

GATHER 'ROUND THE RADIO
E-NEWSLETTER FOR THE METROPOLITAN
WASHINGTON OLD-TIME RADIO CLUB
THE GRTR STUDIO EDITION



THE HIGH SPIRES ISSUE

MAY 10, 2018

THE SET-UP

Hello fine listeners, and welcome once again to the mythical confines of the GRTR Studio where we broadcast information and inspiration about radio, music, nostalgia, personality, books, and beyond. Terry Gross continues to be our inspiration. Listen to her “Fresh Air” radio show, live or podcast; check your NPR listings for a station where you can tune in.

The weather out the studio window is temperate, settled in after frigid and sweltering days, of late. Chuck and Joanie have made the trek across the

Potomac; they stopped in Frederick to visit our favorite bakery, and now we're in the Mud Room feasting on carrot cake and sipping mellow Costa Rican coffee. The dusty courier pouch is rather slim these days; Chuck has fine-tuned the balky old sound board, the squawks and hums have given way to the excellent songs of folk singer Olivia Chaney, who with an acoustic ensemble is singing her contemplative songs from recent years, such as "Waxwing," "The King's Horses," the springtime of "La Jardinera," and the starry skies of "Cassiopeia."

I've been taking motor trips these past weeks, along the secondary roads. In years past the rivers I would follow were the Potomac and the Shenandoah. Clubbers and others will recognize the valley towns of Culpeper and Front Royal. Now I'm fond of making my way between the swift and rocky Susquehanna, and some 140 miles to the east, the deep waters of the Delaware, and the towns of Valley Forge, Radnor, and Langhorne. Driving the blue highways, often the first view of a small town is the high spires and stately homes, and on down the main street, the somber presence of the town hall, often built with quarried stone and high domed clock tower; and the town square with benches and flower beds, just right for relaxing.

ON THE AIR

Our own clock sweeps onward, and we scurry into the studio. Joanie cues the network feed and Chuck fades the guitar, voice, and harmonium of the songs.

Hello everyone, and welcome to the broadcast, thanks for tuning in. We will announce an upcoming show, at northern Virginia's George Mason University. Then we'll visit our favorite baseball team, the Dragons of Dayton; and we'll tune in the enthusiastic voice of Jane Smiley, who is best known for her books, but here she turns in a bit of radio commentary for BBC Radio 4, explaining her fascination with horses as she and her sound engineer stroll around Santa Anita Racetrack, capturing the ambient sounds of a day at the races.

RADIO DRAMA AT GEORGE MASON U., OCTOBER 14, 2018

The very famous L.A. Theatre Works will present “Steel Magnolias” live on stage, for one show only: **Sunday October 14, 2018, 7 PM**. Go to the web-site: <https://cfa.gmu.edu> Tickets on sale August 1, 2018. Mark your calendars!



L.A. Theatre Works has reimagined this timeless story about the enduring bonds of friendship in a new, radio-style production featuring a diverse group of six extraordinary women. Return with the cast to Truvy’s beauty shop in the Bayou of Louisiana. The vibrant women gather in this bastion of camaraderie to preen for special occasions, and celebrate and support one another, while enduring the ups and downs of life. Both laugh-out-loud funny and deeply touching, this production exposes the strength of the human condition and our shared need for companionship. This company, known for radio-style drama presentations which include minimal sets and costumes, employ sound effects made the “old fashioned way”, as they were on the classic radio shows of the

1930s and 1940s. L.A. Theatre Works is hailed as “original, exciting, and highly theatrical” (American Theatre Magazine).

And there is so much more at the GMU web-site (mentioned above), including an extraordinary 2-minute video of the L.A. Theatre Works folks and the scripts they have performed.

Additional: Discussion before the Show. <http://cfa.gmu.edu/calendar>

\$44, \$37, \$26. 2 Free Student Tickets Available with Mason ID.

