

# from the FOOTLIGHTS

JANUARY 2020

"Life shouldn't be all work and no plays." <http://www.footlightsdc.org>

## January 8: *Silent Sky* by Lauren Gunderson

What does it mean to be the most produced playwright in the US and not be Neil Simon?

Being most-produced means writing lots of plays, some modern, some historic. It can involve a focus on famous names, (Shakespeare and Marie Curie) or it can spotlight people we have never heard of – like the women working at the Harvard Observatory 100 years ago.

Footlights will discuss that playwright, **Lauren Gunderson**, and her play about women astronomers, ***Silent Sky*** on **Wednesday, January 8**.

To be the most-produced playwright while still in her 30s means being profiled in the *New Yorker* (Oct 2017) and, amazingly, interviewed on *Science Friday*, just last month, featuring her new play about Marie Curie, now in New York.

Listen to 21 fascinating minutes about why Gunderson loves science topics): <https://www.sciencefriday.com/segments/half-lif e-marie-curie-play/>

While talking about Gunderson's play involves lots of superlatives and wonder, it also involves strong dramatic structure. *Silent Sky* is not a science lesson – while introducing us to women scientists from 100 years ago, it also illuminates modern dilemmas: career vs. romance; career vs. home.

From Gunderson: "The thrill of SILENT SKY is that we are telling the story of a strong woman in a strong women's world. Not only is Henrietta (our hero) ambitious, funny, romantic, nerdy, and sharp; all three other women in the play are the same....The great thing about this is that it's based in history. The "ladies of the logbook" were a real cohort of women recruited by Edward Pickering at the Harvard Observatory to "count stars." This group of creative, curious, dedicated women pushed astronomy forward, and they did it in a room of their own."

*Silent Sky* also features romance: "Some of the most fun I had in writing the play was the awkward, uncool, terribly-timed, hiccupping romance between Henrietta and Peter," says Gunderson "They are both unprepared for each other, and have no model for how to flirt, communicate, or proceed in love."

Gunderson's more than 20 plays have included other local productions: *The Book of Will* at Round House and her adaptation of *Peter Pan* now at the Shakespeare Theatre.

We are thrilled to welcome back **José Carrasquillo**, now Director of Artistic Programming at Ford's Theatre, as our guest. Past Footlights discussions with José include *'night, Mother; The Maids; Happy Days; and The Young Lady from Tacna*. Charlotte Baer will moderate our discussion.

Please join us on Wednesday, January 8 for our first dinner-discussion of 2020. We will meet at Alfio's, 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, but valet parking is available at Alfio's. Dinner is at 6:30, the discussion begins at 7:30 and ends by 9.

The all-inclusive cost for dinner and the discussion is \$30. 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 we are charged for no-shows we expect you to cover our cost.

**Read the play.** *Silent Sky* is published and available through Dramatists Play Service, Inc. – [www.dramatists.com](http://www.dramatists.com).

**See the play.** *Silent Sky* will be presented at Ford's Theatre from January 24-February 23, 2020. More information about a theatre trip will be available soon.

### *About February*

Footlights is planning something new and different for our February discussion – a

lunchtime meeting! Save the date: **Saturday February 15** – Alfio's – 12:30 pm – with director **Nick Olcott** to talk to us about Constellation Theatre's production of *The 39 Steps* – details in our February newsletter!

### *About Footlights*

To subscribe to the Footlights e-list, send an e-mail to [FootlightsDC+subscribe@groups.io](mailto:FootlightsDC+subscribe@groups.io).

Visit our website at [www.footlightsdc.org](http://www.footlightsdc.org).

### *Calendar:*

- **Wednesday, January 8**, 6:30 pm, dinner-discussion of *Silent Sky* by Lauren Gunderson. Guest: **José Carrasquillo**, director of artistic programming, Ford's Theatre. At Alfio's, 4515 Willard Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD. Reserve with Phyllis Bodin at [phylbo@verizon.net](mailto:phylbo@verizon.net) or 301-986-1768.
- **Saturday, February 15**, 12:30 pm, luncheon-discussion of *The 39 Steps* adapted by Patrick Barlow from the novel by John Buchan and movie by Alfred Hitchcock. Guest: **Nick Olcott**. At Alfio's. Reserve with Phyllis.

Robin Larkin for **FOOTLIGHTS**  
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