

# from the FOOTLIGHTS

APRIL 2013

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

<http://www.footlightsdc.org>

## Footlights Discussion on April 10: *Ghost-Writer*

Footlights meets **Wednesday, April 10** to discuss *Ghost-Writer* (2010) by **Michael Hollinger**. While exploring a new work by a favorite playwright – Hollinger authored *Opus* which Footlights discussed in June 2011 – the discussion also highlights a strong local theater and an award-winning director. Our guests will be *Ghost-Writer*’s director, **John Vreeke**, and producing artistic director of MetroStage, **Carolyn Griffin**. Charlotte Baer will moderate our discussion.

*Ghost-Writer* keeps audiences guessing. Novelist Franklin Woolsey is dead but he is quite lively on stage – is he a ghost or a flashback? His surviving wife is still quite jealous of Myra, his secretary, – does she have good reason? Glimpses of Franklin and Myra together tantalize the audience; for example, when Myra teaches Franklin to dance, how sexual is the action? And most important, is the ghost doing the writing or is his secretary a ghost writer? As Myra says, “What is a ghost in any case, but a vivid memory visiting when one least expects it?”

This play has historical resonances. Although it is fiction, the resource list focuses on Henry James and his long-time secretary, their writing habits and their use of the typewriter. (Typewriters were once a controversial new technology, after all.) The play has humor: an obsession with grammatical trivia surely causes chuckles, if not guffaws. And the play asks many big questions, such as, how do authors get ideas?

Michael Hollinger’s *Ghost-Writer* presents us with three separate mysteries.

One: What was the relationship between the novelist Franklin Woolsey and his secretary? We wonder how justified is the jealousy of Woolsey’s wife. And when we see Woolsey once touch his typist’s bare forearm, we feel a tingle of sexual excitement. But is it his, or hers, or ours?

Two: How much of Woolsey’s posthumous novel recalls what Woolsey dictated to his assistant, and how much of it is her own original creation? Was Woolsey, when alive, the sole author of his works?

Three: How do ideas and words come to any writer?

Michael Hollinger’s work continues to garner awards. *Ghost-Writer* won a 2011 award for Outstanding New Play (Barrymore Awards for Excellence in Theatre – Independence Foundation Award for Outstanding New

Play). Even more recently, Hollinger has been nominated for two 2012 Helen Hayes awards for his translation and adaptation of *Cyrano de Bergerac*.

Director John Vreeke brings versatility and insight to this challenging drama. Although Vreeke often directs in DC, he is based in Seattle, so Footlights is delighted to have the opportunity to welcome him back. In the last several years he has directed at MetroStage, at Theatre J and at Woolly Mammoth as well as at theaters out west. Just before going to MetroStage, he directed David Mamet’s *Race* at Theatre J – hearing how he made the quick transition should be quite interesting.

**Read *Ghost-Writer*.** *Ghost-Writer* is available to order directly from Dramatists Play Service, Inc. at [www.dramatists.com/cgi-bin/db/single.asp?key=4309](http://www.dramatists.com/cgi-bin/db/single.asp?key=4309) for \$8 plus shipping or from Amazon, Barnes & Noble and other on-line bookstores. Alternatively, you can ask your favorite local bookstore to order a copy for you. We encourage you to read the play prior to the discussion.

We’ll meet for our dinner-discussion of *Ghost-Writer* at **Alfio’s** Trattoria, located on the ground floor of the Willoughby Apartments, 4515 Willard Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD. The restaurant is just two blocks from the Friendship Heights metro stop on the red line. Street parking is limited but valet parking is free at Alfio’s, if you drive. Dinner is at 6:30 and the discussion begins at 7:30 and ends at 9. Cost for dinner is just \$13, and that includes tax and tip. You will get a salad, bread, choice among six entrees, ice cream, and tea or coffee. Cash or check – no credit cards, please. Beer, wine, and cocktails are available from the bar. You may come for the discussion only if you wish. We appreciate a \$5 contribution to Footlights.

