

# from the FOOTLIGHTS

JANUARY 2011

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

<http://www.footlightsdc.org>

## January 10: Footlights to Discuss *Magic* by G. K. Chesterton

Our play for discussion on **Monday, January 10** will be **G. K. Chesterton's *Magic***. Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1874-1936) was a philosopher, playwright, journalist, literary and art critic, biographer (he wrote the Encyclopedia Britannica article on his friend Charles Dickens), and novelist (including fantasy, notably in his *Man Who Was Thursday*, and detective fiction in his *Father Brown* stories), among many other things. G. B. Shaw called him a man of colossal genius. Although he was both conservative and religious, he was also fascinated by Ouija boards, magic, and the occult. He wrote prodigiously: 80 books, hundreds of poems, 200 short stories, and thousands of essays. Chesterton was 6' 4" tall and weighed close to 300 pounds, wore a cape, carried a sword cane, and apparently knew every important writer and thinker in England.

His friend G. B. Shaw persuaded him to write for the theater. *Magic* was his first and most successful play. It was based on a short story he had written (now lost), and involves a Duke, his cynical American nephew, a magician, and an illusion which cannot be explained. Ingmar Bergman based his film *The Magician* on the play.

Our speaker on January 10 will be **Bill Largess**, co-founder and Producing Artistic Director of Washington Stage Guild. A native Washingtonian and graduate of Catholic University, Largess is an actor, a director, a dramaturg, and a teacher (at both George Washington University and Howard Community College). In his spare time he and some fellow Stage Guilders cook and serve hot meals to wounded vets and their families at Walter Reed's Fisher House. For this volunteer effort they have received both an Army Award for Patriotic Civilian Service and a Presidential Bronze Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service.

We will meet at **Alfio's** Trattoria, located on the ground floor of the Willoughby Apartments, 4515 Willard Avenue in Chevy Chase, Maryland (phone 301-657-9133). The restaurant is two blocks from the Friendship Heights metro station. Street parking is limited but valet parking is free at Alfio's. The cost for dinner is only \$13, for salad, bread, choice among six entrees, ice cream, and coffee or tea. The price includes tax and tip. We appreciate a \$5 contribution to Footlights. Wine, beer, and cocktails are available from the bar.

Phyllis Bodin will take reservations for our dinner-discussion. You can reach her at 301 986-1768 or [Phylbo@verizon.net](mailto:Phylbo@verizon.net). You may come for the discussion only if you wish.

Dinner is at 6:30 and the discussion begins at 7:30 p.m. If you have to cancel, please let Phyllis know by noon on January 10, so we will have an accurate count for the restaurant. Robin Larkin will moderate our discussion.

You may order *Magic* from your favorite book store. *Magic* can be read on-line or downloaded in a number of formats. See <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/19094>.

*Magic* will be performed by the Washington Stage Guild January 6 - 30. The Stage Guild was formed in 1986 and was intended to specialize in "neglected classics, unfamiliar foreign plays, and new works of outstanding merit." After years of performing at an Arena Stage space on 14th and T Streets, Stage Guild has a new home in the Undercroft Theatre in the Mt. Vernon Place Methodist Church at 9th and Massachusetts Avenue. See <http://www.stageguild.org/> for more information.

## See *Magic* with Footlights

We will see the play on **Sunday, January 16, 2:30 p.m.** at the Undercroft Theatre of Mount Vernon Place United Methodist Church, 900 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC. Tickets are \$20 and include a postshow discussion. Please send your check, payable to Footlights, to Robin Larkin, 5800 Nicholson Lane, Apartment L-07, Rockville, MD 20852. If you have questions, Robin can be reached at [robinlarkin@comcast.net](mailto:robinlarkin@comcast.net) or 240-669-6300.

