

from the FOOTLIGHTS

MARCH 2017

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

<http://www.footlightsdc.org>

March 20: Footlights to Discuss Athol Fugard's *Blood Knot*

The strong critical and audience reaction in 1964 to South African playwright **Athol Fugard's** first play to come to the U.S., *Blood Knot*, established him as one of the world's leading theater writers. Footlights welcomes **Ari Roth**, founding artistic director of Mosaic Theater Company, to discuss *Blood Knot* on **Monday, March 20** at Alfio's. Jerry Stilkind will moderate our discussion.

There are two characters in the play, two-half brothers. They had different fathers. One brother is black and the other is light enough to pass for white, which he does for a time in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. But that role becomes too hard to live with. He comes back to live with his black brother in a shack in a "colored only" shanty town of the city with a plan. It is to save enough money to buy a farm where they can have some independence from the crushing system of apartheid.

But, over time the black brother wants something else, the company of a woman. He gets into a pen pal relationship with a white woman, who assumes she is writing to a white man. She writes that she would like to meet him when she visits Port Elizabeth. His brother warns him of how dangerous it would be to try and meet the woman. She later writes that she won't be able to visit after all. Then the play deals drills down into the anger and frustrations of the brothers.

Fugard had produced this sometimes funny, harrowing show of the effects of apartheid in South Africa in 1961. It was closed after one performance because it also included the unheard of casting of a white man and a black man on a South African stage.

In 1962, Fugard publicly supported the movement against apartheid, including an international boycott of South African theaters because audiences had to be segregated. The government reacted by increasing police surveillance of him and his theater.

In 1967, Fugard went to London for the filming of his play. This time the South African government took away his passport on his return home. That did not stop him from writing and it did not stop the critical attention to his work. He moved to the United States after the millennium, teaching playwriting, acting and directing in

the Department of Theatre and Dance at the University of California, San Diego for several years. In 2012 he relocated to South Africa, where he now lives permanently.

He has long been an admirer of Nelson Mandela and a critic of the leaders of the government of South Africa that followed Mandela. "I think one of the tragedies is that he (Mandela) didn't taken on a second term and entrench his vision, because lip service is paid to it but the reality is anything except what Nelson himself envisaged for South Africa.

He is equally hard on the white minority of South Africa. "Prejudice and racism are still alive and well in South Africa. No question about it. We made real attempts in the past to try setting up something that will deal with that issue. How do you take prejudice out of a human heart?", he asks while still insisting he is an optimist.

Studio Theatre's founding artistic director Joy Zinoman is directing *Blood Knot*. It will play at Mosaic Theater from March 29 through April 30.

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 *Blood Knot*. We encourage you to read the play

before our discussion. Our discussion may include spoilers.

April 25: Footlights Dinner-Discussion of Terence McNally's Master Class

Ideas of celebrity and narcissism dominate our thoughts today. How prescient that Metrostage is bringing us **Terence McNally's Master Class**. In a fictionalized Maria Callas, he shows both the woman and the diva and "the point at which Callas could no longer tell the two apart. Callas, like all great, self-created myths, lives on in the darkness of our imaginations as a rage that will not be quieted, a wound that cannot heal." (Hilton Als in the New Yorker)

Or, as Callas says, "ART is domination. It's making people think that for that precise moment in time there is only one way, one voice. Yours."

McNally's version of real master classes that Callas gave at Julliard could be ripped from today's headlines. Maybe he examines a person who always needs the spotlight. Or maybe, he depicts a superb teacher, using personal anecdotes to encourage her students and improve their technique.

Nick Olcott, director, and **Carolyn Griffin**, Artistic Director of MetroStage will explore these questions

Calendar:

- **Monday, March 20**, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of **Athol Fugard's Blood Knot**. Guest: **Ari Roth**, Artistic Director, Mosaic Theater. Jerry Stilkind moderates. At Alfio's, 4515 Willard Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD. Reserve with Phyllis Bodin, phylbo@verizon.net or 301-986-1768.
- **Tuesday, April 25**, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of **Terence McNally's Master Class** with director **Nick Olcott** and MetroStage Producing Artistic Director **Carolyn Griffin**. Charlotte Baer moderates. At Alfio's. Reserve with Phyllis.

Robin Larkin for **FOOTLIGHTS**
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when Footlights meets on Tuesday, April 25 at Alfio's.

March 26: Footlights Discount Tickets for Forum Theatre's #NastyWomenRep

Join Footlights to see two plays at Forum Theatre. At 2 p.m., **What Every Girl Should Know** by Monica Byrne, and at 7 p.m. **Dry Land** by Ruby Rae Spiegel. Forum Theatre is in residence at the Silver Spring Black Box Theatre (formerly Round House Theatre Silver Spring), 8641 Colesville Road, Silver Spring. Buy your tickets - \$15 for each play - using the discount code FOOTLIGHTS. There are many Silver Spring restaurants close to the theater for dinner between shows. Parking in the nearby public garages is free on Sunday. The schedule of performances is found at <https://forum-theatre.org>.

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