

# from the FOOTLIGHTS

MARCH 2011

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

<http://www.footlightsdc.org>

## 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 painfully autobiographical. Harold Athol Fugard was actually called 'Hally' as a child, as is young Harold in the play, and he says he remembers that back then he once spat in the face of a black servant—a black waiter named Sam who was his best friend—something which seemed perfectly acceptable to him at the time but which later caused him great regret. His father was in fact a crippled drunk, and his mother did run a tea room in Port Elizabeth. The play ran for almost 350 performances when it opened on Broadway in 1982.

**Athol Fugard** is perhaps South Africa's best known playwright, although he writes in English, and now lives and teaches in California. He has directed many of his plays and both directed and acted in his *Road to Mecca* when it was performed at the Kennedy Center in 1989. He grew up in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, and sets many of his plays, including "*Master Harold*" there. As a young man Fugard studied philosophy and social anthropology but dropped out of college before graduation so he could hitchhike around Africa with a friend. He spent two years working as a merchant seaman on a freighter in South East Asian waters, but eventually settled back in South Africa to write, and to found a theater group. The movie version of his novel *Tsotsi* won an Academy Award in 2006 as Best Foreign Film.

Our speaker will be **Bob Bartlett**, whom we last heard at Footlights in March 2009 when he directed Richard Wright's *Native Son* for The American Century Theater. He has directed two truly memorable productions for Quotidian Theatre Company: *Long Day's Journey Into Night* and *Frankie and Johnny in the Claire de Lune*. Bob Bartlett is a playwright and teacher as well as a director, and is on the Theater Arts faculty of Bowie State University. In his spare time he is artistic director and founder of AccokeekCreek Theatreco which is dedicated to bringing new plays to central and southern Maryland, as well as sponsoring a series of short plays at the Kennedy Center Page-to-Stage Festival each year, and he served as project director for *Welsh Words: Theatre from Wales* at the 2009 Smithsonian Folklife Festival.

We will meet to discuss "*Master Harold*" . . . and the Boys on **Thursday, March 24**, 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 red line 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 p.m. and the discussion begins at 7:30, ending no later than 9:30. If you have to cancel your dinner reservation please let Phyllis know by noon on March 24 so we will have an accurate count for the restaurant. Mary Ann Wren will moderate the discussion.

Read the play online if you wish at <http://www.drama21c.co.kr/writers/fugard/masterharoldtet.ext.htm>. It may be ordered directly online from Amazon, Barnes & Noble, etc. or through your favorite local bookstore. Several local library systems have copies.

## See "Master Harold" with Footlights

"*Master Harold*" . . . and the boys will be produced by Quotidian Theatre, at the Writers' Center, 4508 Walsh Street in downtown Bethesda, weekends from March 18 to April 17. Quotidian (the name is Latin for 'daily') specializes in plays which deal quietly with everyday life, and with playwrights such as Anton Chekhov, Conor McPherson, and Horton Foote. (Founder Jack Sbarbori was a longtime friend of Foote.) Foote's *The Trip to Bountiful* was discussed at a Footlights meeting last March.

Footlights will attend the Sunday, March 27 2 p.m. matinee performance with postshow discussion included. Our tickets are \$12.50. Send your check to Robin Larkin, payable to Footlights, 5800 Nicholson Lane, Apt. L07, Rockville, MD 20852. To let Robin know your check is on the way—240-669-6300 or [robinlarkin@comcast.net](mailto:robinlarkin@comcast.net)

## April 26: Lynn Nottage's Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Ruined*

With skill and mastery, **Lynn Nottage** drops her readers and audience in the midst of the Democratic Republic of

Congo, where war and women collide. Through a glimpse at the lives of Mama Nadi, Sophie, Salima and Josephine, we witness the violence that reigns and its brutal effects on the women involved. In *Ruined*, Lynn Nottage has crafted a drama that compels us to take our blinders off and confront the stark reality of armed conflict and cruelty. *Ruined* relates, but does not preach. The talent of the playwright allows for the portrayal of serious and appalling circumstances in such a way that makes the subject matter accessible. In the midst of Mama Nadi's rain forest brothel we find much more than the vestiges of war's brutality. We discover hope, resilience, humor and the ever present fortitude of the human heart. Through *Ruined*, Lynn Nottage starts a dialogue . . .

Join us on **Tuesday, April 26**, at Alfio's to continue the dialogue with our guest speaker, Dr. **Sandra G. Shannon** of Howard University. Dr. Shannon has visited with Footlights before to discuss the plays of August Wilson. She is currently a Full Professor of African American Literature, specializing in Dramatic Literature and Criticism. Dr. Shannon is teaching a class on Lynn Nottage's plays this semester at Howard University and has included *Ruined* on the reading list of one of her other classes.

Barbara Reithmaier and Debbie Jackson will moderate

## Calendar

- Thursday, March 24, 6:30 p.m. dinner-discussion of "*Master Harold*" . . . *and the Boys* by **Athol Fugard**. Our guest is **Bob Bartlett**, director. At Alfio's, 4515 Willard Ave., Chevy Chase, MD, 20815. Reserve with Phyllis, 301-986-1768 or phylbo@verizon.net.
- Sunday, March 27, 2 p.m. performance of "*Master Harold*" . . . *and the Boys* at Quotidian Theatre, 4508 Walsh St., Bethesda. Tickets are \$12.50 for Footlights. Reserve with Robin, 240-669-6300 or robinlarkin@comcast.net.
- Tuesday, April 26, 6:30 p.m. dinner-discussion of *Ruined* by **Lynn Nottage**. Our guest is Dr. **Sandra Shannon**, professor at Howard University. At Alfio's. Reserve with Phyllis.

Robin Larkin for **FOOTLIGHTS**

5800 Nicholson Lane, # L07

Rockville, MD 20852

our discussion. We'll meet at Alfio's (see information above). Reserve with Phyllis at 301-986-1768, or Phylbo@verizon.net.

*Ruined* is in wide distribution and available at most book stores. It is also available through online shopping at Amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com in print or in Kindle and NOOKbook downloads. *Ruined* will be produced at Arena Stage April 22–June 5.

## 2011 Contemporary American Theatre Festival

The CATF, which is held every summer in nearby Shepherdstown, WV, has announced its 2011 schedule of plays: David Mamet's *Race*, Sam Shepard's *Ages of the Moon*, and three works by lesser-known playwrights.

The season runs from July 8-31. Book a motel reservation early if you plan to stay in Shepherdstown, because they fill up quickly, especially on weekends. Details may be found at [www.CATF.org](http://www.CATF.org).

## 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).