.

The play premiered in Chicago early in 2014, before police killings of unarmed black youngsters became a widespread national issue. What we've wound up with is African-American communities in many cities under siege from within and without. Perhaps the author concentrated on the killings from within because he felt he needed to write about what he knew best or that the police tactics round the country had not yet come to the flash point. In any case, as reported in the Washington Post this year, cities have described the terror that some black communities feel because of what sometimes seem to be random shootings.

Gardley has written a number of award winning plays produced off-Broadway and in many cities around the county. He holds an MFA in Playwriting from the Yale Drama School and is now a professor of playwriting at Brown University.

Ari Roth will discuss *The Gospel of LovingKindness* with us **Monday, November 30** beginning at 6:30 pm at Alfio's. We expect to have either the director, Jennifer Nelson, or some of the actors join Ari. Make reservations with Phyllis Bodin at phylbo@verizon.net or 301-986-1768.

If you are coming to the dinner-discussion and would like an e-copy of the play, contact Robin Larkin, robinlarkin@comcast.net once you have made your reservation with Phyllis. Please observe copyright restrictions and do not distribute to others.

Gospel will be performed from December 9 through January 3 at the Lab 2 space at the Atlas Performing Arts Center.

About Footlights

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

Calendar – Discussions:

- **Tuesday, November 17**, 6:30 p.m. dinner-discussion of Sarah Ruhl's *Stage Kiss* with guest Dawn Ursula. Mary Ann Wren moderates. 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.
- **Monday, November 30**, 6:30 p.m. dinner-discussion of Marcus Gardley's *The Gospel of LovingKindness* with guest Ari Roth. Jerry Stilkind moderates. 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.

Robin Larkin for **FOOTLIGHTS**
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