

from the FOOTLIGHTS

SEPTEMBER 2007

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

Caligula

Ingmar Bergman's debut as a stage director was Camus' *Caligula* in 1946. "The production was a resounding success, not least thanks to its star, Anders Ek" who played the emperor as "a clown and an acrobat whose hysterical, hiccupping laugh completely dominated the stage," said a review of the production at the Goteborg (Sweden) City Theater. "Ingmar Bergman's directing was nothing less than a renaissance of the art of theatre in these northerly climes," according to the reviewer.

Reviews of *Caligula* have been mixed and reviewers have been more than a little puzzled. Kenneth Tynan wrote when the play was first done (under Sidney Lumet's direction) in New York in 1960: "*Caligula* is not 'a good bad play' or 'a bad good play' but, that rarer thing, 'a bad great play.'" Camus' preface to the play promises a "tragedy of the intelligence" and that it is, he said.

But Frank Rich added in his review for the New York Times of a revival in 1986, "The script itself, however, is richer in ideas than people or drama." The play had a big cast rushing about in a modern business setting and Rich disliked it.

A reviewer at a revival of the play in Britain in 2003 called it "a marvelous evening's entertainment." After all, "Caligula proclaims random death and execution as normal practices, using the rationale that this is the way that an egalitarian Emperor should act since it means that the rich and the poor are treated equally (cruelly)."

The play was done just a few months ago in Los Angeles. Several critics called it stiff, lifeless. Apparently, there was a film of the play with much nudity to which a writer for the LA Weekly refers when writing that in the "dry staging, (there's not even a bare breast to be seen), *Caligula* comes across as a brilliant Enron exec: greedy to own the moon and masterful with cruel logic."

We will start Footlights' 13th season on **Monday, September 17** with a dinner-discussion of *Caligula* by Albert Camus. Our guest will be **Christopher Henley**, artistic director of the Washington Shakespeare Company (WSC). Footlights member Jerry Stilkind will moderate our discussion.

We meet at **Casa Fiesta**, 4910 Wisconsin Ave, NW (202-244-8888), one block south of Fessenden St. on Wisconsin Ave. and two and a half blocks south of the Jenifer St. exit from the Friendship Heights Metro stop. Street parking is available. Come for the buffet dinner at 6:30 p.m. The discussion begins at 7:30 and ends no later than 9:30 p.m. Buffet is \$14, including tax and tip, cash or check payable to Footlights. A \$5 donation to Footlights is suggested.

Contact Mark Gruenberg to reserve, 202-898-4825 or press_associates@yahoo.com. If you later find you must cancel, please let Mark know by noon on September 17, so we have an accurate count of dinner reservations.

Caligula at Clark Street Playhouse

Footlights will see *Caligula* at WSC (Clark Street Playhouse), 601 S. Clark St., Crystal City (Arlington), VA (703-418-4808) on **Sunday, October 21 at 2 p.m.** Tickets are \$15. The deadline for payment is October 15. Make your check payable to Footlights. Send to Robin Larkin at her **new address**: 5800 Nicholson Lane, Apt. L07, Rockville, MD 20852. Call or e-mail Robin to say your check is on the way at 240-669-6300 or robinlarkin@comcast.net.

Reading Caligula

Caligula by Albert Camus can be obtained at Backstage Books (202-544-5744), 545 8th St. SE, Washington, DC (Eastern Market blue line metro stop). Before going to pick up a copy of the play, call first to make sure copies of the play are still in stock. Copies of *Caligula* may be available also from your library.

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 at her **new address**: 5800 Nicholson Lane, Apt. L07, Rockville, MD 20852.

Next Month at Footlights

On Wednesday, October 24th, at Affio's, Footlights is meeting with director Jack Sbarbori and the cast of the upcoming Quotidian Theatre production of Horton Foote's play *The Carpetbagger's Children*. The play tells of the declining fortunes of a family that built its fortune in Texas in the wake of the Civil War. The play was awarded the American Theatre Critics 2002 Best Play Award. Jack Sbarbori and the actors of Quotidian Theatre have extensive experience in the production of plays by Horton Foote and a great deal of knowledge of and enthusiasm for his work.

Copies of the play will be at Backstage Books and also Beatrice will bring copies to the September meeting for those interested.

The Carpetbagger's Children Performance

Footlights will see the Quotidian Theatre Company performance of Horton Foote's *The Carpetbagger's Children* at 4508 Walsh St., Bethesda, MD on Sunday, October 28, 2 p.m. Tickets are \$10; includes postshow discussion.

Helping Footlights

Opportunities to help include greeting and checking in attendees at Footlights discussion meetings, moderating a meeting, and helping determine potential speakers and future plays to discuss. If interested, contact Footlights President, Mark Gruenberg.

Calendar

- Monday, September 17, 6:30 p.m. dinner-discussion of *Caligula* at Casa Fiesta, 4910 Wisconsin Ave., NW, DC.
- Sunday, October 21, 2 p.m., performance of *Caligula* at Washington Shakespeare Company (Clark St Playhouse), 601 S. Clark St, Crystal City, VA. Tickets are \$15; includes postshow discussion.
- Wednesday, October 24, 6:30 p.m. dinner-discussion of *The Carpetbagger's Children* at Alfio's, in the Willoughby Apartments, 4515 Willard Ave., Chevy Chase, MD.
- Sunday, October 28, 2 p.m., performance of *The Carpetbagger's Children* by the Quotidian Theatre Company performing at 4508 Walsh St., Bethesda, MD. Tickets are \$10; includes postshow discussion.

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 at her **new address**: 5800 Nicholson Lane, Apt. L07, Rockville, MD 20852.