

# from the FOOTLIGHTS

OCTOBER 2009

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

<http://www.footlightsdc.org>

## October 19: *Full Circle* by Charles Mee

In playwright Charles Mee's view there is no such thing as an original play. He says: "I grew up with people telling me – I think rightly – that the greatest plays in the western world were written by Shakespeare, and, of course, by the Greeks. But when I started writing plays, people were trying to write plays like Ibsen and Eugene O'Neill and Arthur Miller. And I thought: If the Greeks and Shakespeare were the greatest playwrights, why aren't we all trying to write plays the way they did?" In creating *Full Circle*—Footlights' next play for discussion – Mee notes that Bertolt Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* was taken from a play by the German dramatist Klabund, on which Brecht had served as dramaturg in 1926; and Klabund had taken his play from an earlier Chinese work.

Charles Mee has written several dozen plays, and books for both children and adults. His autobiography, *A Nearly Normal Life*, recounts his barely surviving spinal polio as a teenager, an experience which may possibly have helped shape his dark and fragmentary writing style. He is an historian, a screenwriter, a director, and has edited the *Horizon* magazine of the arts. Mee now teaches playwriting at Columbia University. He has always been a political activist, and was once chairman of a grassroots organization calling for the impeachment of Richard Nixon.

Mee is the first and only playwright ever to make his full body of theater works available on the internet. *Full Circle* is online at <http://www.charlesmee.org/html/fullcircle.html>. If you prefer to have a printed copy, send your check for \$7.50 to cover the cost of printing to Robin Larkin, 5800 Nicholson Ln, #L07, Rockville, MD 20852. 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.

## A Very Brief History of the Berlin Wall

*Full Circle* is set in Berlin in 1989, as the Wall comes down. At the end of WWII, Germany was divided into four zones, each one to be controlled by one of the Allied forces: The United States, France, Britain, and the Soviet Union. The capital Berlin was also divided into four parts, although the city actually was entirely within the Soviet sector. Three of the four zones – American, French, British – soon merged, and rebuilding the country and its economy

began. The Soviet-controlled section, East Germany, became part of the Eastern Bloc of countries, separated from Western Europe by the so-called *Iron Curtain*. Controlling emigration and brain drain from the East to the more prosperous West soon became a problem for the Soviets, and especially in Berlin which had provided the easiest escape route after the border was closed. Their solution: The Berlin Wall, which was built in 1961. It completely encircled West Berlin, isolating it from East Berlin and the rest of East Germany. The Wall remained in place for a quarter of a century, until 1989, when it came down, paving the way for the reunification of Germany. Although some Western European leaders, notably then British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, were very much opposed to the reunification (and possibly the rearming) of Germany, the United States was in favor of it, and Ronald Reagan made history with his "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall" speech.

Perhaps the custody battle in *Full Circle* is a metaphor for the struggle to find a *third way*—something between capitalism and communism—for a reunited Germany to pursue.

We'll meet at **Alfio's** on **Monday, October 19**. 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.

Our speaker will be **Augie Praley**, a member of the New Play Development team at Woolly Mammoth Theater Company. Augie is a University of Chicago graduate, with a degree in Theater and Performance Studies. He is a playwright (he has written five plays – and is hard at work on #6), a director, a poet, and a dramaturg, and has an especial knowledge of, and fondness for, Charles Mee and Mee's plays. Mary Ann Wren will moderate our discussion. Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company will present *Full Circle* starting October 26.

To reserve for dinner, contact Mark Gruenberg, 202-898-4825 or [press\\_associates@yahoo.com](mailto:press_associates@yahoo.com). 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 Mark know as soon as possible, and definitely by noon on October 19, so we have an accurate count for Alfio's.

### **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 Company, 641 D Street, NW (7<sup>th</sup> & 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 post show discussion. Send your check to Robin Larkin, 5800 Nicholson Lane, #L07, Rockville, MD 20852. We'll meet at the theater prior to the performance where Robin will distribute tickets.

### **November 9: Neil Simon's *Lost in Yonkers***

On Monday, November 9, 6:30 p.m. we'll meet at Alfio's for our dinner-discussion of Neil Simon's Pulitzer and

Tony award-winning play *Lost in Yonkers*. Our guest speaker will be one of the DC area's finest actors, **Holly Twyford**, who will be appearing as Bella in Theater J's upcoming production of *Lost in Yonkers*. Make your reservation for our dinner-discussion with Mark.

*Lost in Yonkers* is available at Backstage Books, 545 8th Street, SE, Washington, DC 20003, (202-544-5744 or [backstagebooks@aol.com](mailto:backstagebooks@aol.com)). Call first.

### **November 29: See *Lost in Yonkers* at Theater J**

We'll see *Lost in Yonkers* on Sunday, November 29 at 3 p.m. at Theater J. Tickets for Footlights and The Ushers members are \$35. Send your check to Robin.

### **December 2: *Stick Fly* by Lydia Diamond**

Mark your calendars now! We will have playwright Lydia Diamond as our guest speaker for our dinner-discussion at Alfio's on **Wednesday, December 2**, at 6:30 p.m. Arena Stage will produce her play, *Stick Fly*, in January 2010.

### **Calendar**

- Monday, October 19, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of *Full Circle* by Charles Mee. At Alfio's, 4515 Willard Ave., Chevy Chase, MD, 20815. Augie Praley is our guest speaker. Reserve with Mark, 202-898-4825 or [press\\_associates@yahoo.com](mailto:press_associates@yahoo.com).
- Sunday, November 8, 2 p.m., performance of *Full Circle* at Woolly Mammoth, 641 D Street, NW (7<sup>th</sup> & D), Washington, DC 20004. Tickets are \$40. 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, November 9, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of *Lost in Yonkers* by Neil Simon. At Alfio's. Holly Twyford is our guest speaker. Reserve with Mark.
- Sunday, November 29, 3 p.m., performance of *Lost in Yonkers* at Theater J, 1529 16th St NW, Washington, DC 20036. Tickets are \$35. Send your check to Robin.
- Wednesday, December 2, 6:30 p.m., dinner-discussion of *Stick Fly* by Lydia Diamond. At Alfio's. Lydia Diamond is our guest speaker. Reserve with Mark on or after October 19.

Robin Larkin for **FOOTLIGHTS**  
5800 Nicholson Lane, # L07  
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