

from the FOOTLIGHTS

AUGUST 2016

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

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August 23: Dinner-discussion of Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*

Mark your calendars now, and make reservations to join Footlights on **Tuesday, August 23**, when we revisit **Tony Kushner's** Pulitzer Prize- and Tony Award-winning ***Angels in America*** on its 25th anniversary.

We are delighted to welcome our guests, Olney Theatre Center Artistic Director **Jason Loewith** and Round House Theatre Producing Artistic Director **Ryan Rilette**. In a bold collaboration to begin the 2016-17 season, Olney and Round House Theatres are co-producing *Angels – Part I: Millennium Approaches* (Loewith directs) & *Part II: Perestroika* (Rilette directs) in rotating repertory at Round House Theatre, September 7 through October 30.

In a recent Slate.com article, *Angels in America: The Complete Oral History*, by Isaac Butler and Dan Kois, Kushner summarizes his play: "In two parts and seven hours, *Angels in America* tells the story of an array of characters in New York City in 1985 and 1986. At its center is a young man named Prior Walter, who in an early scene reveals to his lover, Louis Ironson, that he has AIDS. An overwhelmed Louis abandons Prior and falls for Joe Pitt, a closeted clerk at the federal courthouse where he works. Joe, a Mormon, struggles with his relationships with Louis, with his anxious, pill-popping wife, Harper, and with Roy Cohn, the power broker who wants Joe to move to Washington to be his eyes and ears in the Reagan administration. Cohn is also in the closet and battling AIDS; his nurse, Belize, is close friends with Prior. Watching over all of these tangled relationships is the Angel, who has a message for humanity and who chooses Prior as the prophet who will deliver it." The lives of these disparate characters intersect, intertwine, collide, and are blown apart during a time of heartbreak, reaction, and transformation.

Angels puts gay men at the center of American Politics, history, and mythology at a time when they were marginalized by the culture at large and dying in waves. It launched the careers of remarkable actors and directors, not to mention that of the fiercely ambitious firebrand playwright Tony Kushner. Of this time, Frank Rich, chief theater critic of the New York Times from 1980-93 wrote, "If you were on the theater beat, you had to notice that young men, featured actors, no one super

famous yet, were dying. The theater caught up with it relatively fast, at least by the standards of American pop culture."

Theater columnist of the New York Post, Michael Riedel, posits, "Part I is so much better than Part II. If I were running a theater, I'd just do *Millennium* and ignore *Perestroika*," while according to Tony Taccone, artistic director of the Eureka Theatre from 1980-88, and who co-directed the 1992 Los Angeles production, "There is a deeper soul in *Perestroika*. There is an artist who is grappling with the deepest parts of himself. The scene in heaven where God has abandoned them, the brilliant monologue the Angel has that's a description of the world, and Harper's night flight to San Francisco speech, these are the things that live on inside you."

Don't miss this very special evening with our two gifted directors, friends of Footlights, who will again honor us with their presence on Tuesday, August 23 at Alfio's.

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 available at Alfio's. Dinner is at 6:30, the discussion begins at 7:30 and ends no later than 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, 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 August 23. 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.

Read *Angels*. Read the play, parts I and II, available at public libraries, for purchase in some bookstores (call first), or online at Amazon, Samuel French, etc.

See *Angels*. Tickets to *Angels* – parts I and II – are available from AngelsInAmerica2016.com or from the Round House Box Office at 240-644-1100. Through August 31, if you buy tickets to both plays, use the code TWOANGELS for a 25% discount. There are other discounts available, and two PWYC performances are scheduled for each play. Some performance dates include pre- or post-show discussions.

Footlights to Discuss The Last Schwartz, Meet New Theater J Director, September 22

Two Washington premieres, **Deborah Zoe Laufer's** play ***The Last Schwartz*** and new Theater J Artistic Director **Adam Immerwahr**, will headline Footlights' discussion on Thursday, September 22.

"Nothing is funnier than family dysfunction," Theater J says of the play, quoting Laufer. "The Schwartz family has been on their last legs since Papa died a year ago. Norma's husband isn't speaking to her, Herb and Bonnie are having baby troubles, and Simon wants to be an astronaut. Throw a sexy wanna-be Hollywood starlet into the mix, and you've got the recipe for a *yahrzeit*" – Yiddish for the anniversary of the death of a loved one – "gone perfectly wrong. Can Judaism hold this family together?"

Calendar:

- **Tuesday, August 23**, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of **Tony Kushner's *Angels in America***. Guests: **Jason Loewith**, Olney Theatre Center Artistic Director, and **Ryan Rilette**, Round House Theatre Producing Artistic Director. Stephanie Olshan moderates. At Alfio's, 4515 Willard Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD. Reserve with Phyllis Bodin, phylbo@verizon.net or 301-986-1768.
- **Thursday, September 22**, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of **Deborah Zoe Laufer's *The Last Schwartz***. Our guest is **Adam Immerwahr**, Theater J Artistic Director. Mark Gruenberg moderates. At Alfio's, 4515 Willard Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD. Reserve with Phyllis Bodin, phylbo@verizon.net or 301-986-1768.

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That's a good question, as Laufer also calls her play "*Cherry Orchard in the Catskills*." Yes, that *Cherry Orchard* – the Chekhov play Footlights has discussed. Copies of *The Last Schwartz* are available from Samuel French's theater scripts website and from Amazon.com.

The Last Schwartz plays at Theater J from September 7 to October 2. Tickets for Footlights are \$20 for any of the three Sunday matinee performances. Use the coupon code FOOTLIGHTS. Theater J will have post-show panels on those dates; topics and panel guests TBD.

Footlights will discuss *The Last Schwartz* with Theater J's new Artistic Director, Adam Immerwahr. It's not only his Footlights premiere, but the play is his Theater J directing premiere. At Alfio's. Reserve with Phyllis.

About Footlights

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