

from the FOOTLIGHTS

JANUARY 2017

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

<http://www.footlightsdc.org>

January 24: Footlights' Dinner-discussion of Mike Bartlett's *King Charles III*

*For if my name is given through routine
And not because it represents my view
Then soon I'll have no name, and nameless I
Have not myself.*

To sign, or not to sign. That is the question that hangs so urgently over the wavering title character of *King Charles III*, Mike Bartlett's brilliant portrait of a monarchy in crisis. Queen Elizabeth II has died and her son Charles, after a lifetime of waiting, is ready to ascend the throne. Or is he? He himself has doubts. Was he really meant to rule? The first bill to pass the Commons and come to him is a law restricting the press. Charles does not agree with it and demands that Parliament revise it and consult him on the revisions. He won't sign it otherwise. The Prime Minister is livid. After all, Charles's mother never made a fuss, just signed everything that came to her regardless of her feelings.

Written primarily in Shakespearean blank verse, this smash Broadway and West End hit and the 2015 Olivier Award winner for Best New Play is a modern take on the future of the British Royal Family. Directed by David Muse, the production at Shakespeare Theatre will be a regional premiere.

Playwright Mike Bartlett says he knew he wanted *King Charles III* to be a Shakespearean drama - a family epic in five acts, complete with a ghost - Diana - and a comic subplot. But would writing in iambic pentameter prove too great a challenge? "The idea for *King Charles III* arrived in my imagination with the form and content very clear, and inextricably linked. It would be a play about the moment Charles takes the throne, and how his conscience would lead him to refuse to sign a bill into law. An epic royal family drama, dealing with power and national constitution, was the content, and therefore the form had surely to be Shakespearean. Worryingly, the majority of it would have to be in verse."

Bartlett says: "I was more than a little behind Shakespeare. I needed to practise. I wrote lines and lines of iambic pentameter, speaking it round the house to myself, trying to get to the point where I might be able to improvise the verse fluidly, hoping that if I could, the

writing would be driven by the desires and thoughts of the characters, rather than aesthetics or metric requirements."

Please join us on **Tuesday, January 24** to discuss **King Charles III**. Our guest will be **Sivan Battat**, associate director of Shakespeare Theatre's upcoming production opening February 7. Footlights member Joanna Ward will moderate our discussion.

Our dinner-discussion 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, 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 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.

Read the play. *King Charles III* is available from Amazon for your Kindle or from Dramatists Play Service, and other sources. We encourage you to read the play before our discussion. Our discussion may include spoilers.

See the play. *King Charles III* opens at Shakespeare Theatre Company on February 7 and runs through March 12.

February 28: Footlights' Dinner-discussion of Forum Theatre's Two-Play Repertory

On **Tuesday, February 28** we meet to discuss two upcoming plays to be performed in rep - March 16

through April 15 - at Forum Theatre: ***What Every Girl Should Know*** by **Monica Byrne** and ***Dry Land*** by **Ruby Rae Spiegel**. **Michael Dove**, Forum's Artistic Director, and others from the productions will be our guests. Robin Larkin will moderate our discussion.

What Every Girl Should Know – In 1914, four teen girls in a New York reformatory discover their sexuality and personal power as they reveal the horrifying events that led each to the same tiny dormitory room. Adopting birth control activist Margaret Sanger as their secret patron saint, they build a communal fantasy life where they travel the world, take lovers at will, and assassinate their enemies. Their fantasy life grows more and more elaborate until objects from their fantasy world start appearing in the real one-including a baby.

Dry Land – Ester is a swimmer trying to stay afloat. Amy is curled up on the locker room floor. DRY LAND is a play about abortion, female friendship, and resiliency, and

what happens in one high school locker room after everybody's left.

We'll meet at Alfio's. Make reservations with Phyllis Bodin, phylbo@verizon.net or 301-986-1768.

About Footlights

To subscribe to our e-list, go to groups.yahoo.com/group/footlightsdc/join, or email any message to footlightsdc-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. To learn more about Footlights, see www.footlightsdc.org.

Email copies of the monthly newsletter are sent to the Footlights list and are also available at www.footlightsdc.org.

To continue to receive our newsletter by postal mail, please contact Robin at robinlarkin@comcast.net or 240-669-6300.

Calendar:

- **Tuesday, January 24**, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of **Mike Bartlett's *King Charles III***. Guest: **Sivan Battat**, assistant director of Shakespeare Theatre's production. Joanna Ward moderates. At Alfio's, 4515 Willard Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD. Reserve with Phyllis Bodin, phylbo@verizon.net or 301-986-1768.
- **Tuesday, February 28**, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of **Monica Byrne's *What Every Girl Should Know*** and **Ruby Rae Spiegel's *Dry Land***. Guests: **Michael Dove**, Artistic Director, Forum Theatre, and others. Robin Larkin moderates. At Alfio's, 4515 Willard Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD. Reserve with Phyllis Bodin, phylbo@verizon.net or 301-986-1768.
- **Performances:** Footlights November discussion play *The Hard Problem* is at Studio Theatre January 11 - February 19. Our December play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* is at Ford's Theatre January 21 - February 19.

Robin Larkin for **FOOTLIGHTS**
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