

from the FOOTLIGHTS

JUNE 2007

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

<http://www.footlightsdc.org>

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead

As the curtain rises (if there is one), two bewildered men are playing a game of chance. They have been summoned to a place they do not know for purposes they do not know. They soon realize, however, that they have become involved in something big and important, but they don't know what. And then they die.

Any resemblance to life? We know where we came from, but only technically. Most of us move on to places and people that we hardly knew, if at all. We chance this, chance that, make this choice, that choice. Probably the more important the decision, the less predictable the outcome. And then we die.

Nevertheless, we laugh at times, heartily if we're smart. **Tom Stoppard** created an international reputation as a writer of "serious comedy" beginning with *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* 40 years ago. It was his first full-length play, an immediate success, he was 29 years old and some consider it his masterpiece. It and his work for the stage, film and radio since then is full of weighty ideas, wit, humor, puns, jokes and innuendo.

We are very fortunate in having **John Andrews**, former director of academic programs at the Folger Shakespeare Library, an editor of the 19-volume set of Shakespeare's complete works for the Literary Guild, an editor of 16 of Shakespeare's plays for Everyman paperback editions and now executive director of the Washington branch of the English Speaking Union, as one of our speakers. He loves the work of Stoppard, just as Stoppard loves the work of Shakespeare. You may have seen Mr. Andrews on stage or at dinners of his Shakespeare Guild interviewing playwrights, actors and scholars the past several years.

Then, we will have the director of the production that we will see at Studio Theatre, **Kirk Jackson**, join us for the dinner-discussion. The latest mark in his distinguished career is the Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Resident Production for *Take Me Out* at The Studio Theatre. He last spoke to us in October 2001 about his production of *Six Characters in Search of an Author*.

He has told us to expect some of Beckett, Magritte and the surrealists in Stoppard's "farce of ideas." Why not? Why shouldn't we be as bewildered as those in the play?

Our dinner-discussion of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* takes place **Monday, June 4** at **Alfio's**, in the

Willoughby Apartments, 4515 Willard Ave., Chevy Chase, MD (301-657-9133), two blocks from the Friendship Heights Metro. \$12 includes dinner and tip—cash or check payable to Footlights. A \$5 donation to Footlights is suggested. Dinner is at 6:30; the discussion begins at 7:30. We will have extra chairs if you want to come for the discussion only. Valet or street parking is available.

For dinner discussion reservations, call Mark Gruenberg, 202-898-4825, or e-mail press_associates@yahoo.com. If you must cancel, call Mark by noon on June 4, so we have an accurate count of dinner reservations.

Footlights will see *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* at Studio Theatre, 1501 14th Street, NW (14th and P) on **Saturday, June 9 at 2 p.m.** Tickets are \$33 and include a post-show discussion. Make check payable to Footlights. Send to Robin Larkin, 5403 Nibud Ct, Rockville, MD 20852.

Copies of *R & G* should be available from your library or can be purchased or ordered from Backstage Books, 202-544-5744 or backstagebooks@aol.com, 545 8th St. SE, Washington D.C. (Eastern Market Blue Line metro stop). If you pick up the script at the store, identify yourself as a Footlights member for 10% discount. Call first to make sure books are in stock.

Democracy

Our final play for discussion this season is Michael Frayn's *Democracy*. This will be the third Frayn play we've explored – the others being *Copenhagen* and *Noises Off*. Basing his play in factual, but mysterious events much as Frayn did in *Copenhagen*, *Democracy* re-imagines the interactions between Willy Brandt, the first left-of-centre West German Chancellor, and his devoted personal assistant Günter Guillaume, who is no less devoted to his other role as a spy.

We are always thrilled to welcome back **Jim Petosa**, director of *Democracy*, artistic director of Olney Theatre Center, and our most frequent guest speaker at Footlights. Mark Gruenberg will moderate our discussion.

Stay tuned for details on the date and location of our July discussion, and the date we will see *Democracy* at Olney Theatre Center, where it will play from July 18 - August 12.

Support Footlights

To join our e-mail discussion list, send any message to footlightsdc-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. Or browse to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/footlightsdc/join>.

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.

Next Season at Footlights

What would you like to see and discuss next season? Would you like to lead a discussion of a favorite play? Find speakers? Arrange theater trips? Find restaurants suitable for our dinner-discussions? Edit or produce our newsletter?

Bring your ideas to any of our Footlights Board members—Mark Gruenberg, *President*, John Glynn, *Secretary*, Robin Larkin, *Treasurer*, Charlotte Baer, Phyllis Bodin, Rosalind Lacy MacLennan, Beatrice Rouse and Jerry Stilkind.

Calendar

- Monday, June 4, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead* at Alfio's, 4515 Willard Ave., Chevy Chase, MD.
- Saturday, June 9, 2 p.m., performance of *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead* at Studio Theatre, 1501 14th St, NW, DC. Tickets are \$33.
- July, dinner-discussion and performance of *Democracy*, details TBA.

Dinner-discussion reservations: Reserve with Mark Gruenberg, 202-898-4825 or press_associates@yahoo.com.

Theater tickets: Robin Larkin, 240-669-6300 or robinlarkin@comcast.net. Make check payable to **Footlights**. Send to Robin Larkin, 5403 Nibud Ct, Rockville, MD 20852.

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