

from the FOOTLIGHTS

OCTOBER 2014

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

<http://www.footlightsdc.org>

Footlights to Discuss Mary Resing’s *Visible Language* October 7

How do the deaf learn to communicate? In the late 1800s, as science advanced, it became a topic of great debate – a debate with particular roots in Washington – that Footlights will explore in our October 7 discussion of the world premiere of **Mary Resing’s** bilingual musical *Visible Language*.

Two schools of thought in teaching the deaf arose, symbolized by the leaders of those two intellectual streams: Alexander Graham Bell and Edward Miner Gallaudet. Yes, the inventor of the telephone first made a name for himself in trying to find ways for the deaf to communicate. And Edward Gallaudet took the whole concept one step further, believing that the deaf, like people with hearing, could tackle advanced education – at what is now the nation’s, and probably the world’s, premiere higher education institution for the hearing-impaired, Gallaudet University.

The conflict drew in the first lady of the U.S., Carrie Harrison and, eventually, the most famous of all the deaf students, Helen Keller. Footlights discussed the famous play about Keller and her teacher, Annie Sullivan, *The Miracle Worker*, many years ago.

Now Footlights will discuss these issues with guest speakers, playwright **Mary Resing** and **Tom Prewitt**, artistic director of WSC/AvantBard. Mark Gruenberg will moderate.

We will meet at Alfio’s, 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.

The all-inclusive cost for dinner and discussion is \$20. Dinner is a green salad, choice among six entrées, 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 – no credit cards, please. Wine, beer, and cocktails are available from the bar. You may come for the discussion only for just \$5.

Make reservations with Phyllis Bodin, phylbo@verizon.net or 301-986-1768. Reservations and cancellations will be accepted until noon of the day of the discussion. If you must cancel, please let Phyllis know as

soon as possible since the restaurant needs an accurate count. We may be charged for no-shows and would expect you to cover the cost of your meal.

Read *Visible Language*. Playwright Mary Resing has graciously provided Footlights a draft copy of her script. If you are coming to the discussion, you may obtain a copy via e-mail from Robin Larkin, robinlarkin@comcast.net or 240-669-6300. Please observe copyright restrictions, and do not distribute copies to others. Read the play and join the discussion!

***Visible Language* at Gallaudet University.** WSC Avant Bard and Gallaudet University’s Theatre and Dance Program are co-producing *Visible Language*. Tom Prewitt is directing. It will be performed at Gallaudet October 21 to November 16. All performances will be in American Sign Language and spoken English, and all performances will be captioned.

See WSC Avant Bard’s website for more information - <http://wscavantbard.org/season-3/visible-language/>. Note that all preview performances and Saturday matinees are pay-what-you-can. You can reserve a seat for one of these pwy performances online for \$10. The venue is The Gilbert C. Eastman Studio Theatre, Elstad Annex, Gallaudet University, 800 Florida Avenue NE, Washington, DC 20002-3695 [Metro: Red line NoMa-Gallaudet.] Free on-campus parking is available.

Join us on October 29 when Footlights will discuss Henrik Ibsen’s *Hedda Gabler*

Hedda Gabler is ambitious, selfish, vindictive, abusive, even vicious – which makes this a role possibly every actress on earth hopes of playing one day. Hedda’s dream was to live a full and an exciting life “with vine leaves in her hair” and to die beautifully. She marries the boring George Tesman believing his academic prospects will ensure that at least they will live well, if not happily, and this does not happen. They are in debt. She may be pregnant. She is angry at the success a former admirer may well now have, with the help of another woman, and she destroys the only copy of his manuscript, a work those who have read parts of it feel is a masterpiece and one which will undoubtedly mean he will get the position Tesman wants and needs. She finally decides suicide is her only way out of a life of endless disappointment, a threat of being blackmailed, a loss of social status, and she kills herself.

Henrik Ibsen is the most frequently performed dramatist in the world, after Shakespeare, and is considered to have had

a profound influence on Shaw, O'Neill, James Joyce, Arthur Miller, Oscar Wilde, and – curiously enough – Adolph Hitler, who was a failed playwright as well as an untalented painter and who plagiarized freely from Ibsen. Even the term 'The Third Reich' came from an Ibsen play.

Although written in the last decades of the 19th century, and set in Norway in that period, Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*, *A Doll's House*, *The Wild Duck*, *An Enemy of the People* seem timeless, and as such lend the basic story to endless updating. The polluted thermal baths in *An Enemy of the People* become a large and dangerous white shark off the coast of Massachusetts in *Jaws* while the problem remains the same: alerting the public to the danger will surely mean loss of tourist business and financial ruin for some local businesses. Quotidian Theatre's upcoming production of *Hedda Gabler* will be set in Georgetown, D.C. in the 1960s, and some of the language is of that era, but the story itself does not change.

Michael Avolio will direct the production, and he also wrote the adaptation. Although he is principally known as an actor, he directed Quotidian's brilliant staging of Eugene O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh* last year – a play with 19 speaking roles and Michael's first, and extremely

successful, venture at directing.

Michael Avolio will be our guest speaker on October 29, as will the two actresses who will portray Hedda and Thea in the Quotidian production of the Ibsen play, which will run October 24 to November 23, at the Writer's Center in Bethesda. John Glynn will moderate our discussion. Footlights will plan to get group tickets.

Make reservations for October 29 at Alfio's with Phyllis Bodin, phylbo@verizon.net or 301-986-1768.

Read *Hedda Gabler*. Copies of the play are readily available in libraries, bookstores, and online. In addition we have Michael Avolio's adapted script which you may request from Robin Larkin, robinlarkin@comcast.net or 240-669-6300, if you plan to attend the discussion on October 29.

About Footlights

To learn more about Footlights, visit our website at <http://www.footlightsdc.org>. To subscribe to our e-list, go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/footlightsdc/join>, or simply e-mail footlightsdc-subscribe@yahoogleroups.com.

Calendar

- **Tuesday, October 7**, 6:30 p.m. dinner-discussion of *Visible Language* by **Mary Resing**. She will be our guest, joined by WSC Avant Bard artistic director **Tom Prewitt**. 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.
- **Wednesday, October 29**, 6:30 p.m. dinner-discussion of **Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*** as adapted by our guest **Michael Avolio**. At Alfio's. Reserve with Phyllis.

Robin Larkin for **FOOTLIGHTS**
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