

# from the FOOTLIGHTS

DECEMBER 2018

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

<http://www.footlightsdc.org>

## Footlights to discuss Paula Vogel's *The Baltimore Waltz* on Monday, January 7

"Paula Vogel's time to shine" Nelson Pressley headlined the 1998 Pulitzer Prize winner in the Post in September 2018; he hailed the upcoming production of four Vogel plays to be performed in the DC area, and more across the country. *How I learned to drive*, *Indecent*, *A Civil War Christmas* and *The Baltimore Waltz* comprise this Vogel Renaissance, with its culmination in January 2019 at Keegan Theatre when it brings us Vogel's *The Baltimore Waltz*.

No doubt this renaissance is prompted by the Broadway production of Vogel's *Indecent*, and as Pressley writes, "... since Broadway still shines the most influential light in American theatre, even as it has become hostile turf for new plays, a fresh radiance illuminates the body of work by one of the country's most formidable dramatic voices."

*The Baltimore Waltz* is a deeply personal fantasia knifing through the anguish of the AIDS epidemic and is written in memory of Vogel's brother, Carl. You don't need to be from Baltimore to feel a deep connection to this rare and magnificent work. A celebration of life, at the same time it is a heart-rending evocation of loss. Written in 1989, a year after her brother's passing, it is based on her experiences caring for her brother who died of AIDS in 1988. Longtime Baltimore Sun theater critic J Wynn Rousuck said of it: "The play offers a brilliantly imaginative look at this deadly disease. There is no question audiences will view it differently at the end of this 90 minute production."

By using fantasy to bring out the familiar, Vogel sets up a make-believe world of childlike innocence, comic clichés and absurdity. AIDS, for instance is transformed into something called Acquired Toilet Disease, an affliction affecting unmarried elementary school teachers. The plot ostensibly concerns a European trip taken by Carl and his sister, who is called Anna in the play. In reality, Vogel's brother had been diagnosed with AIDS, something he did not disclose to her, but instead suggested a trip to Europe knowing it would be the last time they would be together. Vogel declined for mundane reasons, and came to regret her decision. *The Baltimore Waltz* is dedicated to the memory of her brother Carl, and under the Author's Notes prefacing the play, Paula Vogel includes the letter from Carl to her about his burial instructions. Don't miss this!

Keegan's co-founder, Susan Marie Rhea, who will be directing the production at Keegan is our guest. She will bring with her actor Ray Ficca and dramaturg Clarke Whitehead. Stephanie Olshan will moderate our discussion.

Please join us for dinner and a lively discussion of *The Baltimore Waltz* Monday, January 7, 2019. We will meet at Alfio's, located at 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, but valet parking is available at Alfio's. Dinner is at 6:30, the discussion begins at 7:30 and ends by 9.

The all-inclusive cost for dinner and the discussion is \$30. 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, please – no credit cards. Wine, beer, cocktails are available from the bar. You may come at 7:20 for the discussion only for just \$5.

Make reservations with Phyllis Bodin, at [phylbo@verizon.net](mailto:phylbo@verizon.net) or 301-986-1768. Reservations and/or cancellations will be accepted until noon on the day of the dinner-discussion. If you must cancel, please let Phyllis know as soon as possible since the restaurant needs a complete count. This is a seated, table-service dinner, not a buffet. We may be charged for no-shows and expect you to cover our cost.

Read *The Baltimore Waltz*. If you are coming to the dinner-discussion we can send you an e-copy of the play. Make reservations with Phyllis and then contact Robin Larkin ([robinlarkin@comcast.net](mailto:robinlarkin@comcast.net)) for your copy. We request that you not distribute the play to others.

## Wednesday, February 13: Dinner-discussion of Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*. (Edward Kemp Adaptation)

The plot: The Master has written a play about the trial of Christ before Pilate. He is rehearsing it in Stalin's Moscow. Bureaucrats keep interfering to his frustration. He meets Margarita and she loves him and his work. But he despairs of himself and sets fire to his work. Margarita saves a portion of the work as the Master is carried off to an insane asylum.

The devil under the name of Woland arrives with a troupe of demons. He takes offense with the bureaucrats since he was present at the original trial and they refuse to take him seriously. He uses his powers to dispose of the bureaucrats and to stage an exhibition of Black Magic which affirms his powers and further damages the bureaucrats.

Margarita wanders disconsolate and meets Woland. She offers to become his servant if he grants her wish. Woland agrees and gives her a jar of special cream to be applied to her whole body. She takes the cream and applies it. She is beautified and renewed and becomes a witch. She flies away on a broom. Her maid Natasha sees what happens and also applies the cream. She flies away on a bureaucrat turned into a pig. Woland offers to make Margarita the hostess at his annual Ball.

Margarita is a great success as hostess, the Master's manuscript is restored and he is joined to her as spirit. Although not granted complete forgiveness they are not damned.

The novel and the play are filled with humor and clever

criticism of literary and other bureaucrats and very interesting spiritual speculations.

Our speaker will be Allison Stockman, Founding Artistic Director of Constellation Theatre and director of the upcoming production, which features Alexander Strain as The Master, Amanda Forstrom as Margarita, and Scott Ward Abernethy (son of Footlights member Joanna Ward) as Woland. John Glynn moderates. At Alfio's. Reserve with Phyllis Bodin at [phylbo@verizon.net](mailto:phylbo@verizon.net) or 301-986-1768. *The Master and Margarita* runs from February 1 to March 3.

Read *The Master and Margarita* script. If you are coming to the dinner-discussion we can send you an e-copy of the play. Make reservations with Phyllis and then contact Robin Larkin ([robinlarkin@comcast.net](mailto:robinlarkin@comcast.net)) for your copy.

### ***About Footlights***

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### ***Calendar:***

- **Through December 30**, performances of *Gem of the Ocean* at Round House Theatre, 4545 East-West Highway, Bethesda, MD. 20% off tickets using the code FRIENDS20. See [www.roundhousetheatre.org](http://www.roundhousetheatre.org).
- **December 12 - January 13**, performances of *Oh, God* at the Mosaic Theater, Atlas Performing Arts Center, Lang Theatre, 1333 H St, SE, DC. See [www.mosaictheater.com/oh-god](http://www.mosaictheater.com/oh-god). 30% off tickets. Code: FOOTLIGHTS.
- **Monday, January 7**, 6:30 pm, dinner-discussion of *The Baltimore Waltz* by Paula Vogel. Guests: Susan Marie Rhea, Keegan Theatre Artistic Director, and director of *Baltimore Waltz* and others. Stephanie Olshan moderates. At Alfio's, 4515 Willard Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD. Reserve with Phyllis Bodin at [phylbo@verizon.net](mailto:phylbo@verizon.net) or 301-986-1768.
- **Wednesday, February 13**, 6:30 pm, dinner-discussion of *The Master and Margarita* adapted by Edward Kemp from the novel by Mikhail Bulgakov. Guests: Allison Stockman, Constellation Theater Artistic Director, and others. John Glynn moderates. At Alfio's. Reserve with Phyllis Bodin at [phylbo@verizon.net](mailto:phylbo@verizon.net) or 301-986-1768.

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