

from the FOOTLIGHTS

DECEMBER 2009

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

<http://www.footlightsdc.org>

December 2: *Stick Fly* by Lydia R. Diamond

Footlights is very fortunate to have playwright **Lydia Diamond** as our December speaker. Her play, *Stick Fly*, is a family drama with many engaging characters. Even the characters who do not appear are powerfully realized. It is also a very funny play with underlying serious themes.

The play focuses on an affluent African-American family at their Martha's Vineyard (which has had a significant black population since colonial days) summer home. Many universal themes are present: bringing a girlfriend to meet the family; interracial romance; an artist's place in an over-achieving professional family; the long shadow of sexual promiscuity; father/son relations, etc.

Yet it also highlights a particular social niche. Characters wear "the height of casual style" and sport a "devil-may-care ease that only the entitled possess (*Curtain-Up*)."

In traditional dramatic fashion, the playwright introduces the LeVay family as a closed society, then introduces outsiders: the sons' girlfriends. Flip has brought a white girlfriend, Kimber, who comes from money, works with inner city kids, and doesn't give a fig leaf how people perceive her or her boyfriend. No "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?" situation here; Kimber fits right in among the LeVays.

"Not so Kent's fiancée, Taylor Bradley Scott, who, despite being black and the daughter of an important social anthropologist, is no child of privilege (*Curtain-Up*)."

The multi-sided conflicts keep audiences on the edge of their seats as family alliances twist and turn, and as secrets are suspected and then unveiled.

Playwright Lydia Diamond has been compared to the likes of August Wilson, Lynn Nottage, and Wendy Wasserstein. She's earned rave reviews for her adaptation of Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, which launched her onto the national stage and was presented in DC by Theatre Alliance several seasons ago to critical acclaim. She currently teaches playwriting at Boston University's School of Theatre. She is a Huntington Playwriting Fellow and a Resident Playwright at Chicago Dramatists.

From a *Performink* online interview with Lydia Diamond: "I notice that America has a real comfort zone with seeing African-Americans in certain ways. Not ways that are not important, too, but that are limiting just because it's a narrow perspective of a very complicated, huge part of America. It's just interesting that you see lots of images of black people in historical contexts on stage, often dealing,

directly or indirectly, with the wrongs that white people have inflicted upon us. Or if it's contemporary, it's often in an urban environment dealing with some of the same struggles. What I think is interesting, and what *Stick Fly* explores, is that the struggles don't necessarily change because the environment does. But the environment can change, and black people in those environments are black, too."

We'll meet at **Alfio's** on **Wednesday, December 2**. 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.

Phyllis Bodin will take reservations for our dinner-discussion of *Stick Fly* on December 2. She may be reached at phylbo@verizon.net or 301-986-1768. The cost for dinner is only \$13 for a choice among 6 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 Phyllis know as soon as possible, and definitely by noon on December 2, so we have an accurate count for Alfio's.

Footlights is pleased to invite members and friends of The Black Women Playwrights' Group to join us for the dinner-discussion. Robin Larkin and Debbie Jackson will moderate our discussion with Lydia Diamond.

We have copies of *Stick Fly* available. If you would like a copy mailed to you, please send your check for \$15, payable to Footlights, to Robin Larkin, 5800 Nicholson Lane, #L07, Rockville, MD 20852. Alternatively, contact Backstage Books, 545 8th Street, SE, Washington, DC 20003, (202-544-5744 or backstagebooks@aol.com). Be sure to bring your copy to our dinner-discussion for Lydia Diamond to sign.

Stick Fly at Arena Stage

Arena Stage in Crystal City is producing *Stick Fly*, directed by Kenny Leon and playing from January 1 through February 7, 2010. Footlights will see *Stick Fly* on a date to be determined.

January 18: *The Rivalry* by Norman Corwin

We meet again at Alfio's on **Monday, January 18** to dine and discuss Norman Corwin's *The Rivalry*. Over the course of seven debates, Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas

tackled the hot topics of their day: states' rights, slavery and the intent of the Constitution. *The Rivalry* captures the fiery rhetoric and wry humor of those debates, while adding the insights of Douglas' wife, Adele.

Our very special guest speaker is actor **Rick Foucheux** who will be appearing as Stephen Douglas in Ford's Theatre's production of *The Rivalry*, beginning January 22, through February 14. Footlights will see *The Rivalry* at a date to be determined.

About Footlights

For more information about Footlights, check our website, <http://www.footlightsdc.org>. To subscribe to our e-list go to

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/footlightsdc/join>. Or send a blank message to footlightsdc-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

Footlights is an official 501 (c) (3) nonprofit corporation. To make a tax-deductible contribution to Footlights, send your check to Robin Larkin, 5800 Nicholson Lane, #L07, Rockville, MD 20852. We rely on your support and contributions to enable us to provide our monthly dinner-discussions, theater trips, and newsletters.

We encourage you to receive our newsletters by e-mail. If you prefer a printed newsletter by postal mail, we are happy to do that, but do request that you make a donation to cover the printing and mailing costs.

Calendar

- Wednesday, December 2, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of *Stick Fly* by Lydia Diamond. At Alfio's, 4515 Willard Ave., Chevy Chase, MD, 20815. **Lydia Diamond** is our guest speaker. Reserve with Phyllis, phylbo@verizon.net or 301-986-1768.
- tbd, performance of *Stick Fly* at Arena Stage, Crystal City.
- Monday, January 18, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of *The Rivalry* by Norman Corwin. At Alfio's. Guest speaker: **Rick Foucheux**. Reserve with Phyllis.
- tbd, performance of *The Rivalry* at Ford's Theatre.

Robin Larkin for **FOOTLIGHTS**
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