

from the FOOTLIGHTS

JANUARY 2012

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

<http://www.footlightsdc.org>

Jules Feiffer's *Little Murders* at Footlights January 5

When Jules Feiffer's *Little Murders* debuted in 1967, it depicted American urban rioting as a dark family comedy. Electrical blackouts keep happening, sirens drown out conversation and shooting is right outside the living room windows.

But now in the dawn of 2012 we are living in safe cities, free from violence and menace. Or are we? The American Century Theatre (TACT) thinks the revival of this play, which grew out of a particular set of 1960s circumstances, is anything but dated and may be more timely than ever.

Directed by **Ellen Dempsey**, the play makes us assess how far we have or haven't come in the 40 plus years since it was first produced. And it makes us laugh.

As the *New York Times*' Frank Rich said when the play was revived in 1987, "Mr. Feiffer tried to uncover the enduring connections between the warfare conducted in the American living room or bedroom and the bloodshed practiced by American society, whether at home or abroad."

He also describes how our experiences are anesthetized by constant media coverage. If that was true in 1987 what do we think today? Can we as audiences or citizens feel anything at all?

Feiffer himself took a slightly different view: "*Little Murders* was conceived as an essay on what I perceived to be going on in America in the mid-1960s...inspired, if you will, by the assassination of JFK and the shooting of Oswald a week later. I realized this country was in the process of having an unstated and unacknowledged nervous breakdown."

Director Ellen Dempsey and others from TACT will join us on **Thursday, January 5**, at **Alfio's** for dinner and discussion of *Little Murders*. Dinner is at 6:30 p.m. The discussion begins at 7:30. Phyllis Bodin will take reservations at 301-986-1768, or phylbo@verizon.net.

Alfio's Trattoria is located on the ground floor of the Willoughby Apartments, 4515 Willard Avenue, in Chevy Chase, MD. The restaurant is two blocks from the red line Friendship Heights Metro station. Street parking is limited but valet parking is free. The cost for dinner is only \$13 for salad, bread, choice among six entrees, ice cream, and coffee or tea. The price includes tax and tip. We appreciate a \$5 contribution to

Footlights. Cash or check; no credit cards. Wine, beer, and cocktails are available from the bar.

If you have to cancel your dinner reservation please let Phyllis know promptly but no later than **noon on January 5**. We may need to charge you for your meal if you fail to cancel your reservation. You may come for the discussion only if you wish.

The play runs January 13 - February 11 at the Gunston Arts Center, Theater II, 2700 South Lang Street, Arlington, Virginia. We are arranging a date to see *Little Murders* as a group.

Copies of *Little Murders* may be found in local libraries, ordered from your favorite bookstore or online at Amazon, Barnes & Noble, or Samuel French (\$8.95).

Little Murders was also a 1971 movie, screenplay by Feiffer, directed by Alan Arkin and starring Elliott Gould as Albert.

The Language Archive by Julia Cho

Join us at Alfio's on **Monday, February 20** when we will discuss **Julia Cho's** *The Language Archive* with Forum Theatre co-founder and artistic director **Michael Dove** and **Jessica Burgess** who will direct Ms. Cho's play, winner of the 2010 Susan Blackburn Prize. (Established in 1978, the prize is given annually to recognize women who have written works of outstanding quality for the English-speaking theatre.)

In *The Language Archive*, linguist George speaks a dozen languages and is passionate about his work of making a record of the dying tongues while it is still possible, but he is simply unable to communicate with his own wife Mary. An older couple, the only two humans alive who still speak 'Ellowan' – an imaginary sort-of Eastern European dialect which the Archive is trying to record – are barely on speaking terms in any language.

The Language Archive exists. In fact, there are several of them, the largest of which is in Berlin, Germany. All are dedicated to recording and preserving world languages which they fear are dying out. It is believed that if fewer than 100,000 people today speak a language, it will be gone forever by the end of this century.

Make reservations for our February 20 dinner-discussion with Phyllis Bodin at 301-986-1768, or phylbo@verizon.net. At Alfio's.

The Language Archive will play at Forum Theatre, resident company at Round House Theatre Silver Spring, 8641 Colesville Road, Silver Spring, MD from February 16 – March 10. Footlights will see it at a date and time to be announced later.

We will have copies of *The Language Archive* available for sale at our January meeting.

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@yahoogroups.com.

As 2011 draws to a close, we celebrate our good fortune to have so many wonderful theater opportunities available to us, the many theater professionals and others who share their insights with us at our discussions, and especially, our Footlights members.

Best wishes to you all for good holidays and a new year of rich theater experiences from the Footlights Board –

*Charlotte Baer, Phyllis Bodin, Renée Gier, John Glynn,
Mark Gruenberg, Robin Larkin, Jerry Stilkind and
Mary Ann Wren*

Calendar

- Thursday, January 5, 6:30 p.m. dinner-discussion of Jules Feiffer's *Little Murders* with director Ellen Dempsey and others from the American Century Theater production. At Alfio's, 4515 Willard Ave., Chevy Chase, MD, 20815. Reserve with Phyllis Bodin, 301-986-1768, or phylbo@verizon.net.
- Monday, February 20, 6:30 p.m. dinner-discussion of Julia Cho's *The Language Archive* with director Jessica Burgess and Michael Dove, co-founder of Forum Theatre. At Alfio's. Reserve with Phyllis.

Robin Larkin for **FOOTLIGHTS**
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