

# from the FOOTLIGHTS

OCTOBER 2016

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

<http://www.footlightsdc.org>

## October 17: Footlights' Dinner-discussion of John Guare's *Six Degrees of Separation*

"I read somewhere that everybody on this planet is separated by only six other people. Six degrees of separation. . . . But to find the right six people." This is part of a monologue, spoken by one of the many victims of the mysterious Paul who changes so many lives in the play in his search for. . . what?

Footlights will meet on **Monday, October 17** to discuss playwright **John Guare's** award-winning ***Six Degrees of Separation***, which is generally considered by theater critics as one of the Best 50 Plays of the 20th Century. Actress and Keegan Theatre Associate Artistic Director **Susan Rhea** and director **Brandon McCoy** will join us to talk about the play, and also the *six degrees* theory which has fascinated mathematicians and sociologists since it was first proposed in a 1929 short story called *Chains*. Guare's 1990 story is about a charming and extremely convincing con man and robber who claims (among other things) that he is the son of actor Sidney Poitier. The story is based on a real person and a chain of events which actually happened to friends of John Guare's, and then to their friends. (In a bizarre twist, a kind of final connection, the con man later sued Guare, asking for a share of the profits from the play, but he lost his case.)

As communication and travel have become so much easier and more efficient, human beings are increasingly connecting in spite of physical distance. Start with your computer address book and think about how far away some friends now live, but how quickly you can get in touch with them. Three students watching the film *Footloose* invented the Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon game: connect Bacon to any other actor on earth, living or dead, and do it in no more than six moves, using only actors who must have appeared in either a film or commercial with Bacon. An earlier version of the game involved Heavyweight boxing champion John L. Sullivan ("Shake the hand that shook the hand that shook the hand that shook the hand of the great John L.") There is a 1993 film based on Guare's play, a TV series, and a show like *Lost* explores the same idea, as do films like *Babel* and *Crash*.

Keegan Theatre is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. Susan Marie Rhea and her husband Mark Rhea have put the company firmly in the top rank of our local

theaters. Both act, they direct, they now own the Church Street theater and have made major improvements. They win multiple awards, and they also have spent quality time with Footlights. Remember Susan's story of how Mark proposed to her on stage in Galway when the company was touring Ireland? It brought the Footlights house down the night she came to talk to us about their *Cat On a Hot Tin Roof* production last season. Susan is directing the current Keegan show, *What We're Up Against*, and will appear in *Six Degrees* as Louisa ('Ouisa') Kittridge. The Kittridges are the first family to welcome the con man into their home, simply because he says he knows their children and he obviously needs help because he has been mugged in Central Park.

Brandon McCoy who is directing *Six Degrees* is an actor as well as a director, and is also a teacher, a writer, a musician, and a stand-up comedian.

Although playwright John Guare ('Guare' rhymes with 'air') is best known for *Six Degrees*, his *House of Blue Leaves* is another one of his award-winning works. He is a graduate of Georgetown University and attended the Yale School of Drama. He wrote the book for the musical *Sweet Smell of Success* and the script for Malle's film *Atlantic City*, as well as numerous other plays.

**Read the play.** Copies of *Six Degrees of Separation* are available from Dramatists Play Service, Inc., Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble or local libraries. Note: We encourage you to read the play before our discussion. Our discussion may include spoilers.

**See the play.** *Six Degrees of Separation* will be performed at Keegan Theatre, 1742 Church Street NW, DC, from November 5 to December 3. Footlights will plan a group trip.

Our dinner-discussion on Monday, October 17 is at Alfio's, 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 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 at 7:20 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 the day of the dinner-discussion. 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.

### *In November: Footlights' Dinner-discussion of Tom Stoppard's **The Hard Problem***

Footlights returns to playwright **Tom Stoppard** in November with a dinner-discussion of his latest play, **The Hard Problem**. Our guest speaker will be **Matt Torney**, who is directing the upcoming Studio Theatre production.

From Studio's website: Master dramatist Tom Stoppard's newest play follows Hilary, a young psychology researcher at the prestigious Krohl Institute for Brain Science. As she and her colleagues grapple with the 'hard problem' of defining consciousness, a thorny decision from Hilary's past fuels her controversial stances - and a few suspect choices. Bristling with intellectual energy and searing wit, *The Hard Problem* explores the difference between our brains and our minds, the nature of belief, and how to reconcile hard science with lived experience.

We will meet at Alfio's for our dinner-discussion, mid-November date TBD.

### *About Footlights*

To subscribe to our e-list, go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/footlightsdc/join>, or e-mail [footlightsdc-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:footlightsdc-subscribe@yahoogroups.com). To learn more about Footlights, see <http://www.footlightsdc.org>.

### *Calendar:*

- **Monday, October 17**, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of **John Guare's *Six Degrees of Separation***. Guests: **Susan Rhea**, Keegan Theatre Associate Artistic Director, and **Brandon McCoy**, director. Mary Ann Wren moderates. At Alfio's, 4515 Willard Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD. Reserve with Phyllis Bodin, [phylbo@verizon.net](mailto:phylbo@verizon.net) or 301-986-1768.
- **November**, date to be determined, dinner-discussion of **Tom Stoppard's *The Hard Problem***. Guest: director **Matt Torney**. Jerry Stilkind moderates.

Robin Larkin for **FOOTLIGHTS**  
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