

from the FOOTLIGHTS

SEPTEMBER 2009

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

<http://www.footlightsdc.org>

September 15: *Moonlight* by Harold Pinter

"In *Moonlight*, Harold Pinter is considering love and death in his own very oblique way, in language that resonates with familiar Pinter syntax," according to Vincent Canby. "... Jargon is often used with such force that it becomes the language of poetry."

Even the plot summary is so very Pinteresque: a father lies on his death bed talking with his wife while in another area, his sons speak enigmatically about their estrangement, rationalizing their love-hate relationship with their dad. Thinking back to *The Homecoming*, we wonder, will family members ever connect or even speak directly to each other? Will we still laugh out loud, even as we despair?

Many critics have given us their take on Pinter. For example, Margo Jefferson (1995): "As a playwright, Harold Pinter runs the gamut from brilliant to accomplished. He inherited Beckett's prose of despair – minimalist and starkly cadenced – took it into the living rooms and bedrooms of England, and used it to make dramas of family treachery, class menace and psychological terrorism."

But only through our own dialogue do we sharpen our perspectives. Please join us for stimulating conversation and insights. Footlights members will delve into Pinter's comedy, melancholy and of course, those famous pauses at our September meeting. On **Tuesday, September 15**, we will discuss *Moonlight*, Pinter's 1993 play. We will be joined by **Sarah Wallace**, associate literary manager/dramaturg at Studio Theatre, where *Moonlight* will open on September 9. Ted van Griethuysen will play the dying father; Joy Zinoman directs. Charlotte Baer will moderate our discussion.

We meet at **Alfio's**. Dinner is at 6:30 p.m. Alfio's is located on the ground floor of the Willoughby Apartments, 4515 Willard Ave., Chevy Chase, MD, 20815 (phone: 301-657-9133) – two blocks from the Friendship Heights Metro. Street parking is limited but valet parking is free at Alfio's. To reserve for dinner, contact Robin Larkin at 240-669-6300 or robinlarkin@comcast.net. The cost for dinner is only \$12 for a choice among 5 entrees, plus salad, bread, beverage and ice cream, and includes tax and tip. We suggest an additional \$5 contribution to Footlights.

The program begins at 7:30 p.m. and ends at 9-9:30 p.m.

You may come for the discussion only, if you wish. If you have to cancel, please let Robin know as soon as possible, and definitely by noon on September 15, so we have an accurate count for Alfio's.

Please note that Robin is taking reservations for September's meeting in place of Mark who will be out of town at that time.

We encourage you to read our plays before we meet. Chances are you will enjoy and be able to contribute to the discussion more if you do; however, all are welcome. *Moonlight* is available at Backstage Books, 545 8th Street, SE, Washington, DC 20003, (202-544-5744 or backstagebooks@aol.com).

October 3: See *Moonlight* at Studio Theatre

Footlights will see *Moonlight* on **Saturday, October 3** at 2 p.m. at Studio Theatre, 1501 14th St, NW, Washington, DC 20005. Tickets are \$48. A post show discussion is included. Please send your check to Robin Larkin, 5800 Nicholson Lane, #L07, Rockville, MD 20852. We'll meet at the theater prior to the performance where tickets will be distributed.

October 19: *Full Circle* by Charles L. Mee

So Whose Baby Is It Really? It all started with King Solomon who in his wisdom announced he would simply cut the baby in two and give each woman half, thus ending the dispute. The real mother immediately gives up her claim in order to save the child's life, and goes home with the baby.

Many cultures both ancient and modern have stories of magic, protective circles, made of chalk (*The Dybbuk*), salt, cornmeal, even eggshells. The idea of a chalk circle with the baby in the center, and the two women each told to pull an arm until the baby is out of the circle – the stronger woman to be declared the winner but the real mother opting out rather than injure the child – first appears in a 14th Century Chinese tale. It was translated into French in 1832, then German, next appearing in English: a 1929 play in London's West End, starring Anna May Wong and Lawrence Olivier in his first major stage appearance. Bertholt Brecht rewrote it as the famous *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, set in the Soviet Union (Georgia) in 1944, with

once again a child claimed and fought over by two women. Now comes Charles L. Mee with a new version of this custody battle: *Full Circle*, set in 1989, with the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Charles Mee has written 34 plays, using as source material Greek tragedy, Shakespeare, Chekhov, modern art, novels, movies, and even TV soap operas. Many of us saw his quirky *Big Love* at Woolly Mammoth in 2002 and *Wintertime* which Round House presented back in 2004.

Mee feels “there is no such thing as an original play” and says the Greeks borrowed liberally from myths and legends and other writers, as did Shakespeare. And because Mee borrows, and rewrites, and updates, from others, he offers us all his plays to read for free online. *Full Circle* is found at <http://www.charlesmee.org/html/fullcircle.html>. It has not been published. We will print some copies from the online version for you which will be available at cost at the

September 15 meeting.

Footlights will meet for our dinner-discussion of *Full Circle* on **Monday, October 19**, at Alfio’s. Our guest speaker will be **Miriam Weisfeld**, dramaturg for Woolly Mammoth Theater Company. Mary Ann Wren will moderate our discussion. Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company will present *Full Circle* starting October 26.

November 8: See *Full Circle* at Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company

We’ll see *Full Circle* on Sunday, November 8, at 2 p.m. at Woolly Mammoth Theatre, 641 D Street, NW (7th & D), Washington, DC 20004, a short walk (1-2 blocks) from either the Archives or Gallery Place Metro stations. Tickets are \$40 and include a postshow discussion. Send your check to Robin Larkin, 5800 Nicholson Lane, #L07, Rockville, MD 20852.

Calendar

- Tuesday, September 15, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of *Moonlight* by Harold Pinter. At Alfio’s, 4515 Willard Ave., Chevy Chase, MD, 20815. Sarah Wallace is our guest speaker. Reserve with Robin, robinlarkin@comcast.net or 240-669-6300.
- Saturday, October 3, 2 p.m., performance of *Moonlight* at the Studio Theatre, 1501 14th St., NW, DC (at P St.). Tickets are \$48. Send your check, payable to Footlights, to Robin Larkin, 5800 Nicholson Lane, #L07, Rockville, MD 20852. Please indicate for which play or plays you want tickets.
- Monday, October 19, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of *Full Circle* by Charles Mee. At Alfio’s.
- Sunday, November 8, 2:00 p.m., performance of *Full Circle* at Woolly Mammoth, 641 D Street, NW (7th & D), Washington, DC 20004. Tickets are \$40. Send your check to Robin.

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