## See Eugene O'Neill's *Beyond the Horizon*

The American Century Theater will produce O'Neill's *Beyond the Horizon* directed by Kathleen Akerley, Footlights guest speaker at our December dinner-discussion of this Pulitzer Prize-winning play. It runs from January 14 - February 12 at the Gunston Arts Center, Theater II, 2700 South Lang Street, Arlington, VA 22206.

Footlights will see it on **Sunday, January 30, 2:30 p.m.** Tickets are \$15 and include a postshow discussion. Send your check (payable to Footlights) to Robin Larkin, 5800 Nicholson Lane, Apartment L-07, Rockville, MD 20852.

## February 7: Tom Stoppard's *On the Razzle*

Two callow shop clerks escape their lives of provincial drudgery for one day in glitzy, sinful old Vienna, where

they hope, as one of them puts it, “to acquire a past before it’s too late.” *On the Razzle* is an adaptation of the Viennese play *Einen Jux will er sich machen* by Johann Nestroy, also the basis for Thornton Wilder’s *Matchmaker* which in turn was the basis for the musical *Hello, Dolly!* While sticking close to the original plot and characters (minus Dolly), Stoppard’s *On the Razzle* puts his own distinctive spin on the farce. He has likened his approach to “cross-country hiking with a map and compass, where one takes a bearing on the next landmark and picks one’s own way toward it.” His way, as might be expected, is strewn with wordplays and verbal gymnastics, by turns brilliant and outrageously silly.

The play will be performed at Constellation Theatre February 3 - March 6, in the renovated Source space at 1835 14th Street. We can probably expect bold visual design, split-second timing – judging from their farce *A Flea in Her Ear* last season – and a lot of fun from their *On the Razzle*.

Our speaker will be **Nick Olcott**, a Footlights favorite

### Calendar

- Monday, January 10, 6:30 p.m. dinner-discussion of *Magic* by **G. K. Chesterton**. Our guest speaker is Washington Stage Guild producing artistic director **Bill Largess**. At Alfio’s, 4515 Willard Ave., Chevy Chase, MD, 20815. Reserve with Phyllis Bodin, [phylbo@verizon.net](mailto:phylbo@verizon.net) or 301-986-1768.
- Sunday, January 16, 2:30 p.m. performance of *Magic*. At Washington Stage Guild, Undercroft Theatre of Mount Vernon Place United Methodist Church, 900 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC. **Tickets are \$20**. Reserve with Robin Larkin, [robinlarkin@comcast.net](mailto:robinlarkin@comcast.net) or 240-669-6300.
- Sunday, January 30, 2:30 p.m. performance of *Beyond the Horizon* by **Eugene O’Neill**. At The American Century Theater, Gunston Arts Center, Theater II, 2700 South Lang Street, Arlington, VA. **Tickets are \$15**. Reserve with Robin.
- Monday, February 7, 6:30 p.m. dinner-discussion of *On the Razzle* by **Tom Stoppard**. Our guest speaker is director **Nick Olcott**. At Alfio’s. Reserve with Phyllis.

Robin Larkin for **FOOTLIGHTS**

5800 Nicholson Lane, # L07

Rockville, MD 20852

and member of our advisory board, who will direct the play for Constellation, but who is also an actor, a playwright, a teacher, and someone equally at home with drama, comedy, musicals, and with opera. He has worked with many area theaters. Footlights last met with Nick as director of Round House Theatre’s production of Chekhov’s *The Cherry Orchard*.

We will meet at Alfio’s. Phyllis Bodin will take reservations at [phylbo@verizon.net](mailto:phylbo@verizon.net) or 301-986-1768.

It is always prudent if possible to read a Stoppard play before discussing it. Check your local library or order a copy from your favorite bookstore.

### About Footlights

For more information about Footlights, check our website: [www.footlightsdc.org](http://www.footlightsdc.org). To subscribe to our e-list and monthly newsletter, go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/footlightsdc/join>, or send an e-mail to [footlightsdc-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:footlightsdc-subscribe@yahoogroups.com).