

MAY 7: *THE VISIT* BY DÜRRENMATT

Because *Der Besuch der alten Dame* ("The Visit of the Old Lady") premiered in Zurich in 1956, some reviewers saw the play's town and its people representing life fueled by fears from dealing with the uncertainty of the Cold War and the threat of the atomic bomb. Yet Dürrenmatt said of the visiting old lady: "Claire Zachanassian represents neither justice nor the Marshall Plan, nor the apocalypse; let her be just that which she is, namely the richest woman in the world who is enabled by her money to act like the heroine of a Greek tragedy, absolutely, cruelly, perhaps like Medea..."

Is *THE VISIT* just a play about a woman scorned or does the playwright illustrate how we all in the end will rationalize and succumb to the lure of monetary gain? In 2002, Footlights discussed Friedrich Dürrenmatt's later play, *THE PHYSICISTS*, which blurred the boundaries between insanity, absurdity, and reality. One can argue that *THE VISIT* does the same.

Dürrenmatt's themes include the nature of justice, redemption, and community; yet he prizes self knowledge and surrender to the vagaries of life and death. Dürrenmatt biographer, Murray Peppard, writes "In all of Dürrenmatt's mature works, serenity of soul is typically coupled with the acceptance of death and an insight into the fundamental, if inscrutable, justice of the world order...Characteristic is the victim's smile of joy in anticipation of final fulfillment... Or as Romulus says, 'Never was I more composed, never was I more serene, now that everything is over.'"

Michael Baron, Associate Director of Signature Theatre, will lead the Footlights discussion of Dürrenmatt and the Signature Theatre's musical version of *THE VISIT*. Baron is an accomplished theatre and arts educator. Renée Subrin will moderate with Joel Markowitz of Ushers.

The Ushers theatre group will join Footlights in the dinner discussion of *THE VISIT*, **Wednesday, May 7, at Alfio's**, in the Willoughby Apartments, 4515 Willard Ave., Chevy Chase, MD 20815. Dinner (including tip) is \$12 with several choices of entrées, as well as salad, bread, ice cream & coffee.

Please arrive by 6:15 p.m. Contact Mark Gruenberg to reserve for dinner at press_associates@yahoo.com or 202-898-4825. If you must cancel your dinner

reservation, please let Mark know by noon on Wednesday, May 7. You may come just for the discussion. We would appreciate a \$5 contribution to Footlights to help cover our expenses. Your voluntary contribution to Footlights is tax-deductible.

READING & SEEING *THE VISIT*

THE VISIT may be ordered from Backstage Books (202-544-5744) or any other bookstore. Footlights will join the Ushers theatre group at Signature Theatre on Sunday, May 18 at 2 p.m. to see Signature's production starring Chita Rivera and George Hearn. Tickets for this performance are now sold out. Check with the box office for other dates. Signature Theatre's production of *THE VISIT* is the East Coast premiere and part of their celebration of the songwriting partnership of John Kander and the late Fred Ebb, the longest-running songwriting partnership in Broadway musical history.

FOOTLIGHTS ON JUNE 11: *NIXON'S NIXON*

It is the night of August 7, 1974. Richard Nixon, facing certain impeachment and conviction as a result of Watergate, is spending his last night in the White House before resigning the next day. For consolation, he calls his Secretary of State/National Security Adviser, Henry Kissinger. What happened that night?

For Woodward and Bernstein, it was a scene of praying together. For Russell Lees, in *NIXON'S NIXON*, it was foreign policy. The two discussed the great changes they brought to the world...their roles...the events: The opening to China, détente with the Soviet Union, the Yom Kippur war. And who did what? The two trade roles, they trade jabs, and they trade credit.

But what are they trading credit for? What was their relationship like? For that, Footlights will turn to its guest speaker, Murray Marder. Marder, the retired diplomatic correspondent of *The Washington Post*, covered Nixon and Kissinger, their relationship, their policies and the lasting impact the two have had on U.S. history. Now co-director and co-author of a major project on the relationship between the press and the presidency for the Nieman Foundation at Harvard University, Marder will share with us his insights on an unique and important period of U.S. history.

NIXON'S NIXON may be ordered from Backstage Books (202-544-5744) or any other bookstore.

SEPTEMBER 22, 2008: AN EVENING WITH TED VAN GRIETHUYSEN

Footlights has a very special occasion planned for the beginning of the Footlights 2008-2009 season: An Evening with Ted van Griethuysen. When asked if he would speak to his legion of admirers in Footlights, van Griethuysen enthusiastically replied: "Yes, I love to talk." The reason for asking him was as simple as his reply – not only is he one of the finest actors in the Washington area but he has excelled in a wide range of roles over the past 20 years. We are moved by his work on stage and those who have heard him at cast discussions know that there is a sharp intellect behind his characterizations in Shakespeare, Brecht or Stoppard.

Ted van Griethuysen joined the Shakespeare Theater Company 20 years ago but in that time and the 20 years before that has appeared on and off-Broadway, around this country, in London, and on television. The date is set: Monday, September 22. Everything else is being worked on. Tentative plans are for him to speak about his life in the theater, or his favorite roles, or directors he

has worked with, or his interpretations of Shakespeare, or all of the above and take questions from about 7 to 9 pm. . All money collected above costs will go to a theater cause chosen by Mr. van Griethuysen. Please stay tuned for what is sure to be one of Footlights' most fascinating events ever.

Anyone who has a specific idea for a place and a caterer of moderate cost for this event please contact Jerry Stilkind: jerry@earthlink.net.

BUILDING ON SUCCESS

Footlights is beginning its planning process for next season. Which plays from the many fine productions offered for 2008-2009 in the D.C. metropolitan area should we choose to read, discuss and see as part of the coming Footlights season? Please share your ideas for plays, speakers, etc. Volunteers to moderate a discussion or to help with the various tasks associated with putting on a meeting are always welcome. If interested, please contact Footlights President Mark Gruenberg or Treasurer Robin Larkin.

Calendar

- May 7 (Wednesday) -- Please arrive by 6:15 p.m. for dinner discussion of **Friedrich Dürrenmatt's *THE VISIT*** at **Alfio's**, in the Willoughby Apartments, 4515 Willard Ave., Chevy Chase, MD 20815.
- May 18 (Sunday) at 2 p.m. - Performance of ***THE VISIT*** at **Signature Theatre**. Sold out.
- June 11 (Wednesday)- - Please arrive by 6:15 p.m. for dinner discussion of ***NIXON'S NIXON***, by **Russell Lees** at **Casa Fiesta**, 4910 Wisconsin Ave, NW, Washington, D.C. 20016 (202-244-8888).
- June 15 (Sunday) at 3 p.m. Performance of ***NIXON'S NIXON*** at **Round House Theatre Bethesda** 4545 East-West Highway Bethesda, MD 20814, Tickets are \$45; includes post show discussion. Make your check payable to Footlights, and send to Robin Larkin, 5800 Nicholson Lane, #L07, Rockville, MD 20852.
- September 22 (Monday) Hold the Date for **An Evening with Ted van Griethuysen**. Details to follow.

Beatrice Rouse *for* **FOOTLIGHTS**
P.O. Box 5443
Rockville, MD 20848-5443