Radio drama is more popular all the time! The Club has been in on it in several venues, and the GMU Center last hosted a radio show in January 2017: “Murder on the Nile,” with the Aquila Theatre.

COMMERCIAL BREAK

Joanie is signaling the network’s time, so Chuck pipes in another Olivia Chaney song, from her 2015 album *The Longest River*. Look for her new album, written and composed in the comfort of her North Yorkshire digs; it’s called “Shelter,” and it’s out on June 10, 2018. Olivia Chaney tours and collaborates with so many folks, it’s wonderful.

THE DAYTON DRAGONS

The Dragons are hanging tough, early in the season: W 18 L 12. They reached that level by winning 9 of 10 games; over the weekend they swept a double-header from the Cedar Rapids Kernels. The guys are playing well, very together. Here are some names to follow throughout the season: Jeter Downs, Narciso Crook, Hunter Greene, Packy Naughton, Dauri Moreta, and Stuart Fairchild. Listen to the play-by-play broadcast: *Radio: Fox Sports 980 WONE*.

JANE SMILEY ON RADIO

In 2011, the BBC gave Jane Smiley a 29-minute time slot, and she gave us the world of thoroughbred horses. She combines history (Santa Anita was built by a dentist to lure the Hollywood crowd in the ‘30s) with her horse sense (she traced the lineage of a horse she rescued in Wisconsin, to find that he was

foaled in Germany and that he had won stakes races in France). She tells us how she researched the world of owners, breeders, and trainers to write a long novel (*Horse Heaven*) with so many characters and places that she put in a chart, not unlike a Victorian novel. She touches on the importance of broadcast radio (gravel-voiced Clem McCarthy calling races for the Depression-era public) and later, television (she loved *My Friend Flicka*, and *Fury*). She includes comments from a fellow writer who pinpoints the idea of legend and the way that Americans cling to legends (James Stewart, Seabiscuit) because therein lies the picture of success and the hope for oneself. Smiley puts in a quote from the film of Laura Hillenbrand's *Seabiscuit*: Jeff Bridges plays the horse's owner (fellow named Howard who had car dealerships in SoCal), and he says: "The horse is too small, the jockey's too big, the trainer's too old, and I'm too dumb to know the difference!"

These are the ideas that Jane Smiley takes to Santa Anita on a beautiful Saturday in early April 2011: Santa Anita Derby day, for 3-year-olds who are vying for an invitation to the Kentucky Derby, the first Saturday in May.

The murmurs of the crowd and the precise voice of the race announcer echoing over the P.A. speakers give us a happy sense of leisure which soon gives way to the urgency of the race as the crowd noise rises and we imagine the colors of the silks and the glistening horses thundering across the finish line. Smiley intones that Midnight Interlude had won (he would not win in 4 weeks at Churchill Downs); but that the dreams were there, for rich and poor alike.

I listened to this year's Kentucky Derby (May 5) on the radio (Westwood One over Sirius) as I was driving the PA Turnpike. The winner of the Santa Anita Derby indeed won in the slop at Churchill Downs. Justify by name, and to listen to the call of the race was a throwback to the days of old Clem McCarthy ("...down the stretch...Seabiscuit by three..."). The smooth voiced youngster in 2018 called it well, said that Justify broke well, and that jockey Mike Smith

hardly had to move a muscle, that the big bay was in the clear, turning back all comers.

It's the Preakness next, at Pimlico, just up the road from Arlington. I won't be going, not even if I had a microphone. Can't get near the place, and it's way too crowded!

Talk about unsung heroes! Here is a photograph, courtesy of the BBC, that could well be Jane Smiley's sound engineer!



MUSIC BRIDGE AND NETWORK FEED

That wraps up the broadcast; thanks for tuning in. Chuck is piping in another song by Olivia Chaney, "Loose Change," lovely. Joanie signals network feed. Keep those cards and letters coming!

Thanks ever,

Mark Anderson

For the Club