

from the FOOTLIGHTS

MAY 2016

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

<http://www.footlightsdc.org>

May 9: Dinner–discussion of Steve Yockey’s *Blackberry Winter*

Blackberry winter is a colloquial expression in the South and Midwest referring to a sudden and unexpected cold snap in late spring – just when the blackberry bushes are in bloom.

Join Footlights at Alfio’s on **Monday, May 9**, for our dinner- discussion of **Steve Yockey’s *Blackberry Winter*** with guest speaker director and Forum Theatre co-founder **Michael Dove**.

The very organized Vivienne Avery has always felt able to deal with anything. She has an orderly life, a husband, a son, a sister, a small baking business she runs from home. But anyone who has ever cared for a terminally ill family member will sympathize as Vivienne helplessly watches her mother’s long slide into dementia, knowing there is no cure or even a treatment for it. “An incredibly poignant depiction of what it means to have a parent with Alzheimer’s” is how one reviewer described the play, which is both funny and sad – as well as timely.

At one point, to deal with the stress, Vivienne imagines a metaphorical Alzheimer’s “creation myth” about memory loss and how it could happen. In this fanciful version an egret offers to store memories safely, in a box buried in the ground, for all her forest friends – and a mole accidentally destroys the collection.

Blackberry Winter is a National New Play Network Rolling World Premiere. (NNPN is an alliance of non-profit theaters dedicated to the development, production, and continued life of new plays.) It is receiving a record seven productions this season from NNPN member and associate theater companies. Forum Theatre’s is the last of these separate productions.

Playwright Steve Yockey is a Los Angeles based writer. He currently contributes issues to the Zenescope comic book series *Grimm Tales of Terror* and writes on HBO’s *The Brink*. His plays *Afterlife*, *Octopus*, *Large Animal Games*, *CARTOON*, *Subculture*, *Very Still & Hard to See*, *The Fisherman’s Wife*, *Wolves*, *Disassembly*, and *Niagara Falls & Other Plays* are published and available from Samuel French. He was selected for the first US/Australia playwright exchange in February 2013 for his play *Pluto*, sponsored by NNPN and Playwriting Australia. *Pluto* – a play about school shootings – was a sensation during

Forum’s 2014 season. Yockey takes an oblique approach to the serious problems he explores. In *Pluto* his play concentrated not on the actual event but rather on how the mother of the shooter tries to cope with the horror, as she makes time itself stop.

Our guest **Michael Dove** is a Footlights favorite. He spoke to us most recently on *When the Rain Stops Falling* which he guest directed for 1st Stage Theater. Other memorable plays Michael discussed with us are *Scorched*, *The Language Archive*, and *Gidion’s Knot* – all Forum Theatre productions. Robin Larkin will moderate the discussion on May 9.

Reserve now. Alfio’s is 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 if you drive, but valet parking is available at Alfio’s. Dinner is at 6:30, the discussion begins at 7:30 and ends at 9. (Note: if you know you must leave before 9, please try to sit near the door so you can exit quietly.)

The all-inclusive cost for dinner and discussion is \$20. 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 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 May 9. 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.

If you are coming to the May 9 discussion, we recommend you read the play in advance. The playwright has graciously given us permission to distribute e-copies of the draft play to those attending our discussion. It is not published. For a copy of *Blackberry Winter* e-mail Robin, robinlarkin@comcast.net. Please respect the copyright and do not share with others.

Forum will present the play May 14 through June 11. The cast is led by the always amazing Holly Twyford as Vivienne. See forum-theatre.org for more information. We expect to organize a group trip to see *Blackberry Winter*.

June 8: Dinner-discussion of An Octoroon by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins

Woolly Mammoth's upcoming show – *An Octoroon* – is a melodrama infused riff with a plantation on the brink of foreclosure, a gentleman falling for the part-black daughter of the estate's owner, and an evil swindler plotting to buy her for himself. Meanwhile, the slaves are trying to hold down the plantation and keep things moving along "because everybody else is acting crazy." Written by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, the show is an Obie-winning period satire-described as "a provocative challenge to America's lasting legacy of slavery and the

racial pigeonholing of 1859-and today."

Footlights will be discussing *An Octoroon* on Wednesday, June 8, at Alfio's. Debbie Jackson will moderate our discussion.

We will see *An Octoroon* at Woolly Mammoth on Saturday, June 11 at 3 p.m., with a talk-back discussion following. Tickets for Footlights for this performance only are \$30. You may get your tickets at this rate by using the code **6659**.

About Footlights

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

Calendar:

- **Monday, May 9**, 6:30 p.m. dinner-discussion of **Steve Yockey's *Blackberry Winter*** with guest Forum Theatre director **Michael Dove**. At Alfio's, 4515 Willard Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD. Reserve with Phyllis Bodin, phylbo@verizon.net or 301-986-1768.
- **Wednesday, June 8**, 6:30 p.m. dinner-discussion of **Branden Jacobs-Jenkins' *An Octoroon***. At Alfio's, 4515 Willard Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD. Reserve with Phyllis Bodin, phylbo@verizon.net or 301-986-1768.
- **Saturday, June 11**, 3 p.m. performance of ***An Octoroon*** with talk-back at Woolly Mammoth Theatre, 641 D St NW, Washington, DC. Tickets are \$30. Use code 6659. On-line or phone 202-393-3939.

Robin Larkin for **FOOTLIGHTS**
5800 Nicholson Lane, Apt. L-07
Rockville, MD 20852