

from the FOOTLIGHTS

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

VOLUME 10 ISSUE 1

SEPTEMBER 2004

M. Butterfly September's Play

M. Butterfly, a Broadway hit of 1998, won the Tony Award for best play and established **David Henry Hwang** as a major modern American playwright. A critic writing in *Time* argued that "the final scene of *M. Butterfly*, when the agony of one soul finally takes precedence over broad-ranging commentary, is among the most forceful in the history of the American theater." *M. Butterfly* is one of the most celebrated of recent American plays, and the first by an Asian-American to win universal acclaim.

The play is based on a true story of a French diplomat who carried on a twenty-year affair with a Chinese actor and opera singer, not realizing that his partner was in fact a man masquerading as a woman. This strange story stimulated Hwang's imagination. Weaving into the play many parallels with, and ultimately ironic reversals of, Puccini's opera, *Madame Butterfly*, Hwang explores the stereotypes that underlie and distort relations between Eastern and Western culture, and between men and women. Arena Stage, where *M. Butterfly* will play from September 3 through October 17, says *M. Butterfly* is a revelation, a work of art that challenges the thresholds of human compassion and intimacy.

Footlights will meet to discuss *M. Butterfly* on **Monday, September 20 at 6:30 p.m.** at **La Madeleine French Bakery & Café**, 7607 Old Georgetown Rd. in Bethesda (Old Georgetown Rd. & Commerce Ln.; TEL: 301-215-9142). La Madeleine is one block from the Bethesda Metro. If you drive, there is a small parking lot in front of the restaurant. If that is full, there is a large garage across Old Georgetown Rd. which you enter on Edgemoor Ln. or Woodmont Ave. La Madeleine will stamp your parking ticket. Go through the cafeteria line at La Madeleine and bring your food to the fireplace room at the back of the restaurant. Our meeting begins at 7:30 and goes no later than 9:30.

To help us better understand *M. Butterfly*, Footlights members Sybil Keats and Phyllis Bodin have arranged for

our return guest speaker, **Michelle T. Hall**, Arena's production dramaturg for *M. Butterfly*. Ms. Hall is a Washington, DC-based director, writer, dramaturg and actor. She is currently the Literary Manager and production dramaturg for Arena Stage. Michelle was nominated for two Helen Hayes Awards for co-adapting *The Desk Set* by William Marchant which was produced by The Studio Theater. Standout projects include dramaturgy for last season's *Proof* at Arena, directed by Wendy Goldberg, our guest at our dinner-discussion last October. Footlight members may remember Ms. Hall as our guest speaker for the discussion of *The Last Night of Ballyhoo*.

To make reservations for the September 20 dinner-discussion meeting, call or e-mail Mark Gruenberg, 202-898-4825 or gruenberg@footlightsdc.org. If you must cancel for any reason, be sure to notify Mark so that someone else can attend.

Look for *M. Butterfly* in our bookstores—Backstage Books (202-544-5744) 545 8th St, SE, Washington, D.C.; Olsson's two stores: Dupont Circle, 1307 19th St., NW (202-785-1133) & Bethesda 7647 Old Georgetown Rd. (301-652-3336); or Politics & Prose, 5015 Connecticut Ave., NW (202-364-1919). Ask for the Footlights discount at Olsson's and Politics & Prose. Call these stores first to make sure they have copies available. Olsson's would be glad to send a copy to another of their branches if it is more convenient. Just give them a call with your name and be sure to pick it up. Discounts are only available as long as the bookstores buy and sell a large order of our plays. So, whenever possible, please patronize our bookstores.

We'll see *M. Butterfly* at the **Tuesday 7:30 p.m.** performance on **September 28** at the Fichandler, Arena Stage, 1101 Sixth Street, SW. Tickets are \$36 and include a post-show discussion. Send your check to Robin Larkin, 5403 Nibud Ct, Rockville, MD 20852. **Payment deadline is Friday, September 10.** Group tickets may not be available after that date. No refunds after September 10.

About Footlights

To get Footlights updates on-line, send any message — even blank — to join@footlightsdc.org. Subscribers can post to our on-line list by sending brief messages to list@footlightsdc.org. Visit our website at www.footlightsdc.org. Address all inquiries to Mark Gruenberg, 202-898-4825 or gruenberg@footlightsdc.org.

Please support Footlights, a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organization. Send your tax-deductible contributions to Footlights, c/o Robin Larkin, 5403 Nibud

Ct., Rockville, MD 20852.

To volunteer, contact Mark. We need people willing to help find speakers, lead/moderate discussions, publicize Footlights to potential members, find meeting locations, help with site coordination, write and distribute newsletters, assist with tickets at theaters, attend to a few legal matters and anything else you can think of offering. Just ask Mark.

Robin Larkin *for* FOOTLIGHTS
5403 Nibud Court
Rockville, MD 20852

 **U·S AIRWAYS**

OFFICIAL FOOTLIGHTS AIRLINE

Calendar

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