**Note:** For this meeting only, make reservations with **Mary Ann Wren**, at 301-770-4572 or [wjwren@erols.com](mailto:wjwren@erols.com). If you have to cancel, please let Mary Ann know by noon on April 10, so we have an accurate count for the restaurant. We may have to pay for no-shows.

**See *Ghost-Writer* with Footlights.** *Ghost-Writer* will be performed April 25 - June 2 at MetroStage, 1201 North Royal Street in Alexandria. Footlights will see it on **Sunday, May 5** at 3 p.m. Our tickets are \$30 and include a postshow discussion. Send your check, payable to Footlights, to Robin Larkin, 5800 Nicholson Lane, #L-07, Rockville, MD 20852.

## On May 13: *The Real Thing* by Tom Stoppard

Footlights returns to another favorite playwright when we discuss Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing* (1982) on **Monday, May 13** at Alfio's. Over the years, we have visited no less than five Stoppard plays. In this one, as Studio Theatre's website describes, "Henry is a celebrated playwright, his wife is an actress, and his latest play is a Coward-esque take on relationships and adultery. But as the intricate web of off-stage infidelities unfolds, relationships prove much more demanding than a droll retort. A distinguished play about the complexities of commitment, the power of great writing, and the mysterious ways of love, from one of the world's most celebrated playwrights."

Our special guest is **David Muse**, artistic director of Studio Theatre, and director of Studio's upcoming production of *The Real Thing* (performances begin May 22). Moderators are Robin Larkin and Don Bliss.

## Calendar

- **Wednesday, April 10**, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of *Ghost-Writer* by **Michael Hollinger**. Our guests are **John Vreeke**, director, and **Carolyn Griffin**, artistic director of MetroStage. At Alfio's, 4515 Willard Ave, Chevy Chase, MD 20815. Charlotte Baer moderates. Reserve with **Mary Ann Wren**, at 301-770-4572 or [wjwren@erols.com](mailto:wjwren@erols.com).
- **Sunday, May 5**, 3 p.m., performance of *Ghost-Writer* at MetroStage. Tickets are \$30; postshow discussion included. Reserve with Robin Larkin, [robinlarkin@comcast.net](mailto:robinlarkin@comcast.net) or 240-669-6300. Send checks, payable to Footlights, to Robin Larkin, 5800 Nicholson Lane, #L-07, Rockville, MD 20852.
- **Monday, May 13**, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of *The Real Thing* by **Tom Stoppard**. Our guest is **David Muse**, artistic director of Studio Theatre. At Alfio's. Robin Larkin and Don Bliss co-moderate. Reserve with Phyllis Bodin, [Phylbo@verizon.net](mailto:Phylbo@verizon.net) or 301-986-1768.
- **Saturday, June 15**, 2 p.m., performance of *The Real Thing* at Studio Theatre. Tickets are \$35; postshow discussion included. Reserve with and send checks to Robin.
- **Monday, June 17**, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of *The Hampton Years* by **Jacqueline Lawton**. Guests: **Jacqueline Lawton** and **Shirley Serotsky**, director of Theater J's upcoming production. Mary Ann Wren moderates. At Alfio's. Reserve with Phyllis.

Robin Larkin for **FOOTLIGHTS**  
5800 Nicholson Lane, Apt. L07  
Rockville, MD 20852

We'll meet at Alfio's. To reserve, contact Phyllis Bodin, at 301-986-1768 or [phylbo@verizon.net](mailto:phylbo@verizon.net).

**Read *The Real Thing*.** Copies of Stoppard plays are readily available at local libraries and bookstores or order on-line from the usual sources.

**See *The Real Thing* with Footlights.** Performances begin on May 22 at Studio Theatre. We will see it on **Saturday, June 15**, 2 p.m. Tickets are \$35 and include a postshow discussion. Send your check, payable to Footlights, to Robin Larkin, 5800 Nicholson Lane, #L-07, Rockville, MD 20852.

## 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@yahoo.com](mailto:footlightsdc-subscribe@yahoo.com).