

from the FOOTLIGHTS

OCTOBER 2006

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

<http://www.footlightsdc.org>

Special Event! October 11

WOYZECK: The Business Side Of Theater

Note change of location: Casa Fiesta
4910 Wisconsin Ave. NW, DC

Throughout our decade at Footlights, we've discussed the artistic and philosophical side of theater: the plays, their themes, the acting, the concepts and the intellectual points that each playwright wants to get across. Our **Wednesday, October 11** session at **Casa Fiesta** will be different. That's because, for the first time, we'll discuss the business side of theater, more than the artistic side. The play, *Woyzeck*, was produced at the small 70-seat Gate Theatre situated above a pub in London's Notting Hill neighborhood. Now the Gate's *Woyzeck* is making the jump to the Big Apple. It is coming in mid-November to St. Anne's Warehouse Theatre, a 300-seat house on the Brooklyn waterfront at the foot of the Manhattan Bridge.

The Gate's production of *Woyzeck* is the latest reincarnation of a seminal 19th-century edgy play about the military, and about social class, that raises many questions. Because author Georg Buchner left it in fragments, directors get an unusual opportunity to manipulate the production. (By the way, an expert we know calls Buchner "the precursor of modern theater" in that he had all the concepts and ideas of Ibsen, Wilde and Shaw, but a half-century before...they just didn't "take" in the 1830s and 40s).

In New York, Daniel Kramer, who won an outstanding young director's award in Britain, will direct *Woyzeck*. Differing interpretations of *Woyzeck* have appeared: in this production, in another in Great Britain, in the opera and in a Werner Herzog film.

But how do you get from there to here, artistically and—more interestingly—financially? Answering those questions will be our guest, co-producer **Kay Ellen Consolver**. Founder of KLN Productions Ltd. She is known to Washington theater-goers as a member of the Studio Theater board and a backer of Studio's production of *Guantanamo*. Her firm is also heavily involved in productions both in the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

To attend this October 11 discussion of theater behind the scenes, make your reservations with Mark Gruenberg at press_associates@yahoo.com or 202-898-4825. Dinner starts at 6:30 pm and discussion begins at 7:30. You may come for the discussion alone; we will have extra chairs. (Note: If later you need to cancel, be sure to let Mark know.)

November Play for Discussion: *Equus*

"One weekend over two years ago, I was driving with a friend through bleak countryside" in England – so **Peter Shaffer** writes in a note on his play *Equus* published in 1973. Fitting the setting, the friend mentions a barely remembered horror story. Six horses penned in their stalls blinded with a spike by a 17-year-old boy.

That actually happened. But Shaffer did not want to know anything more about the crime. "I had to create a mental world in which the deed could be made comprehensible...I am grateful now that I have never received confirmed details of the real story, since my concern has been more and more with a different kind of exploration," he went on in the note on the play.

Shaffer is one of the rare breed of playwrights who has won critical as well as popular approval. Few other contemporary playwrights have won so many awards for so many different plays. *Equus*, the play we will discuss with its director at the revival by the Washington Shakespeare Company, won the Tony Award for Best Play in 1975. But, before that came *Five Finger Exercise*, *The Private Ear and the Public Eye*, *The Royal Hunt of the Sun*. After *Equus* came the unforgettable *Amadeus*, which won the Tony and other theater awards in the U.S. and Britain (where Shaffer was born and raised) and then Academy Awards when it was made into a film.

"Rehearsing a play is making the word flesh. Publishing a play is reversing the process," Shaffer writes in another note on the text. We must differ with him because the notes, settings and stage directions combined with the text ignite the imagination of a reader. The mystery of why is slowly teased out by the detective-psychiatrist. Should we agree with him in all his uncertainties would be a fair intellectual question after reading the play. Will the staged play when we see it conjure up the sounds, light and dark, feelings, mood that Shaffer wanted with his words to have us feel?

On **Thursday, November 2**, at **Casa Fiesta**, 4910 Wisconsin Ave. NW, DC (202-244-8888), we will discuss *Equus*. Our speakers will be Footlights' Advisory Board members **Lee Mikeska Gardner**, who will be directing *Equus* for Washington Shakespeare Theatre and **Christopher Henley**, Artistic Director of WSC. Make your reservations with Mark Gruenberg at press_associates@yahoo.com or 202-898-4825. Dinner starts at 6:30 pm and discussion begins at 7:30, at Casa Fiesta.

We will see *Equus* on **Sunday, November 5, 2 p.m.** at the Clark St. Playhouse, 601 S. Clark St., Crystal City (Arlington), VA (703-418-4808). Tickets are \$15.

Send your check, payable to “Footlights” to Robin Larkin, 5403 Nibud Ct, Rockville, MD 20852. Contact Robin at robinlarkin@comcast.net or 301-897-9314.

Reading Plays

Footlights is a drama discussion group. Like book clubs, we are a play-of-the-month group. Your enjoyment of the discussion is greatly enhanced by reading the plays in advance. We won't give you a pop quiz or toss you out if you have not read the play — sometimes it's difficult to find time or even find the play — but we do want to encourage you to make the effort to read it first.

Equus may be found at Backstage Books (202-544-5744), 545 8th St. SE, Washington, DC (Eastern Market metro stop). Check to make sure that they have copies in, before you go. Local libraries should have copies of *Equus* also.

Calendar

- Wednesday, October 11, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of **Woyzeck: The Business Side of Theatre** at Casa Fiesta, 4910 Wisconsin Ave. NW, Washington, DC (202-244-8888). Dinner: \$14, includes tax and tip. Suggested contribution to Footlights: \$5.
- Thursday, November 2, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of *Equus* at Casa Fiesta, 4910 Wisconsin Ave. NW, Washington, DC (202-244-8888).
- Sunday, November 5, 2 p.m., performance of *Equus* at Washington Shakespeare Company, Clark St. Playhouse, 601 S. Clark St., Crystal City (Arlington), VA (703-418-4808). Tickets: \$15.

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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 for updates. Address inquiries to Mark Gruenberg at 202-898-4825 or press_associates@yahoo.com.

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.

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