

from the FOOTLIGHTS

SEPTEMBER 2018

“Life shouldn’t be all work and no plays.”

<http://www.footlightsdc.org>

Footlights to discuss *Venus in Fur* by David Ives on Monday, September 24

Leopold von Sacher-Masoch’s semi-autobiographical 1870 Victorian shocker *Venus In Furs* not only gave the term *masochism* to the world, but has reappeared in everything from a rock song to a Roman Polanski movie. David Ives’s 2011 adaptation of the erotic novella has been performed several times in our area, as have many of his other plays: *All In The Timing*, *New Jerusalem*, and *Is He Dead?*, as well as his reworking of several French farces such as *A Flea In Her Ear* and *Metromaniacs*.

In Ives’s adaptation, after a long day of auditioning actresses for a leading role in a theatrical version of the original story, the director is tired and discouraged and ready to go home – when Vonda rushes in, late, begging for a chance to read for him. He finally agrees to listen – and their lives change forever.

Venus in Fur will be produced by a new company just starting its second season: 4615 Theatre (named for the house number where the group started out). Their recent production of Moira Buffini’s *Dinner* (she wrote *Handbagged*) got rave reviews. Since the company’s beginning, literally in a couple of rooms, a basement, and a backyard in a suburban house, with a Jacobean tragedy, it has become a thriving small professional theater, performing a mixture of classical and contemporary plays in an intimate black box space.

Incidentally, a bit of trivia: the Titian painting, *Venus With a Mirror*, which is mentioned in both the original and in the Ives play is actually in the National Gallery in downtown Washington, D.C. And yes, she is wearing fur.

Our guests include **Jordan Friend**, co-founder and artistic director of the 4615 Theatre, as well as an actor and composer. With a fine arts degree from Ithaca College and one in classical acting from the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, he has also studied under Studio Theatre founder Joy Zinoman. This winter he will direct a world premiere at 4615, and also co-direct a first – a repertory production of all eight of Shakespeare’s tragedies for a Virginia theater.

Anna DiGiovanni (Vonda), with a theater degree from the University of Southern California, reports that her first appearance on stage was at age 4, and she knew immediately that is what she wanted to do with her life.

When not on stage, she knits, cooks, dances, practices yoga – and works on accents and stage combat. She recently received her MFA from Shakespeare Theatre-George Washington University’s Academy for Classical Acting.

Stevie Zimmerman, director, is originally from London, and has degrees from both the University of Leeds and Oxford, but now lives and works in this area. Among her award-winning credits, she directed Quotidian’s brilliant production of *Doubt*.

Mary Ann Wren will moderate our discussion.

Location. We will meet at **Alfio’s La Trattoria**, 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 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 *Venus in Fur*. If you are coming to the dinner-discussion we can send you an e-copy of the play. Make reservations with Phyllis and then contact Robin Larkin (robinlarkin@comcast.net) for your copy. As always, we request that you not distribute the play to others.

See it. *Venus in Fur* will be performed in the Silver Spring Arts Center, Highland Theater, 914 Silver Spring Ave, Silver Spring, MD, October 25-November 17. Footlights tickets are just \$12 using the code VENUSFOOTLIGHTS. Ticket sales begin September 24. Dates for postshow discussions have not been posted yet.

Next up: Footlights Discussion of August Wilson's Gem of the Ocean November 1

By 1999 **August Wilson** had completed eight plays covering each decade from 1910 to the 1980s. He then wrote *Gem of the Ocean* in 2003 based on the 1900s and his finale, *Radio Gulf* set in the 1990s ending a century and era, also the year of his death 2005. As such, *Gem* sets up the premise for the characters and concepts of the entire cycle that already lay before him. The mysteriously old conjure woman Aunt Ester appears throughout the cycle and represents healing redemption rooted in the African traditions.

Mark the date and come join us explore the foundational concepts of Wilson's plays deeply rooted in Africa, through characters still grappling with newly found freedom while dealing with horrific oppression, with souls and spirits cast off of slave ships of the Middle Passage, determined to be heard in *Gem of the Ocean*.

Round House Theatre will produce *Gem of the Ocean* November 28-December 23.

Tickets to Gloria at Woolly Mammoth

Last month Footlights discussed **Branden Jacobs-Jenkins's Gloria**. *Gloria* opens the season for Woolly Mammoth Theatre Co. Performances will be September 3 - 30. Footlights members will receive a 15% discount off full priced tickets, using the code FOOTLIGHTS for any performance during the run (excluding Opening Night and PWYW previews). Woolly has three talkbacks scheduled so far that will be after Sunday matinees on September 16, 23 and 30.

About Footlights

To subscribe to the Footlights e-list, go to groups.yahoo.com/group/footlightsdc/join, or e-mail any message to footlightsdc-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. To learn more about Footlights, see www.footlightsdc.org. Copies of the newsletter are sent to the Footlights e-list and are also available at www.footlightsdc.org. To get a newsletter print copy contact Robin, robinlarkin@comcast.net or 240-669-6300.

Calendar:

- **Monday, September 24**, 6:30 pm, dinner-discussion of **David Ives's Venus in Fur** with 4615 Theatre Company's artistic director, **Jordan Friend**, actor **Anna DiGiovanni**, and director **Stevie Zimmerman**. Mary Ann Wren moderates. At **Alfio's**, 4515 Willard Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD, on the ground floor of the Willoughby Apartments. Reserve with Phyllis Bodin at phylbo@verizon.net or 301-986-1768.
- **Thursday, November 1**, 6:30 pm, dinner-discussion of **August Wilson's Gem of the Ocean**. Save the date. Look for details in our next newsletter.

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