

from the FOOTLIGHTS

OCTOBER 2015

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

<http://www.footlightsdc.org>

October 20: Footlights Dinner-Discussion

August Wilson—The Man, the Messages, the Legacy

April 27- 1945- October 2, 2005

It’s been ten years since August Wilson’s death. He left a legacy of ten plays in his “Pittsburgh cycle,” that stand at the pinnacle of American Theater. There is always an August Wilson production happening Somewhere—there were four and counting last year in the Washington, D.C. metro area. His Pulitzer Prize winning *Fences* opens at Everyman in October and is called “one of the most groundbreaking plays of the 20th century.” His work is honored and celebrated in festivals and events worldwide, including an August Wilson Monolog Competition in New York that brings talented young people into his canon of literature, to live on.

What is it about his plays that instills such passion in actors and artists who perform his work? Wilson’s textual phrasing and cadence with words spill across the page like jazzy riffs that over time become embedded in our hearts and souls. His use of African symbolism and spirituality throughout his scripts is legendary and touch us to the core.

Join our guests as we explore what makes him and his passages so endearing and powerful. Many of us have seen **KenYatta Rogers** take on Wilson’s work with ferocious intensity, most recently in *King Hedley II* at Arena Stage earlier this year. Rogers was recently named the Maryland Professor of the Year by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE). **Michelle Rogers**, yes a husband and wife theatrical dynamic duo, has also performed in Wilson’s productions and will offer her views on his approach to his female characters.

It’s been ten years since the historic and groundbreaking two-day symposium “Situating August Wilson” was held at Howard, organized and coordinated by **Dr. Sandra G. Shannon**, just six months before his death. She knew and talked with Wilson and will provide her insights on his life work and mission. Dr. Shannon was also a consultant on the 2015 PBS American Masters documentary, *The Ground On Which I Stand*, described as the “first in-depth documentary on the life, work and cultural impact of the great playwright and visionary.”

Sandra is a Full Professor of African American Literature, specializing in Dramatic Literature and Criticism at Howard, is President of the Black Theater Network, and has a warm place in her heart for Footlight discussions.

Join us for this reflective, retrospective journey to explore the themes, social issues, and societal commentary in Wilson’s work. No one does it like August Wilson, and we look forward to seeing how and why. **Debbie Jackson** is facilitating and is dedicating the session to the memory of **Beatrice Rouse** who organized the Wilson Legacy discussion in 2006.

Reserve now for Footlight's dinner-discussion on **Tuesday, October 20** at Alfio's, 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 free 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 entrees, 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 October 20. 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.

Stage Kiss Dinner-Discussion November 17

Footlights has discussed two of Sarah Ruhl’s plays: *Eurydice* and *In the Next Room, the Vibrator Play*, and many of us have seen some of her other plays, such as *Dead Man’s Cell Phone*, *The Clean House*, and *Passion Play* - so we can expect that *Stage Kiss* will be just as quirky and as entertaining as all the others have been.

This is a play-within-a-play, about an aging 1930s melodrama which is being revived, two stars who have a history, brought together again in a play about two people with a history. We are fortunate indeed to have the amazing **Dawn Ursula** as our guest speaker. Dawn is cast as She in the upcoming Round House Theatre production of *Stage Kiss*, directed by Aaron Posner.

Mary Ann Wren will moderate.

Stage Kiss is available from Amazon and Samuel French.

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 – Discussions:

- **Tuesday, October 20**, 6:30 p.m. dinner-discussion of **August Wilson—The Man, the Messages, the Legacy** with **KenYatta Rogers, Michelle Rogers** and **Dr. Sandra Shannon**, moderated by **Debbie Jackson**. At Alfio's, 4515 Willard Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD. Dinner including discussion is \$20; discussion only is \$5. Reserve with Phyllis Bodin, phylbo@verizon.net or 301-986-1768.
- **Tuesday, November 17**, 6:30 p.m. dinner-discussion of **Sarah Ruhl's Stage Kiss** with guest **Dawn Ursula**. **Mary Ann Wren** moderates. At Alfio's. Reserve with Phyllis.

Calendar – Performances:

- **Saturday, October 10**, 1:45 p.m. performance of **Jennifer Hoppe-House's Bad Dog** at Olney Theater 2001 Olney-Sandy Spring Road, Olney, MD.

Robin Larkin for **FOOTLIGHTS**
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