

# from the FOOTLIGHTS

FEBRUARY 2011

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

<http://www.footlightsdc.org>

## Footlights to Discuss *On the Razzle* by Tom Stoppard February 7

Our play for discussion on **Monday, February 7** will be **Tom Stoppard's *On the Razzle*** (1981). The play began life in 1835 in England, as John Oxenford's one-act farce *A Day Well Spent*. In 1842, in Vienna, it became *Einen Jux will er sich machen*, by Johann Nestroy—a popular play about two shop clerks who accidentally have a day off and decide to go out 'on the town' to celebrate. Although Nestroy's Viennese dialect and word-play were considered untranslatable 'even into German,' the story came to America when novelist-playwright Thornton Wilder decided to adapt it. His 1938 play was called *The Merchant of Yonkers* and was a flop. Undaunted, Wilder rewrote it in 1955 as *The Matchmaker*, and he made Dolly Levi (the matchmaker) a principal, although she had been a minor character at best, or even absent, in other versions. Shirley Booth was the matchmaker in the Hollywood movie. In 1964 the musical *Hello Dolly* arrived on Broadway, ran for a record 2844 performances, and made Carol Channing a star.

Tom Stoppard's adaptation *On the Razzle* once again leaves Dolly Levi out, but does feature all the mistaken identities, misdirected orders, *double entendres*, bawdy puns, and romantic complications one could wish for in a farce, and of course at the end life returns to normal for everyone after that one big night on the town.

Our speaker will be **Nick Olcott**, a Footlights favorite guest and member of Footlights Advisory Board, who will direct the play, but who is also an actor, a playwright, a teacher, and someone equally at home with drama, comedy, musicals, and with opera (and who is an important member of the University of Maryland Opera Studio). He has worked with theaters from Arena to Wolf Trap, Round House to Theatre J, and is the only person ever to be nominated for a Helen Hayes Award in three different categories: for Actor, Director, and Outstanding New Play.

Joining Nick will be **Ashley Ivey**, a founding member of Constellation Theatre and who will play Weinberl in Constellation's upcoming production of *On the Razzle*. He has appeared in many Constellation productions as well as in plays at the In Series, Catalyst, and Forum theaters and regionally at the Contemporary American Theater Festival, held each July in Shepherdstown, WV. Robin Larkin will moderate our discussion.

We will meet at Alfio's Trattoria, located on the ground floor of the Willoughby Apartments at 4515 Willard Avenue in Chevy Chase, MD 20815 (phone 301-657-9133). The restaurant is two blocks from the Friendship Heights metro station, on the red line. Street parking is limited but valet parking is free at Alfio's.

The cost for dinner is only \$13, for salad, bread, choice among several entrees, ice cream, and coffee or tea. The price includes tip and tax. 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. She may be reached at [phylbo@verizon.net](mailto:phylbo@verizon.net) or 301-986-1768. You may come for the discussion only if you wish. Dinner is at 6:30 and the discussion begins at 7:30, ending no later than 9:30. If you find you have to cancel, please let Phyllis know by noon on February 7 so we will have an accurate count for Alfio's.

It is always prudent to read a Stoppard play before discussing it. *On the Razzle* may be ordered directly on-line from Samuel French, Amazon, Barnes & Noble, etc. or through your favorite local bookstore. Several local library systems have copies.

## See *On the Razzle* with Footlights

The play will be performed by the Constellation Theatre Company, in the renovated Source space at 1835 14th Street, NW. Since this company was started in 2007 it has undertaken everything from Thomas Middleton's Jacobean bloodbath *Women Beware Women*, to Beaumarchais's *Marriage of Figaro*, and Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, to Vaclav Havel's *Temptation*, and the amazing Indian epic of *The Ramayana* (with Tom Teasley as a one-man orchestra). We can 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!*

Footlights will see *On the Razzle* on **Sunday, February 13, 2 p.m.** at Constellation, 1835 14th Street NW, DC (Source Theatre). Tickets are \$18 if you stop by the Box Office and use the code FOOTLIGHTS, or visit <http://www.constellationtheatre.org/razzle.html> to purchase tickets on-line. Use the code FOOTLIGHTS. The price will include a fee for a total of \$19.50. There will be a post show discussion. Note: Footlights discount price applies to the February 13 matinee performance only.

## March 24: Athol Fugard's prize-winning play "Master Harold" . . . and the Boys

It's the apartheid 1950s in South Africa. Young white teenager Hally's father is a brutal drunkard and Hally's best friends are two black servants who work in his family's tea room—where the play takes place—but prejudice and institutionalized racism may win out yet.

The play is autobiographical. Harold Athol Fugard was actually called 'Hally' as a child. Of all his plays, none is more personal than "*Master Harold*" . . . and the Boys because it relates a boyhood incident which involved him and which haunted him for years until he tried to atone by writing this play. Many of his plays were banned in his homeland, and were premiered instead at the Yale Repertory Theatre. He is generally considered the finest South African playwright.

Our speaker will be **Bob Bartlett**, who last spoke to Footlights in March 2009 when he directed Richard Wright's *Native Son* for The American Century Theater. He has done two truly memorable productions for Quotidian: *Long Day's Journey Into Night* and *Frankie*

and *Johnny in the Claire de Lune*.

Read the play on-line if you wish at <http://www.drama21c.co.kr/writers/fugard/masterharolddetext.htm>, or find a copy at your local library.

We will meet to discuss the play on **Thursday, March 24**, at Alfio's (see information above)—6:30 for dinner, discussion at 7:30. Make your reservation with Phyllis Bodin, at 301-986-1768, or Phylbo@verizon.net. Mary Ann Wren will moderate the discussion.

"*Master Harold*" will be produced by Quotidian Theater, at the Writers' Center, 4508 Walsh Street in downtown Bethesda, from March 18 to April 17. Footlights will see it on a date to be announced.

### About Footlights

To learn more about Footlights, visit our website: <http://www.footlightsdc.org>. To subscribe to our e-list, go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/footlightsdc/join>, or e-mail [footlightsdc-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:footlightsdc-subscribe@yahoogroups.com).

### Calendar

- 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. Includes a postshow discussion. Reserve with Robin, [robinlarkin@comcast.net](mailto:robinlarkin@comcast.net) or 240-669-6300.
- Monday, February 7, 6:30 p.m. dinner-discussion of *On the Razzle* by **Tom Stoppard**. Our guest speakers are director **Nick Olcott** and actor **Ashley Ivey**. At Alfio's, 4515 Willard Ave., Chevy Chase, MD, 20815. Reserve with Phyllis, [phylbo@verizon.net](mailto:phylbo@verizon.net) or 301-986-1768.
- Sunday, February 13, 2 p.m. performance of *On the Razzle*. At Constellation Theatre Company (Source Theatre), 1835 14th Street, NW, Washington DC, 20009. Tickets are \$18 at the box office or \$19.50 on-line at <http://www.constellationtheatre.org/razzle.html>. Use code FOOTLIGHTS.
- Thursday, March 24, 6:30 p.m. dinner-discussion of "*Master Harold*" . . . and the Boys by **Athol Fugard**. At Alfio's. Reserve with Phyllis.

Robin Larkin for **FOOTLIGHTS**  
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