

# from the FOOTLIGHTS

MARCH 2016

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

<http://www.footlightsdc.org>

**March 14: Scott Carter’s *The Gospel According to Thomas Jefferson, Charles Dickens and Count Leo Tolstoy: Discord***

Join us for our next Footlights dinner-discussion on **Monday, March 14**, at Alfio’s.

Three famous thinkers locked together in Hell is the setup for **Scott Carter’s *The Gospel According to Thomas Jefferson, Charles Dickens and Count Leo Tolstoy: Discord***. Carter envisions a sharp, entertaining meeting of minds as something of a variation on Jean-Paul Sartre’s *No Exit*.

So, why are they imprisoned? Each of them had in life composed an idiosyncratic revision of the Christ story. What better way to pass the time than to compare notes?



*The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth*, commonly referred to as the *Jefferson Bible*, was constructed by T h o m a s

Jefferson by cutting and pasting with razor and glue numerous sections from the New Testament of the doctrine of Jesus. *Jefferson’s Bible* stripped the Gospels of any and all supernatural elements, leaving only Jesus’ teachings themselves.

*The Life of Our Lord* is a book about the life of Jesus Christ written by English novelist Charles Dickens for his young children to whom he read it aloud every Christmas. In many ways, Dickens’ account is the polar opposite of the deist Jefferson’s — the Englishman celebrates the miracles in an easy-going style and peppers his narrative with his own views and prejudices. He strictly forbade publication of *The Life* during his own lifetime. It was finally published in 1934, 64 years after Dickens’ death.

Count Leo Tolstoy is famous for his sprawling portraits of nineteenth-century Russian life, as recounted in *Anna Karenina* and *War and Peace*. But a spiritual crisis

prompted him to seek answers from the study of Christianity which led him to write his own version of the New Testament— *The Gospel in Brief*. Playwright Scott Carter says, “Tolstoy is in the middle between Jefferson and Dickens, theologically. He thinks miracles are possible but irrelevant. Jefferson clearly dismisses them, and Dickens celebrates them.”

Scott Carter is Executive Producer/Writer for HBO’s *Real Time With Bill Maher*. He produced the first 1,100 episodes of *Politically Incorrect with Bill Maher*, from its 1993 Comedy Central debut to its 1997 move to ABC. During that time producer/writer Carter won eight Emmy nominations and three consecutive CableAce Awards for Best Talk Series.

We will be joined by **Bill Largess**, Artistic Director of Washington Stage Guild. Bill last spoke to us as we discussed Shaw’s *Back to Methuselah*. Dorothy Marschak will moderate our discussion.

Reserve now. Alfio’s is 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](mailto:phylbo@verizon.net) or 301-986-1768. Reservations and/or cancellations will be accepted until noon on March 14. 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.

Stage Guild will produce *Discord* March 31 through April 24. Stage Guild performs at the Undercroft Theatre which is in the ground (street) level of the Mount Vernon Place United Methodist Church: 900 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC.

Copies of the play are available from Dramatists Play Service – [www.dramatists.com](http://www.dramatists.com). Amazon has copies also. The cost is \$9.

*In April: All the Way by Robert Schenkkan*

*All the Way* depicts President Lyndon B. Johnson's efforts to maneuver members of the 88th United States Congress to enact, and civil rights leaders including Martin Luther King, Jr. to support, the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The play takes its name from Johnson's 1964 campaign slogan, "All the Way with LBJ."



The play was commissioned by the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and premiered there in 2012. It premiered on Broadway in March 2014, and won the 2014 Tony

Award and Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Play. Bryan Cranston won the Tony Award for Best Actor in a Play for his performance.

Arena Stage will produce *All the Way* April 1 through May 8.

Footlights will meet in April to discuss it - details to come. Mark Gruenberg will moderate our discussion.

### *About Footlights*

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### *Calendar – Discussions:*

- **Monday, March 14**, 6:30 p.m. dinner-discussion of *The Gospel According to Thomas Jefferson, Charles Dickens and Count Leo Tolstoy: Discord* by **Scott Carter** with guest **Bill Largess**, Artistic Director, Washington Stage Guild. At Alfio's, 4515 Willard Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD. Reserve with Phyllis Bodin, [phylbo@verizon.net](mailto:phylbo@verizon.net) or 301-986-1768. Dorothy Marschak will moderate.

Robin Larkin for **FOOTLIGHTS**  
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