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OFF CENTRE THEATRE

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PRESENTS

THE ODD COUPLE



By
NEIL SIMON



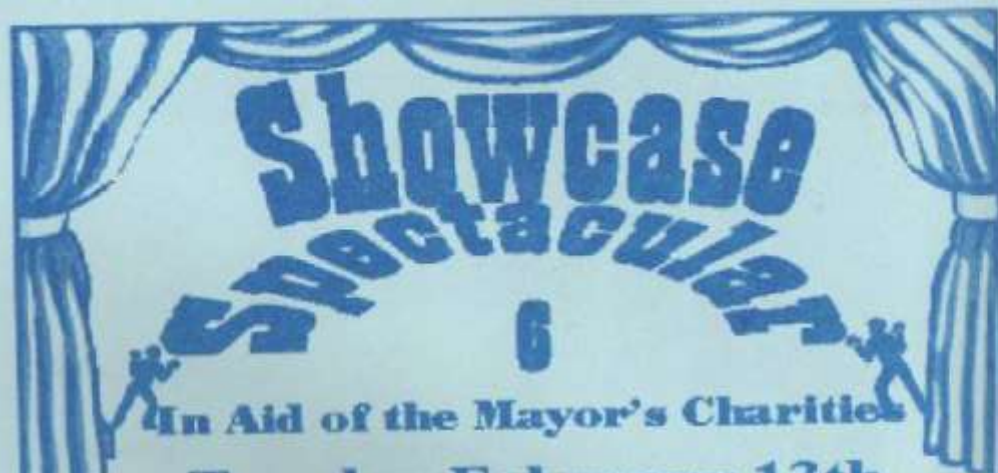
AT THE HABERDASHERS'
MONMOUTH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Thurs, Fri & Sat
4th, 5th & 6th January 2007
at 7.30pm

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Message from the Chairman

Welcome to Off Centre Theatre's January production of the *Odd Couple* by Neil Simon - I am sure that you will enjoy the performance. The cast and crew have been hard at work over the Christmas and New Year period rehearsing and building the set make sure that *The Odd Couple* provides you with an entertaining start to 2007.



2006 was a successful year for OCT-we presented a variety of shows starting with *The Virtuous Burglar* by Dario Fo and *The Dumb Waiter* by Harold Pinter. In the summer we performed *Wind in the Willows* and in September a supper evening with extracts from *Round the Horne*. In October *Summer End*, written by Eric Chappell of *Rising Damp* fame, entertained audiences. Did you guess who did it? All very different and all well received and well supported.

Thank you for that support and OCT hopes that it will continue this year and you continue to enjoy our productions.

As well as our drama productions we also have a range of social activities throughout the year including monthly club nights in our rooms above Barclays Bank in town, theatre trips, quiz nights, play readings. New members are always welcomed whether they want to act, direct, help backstage or just enjoy theatre and socialising. If you are interested in joining see the page towards the back of this programme. If you prefer there are membership forms available in the foyer or you can speak to any of the front of house staff who will be happy to help you.

Thank you again for your valued support and on behalf of the Committee and membership may I wish you all the best for 2007.

Tony Wells
 Chairman





About the author - Neil Simon

Neil Simon is the world's most successful playwright. He has been showered with more Academy and Tony nominations than any other writer, and is the only playwright to have four Broadway productions running simultaneously. His plays have been produced in dozens of languages, and have been hits from Beijing to Moscow.

Marvin Neil Simon was born in New York on July 4, 1927. The second son of Irving Simon, a traveling salesman, and his wife Mamie. After graduating, he enlisted in the Army and began his career writing for an Army camp newspaper. After discharge, he returned to New York and became a mail-room clerk for Warner Brothers' East Coast office. Soon he was writing comedy revues with his brother Danny, providing material for the likes of Tallulah Bankhead, and later for television, for Phil Silvers, Jackie Gleason, and Sid Caesar. He wrote for "Your Show of Shows," the nation's most popular weekly variety show in the 1950s. He and his brother Danny toiled alongside fellow budding talents Woody Allen and Mel Brooks writing these scripts.

His brother Danny, eight and a half years his senior, was influential in bringing Simon into the business and showing him the ropes. Danny also provided the inspiration for one of Simon's most enduring hits. After his divorce, Danny moved in with another divorced man, and this situation became the set-up for "The Odd Couple" (1965). Though Danny had begun writing the story himself, he reached a block and eventually handed it to Simon who soon made it a smash on Broadway.

The theatre was always Simon's destiny and after working with his brother contributing sketches to a couple of Broadway musicals he began writing on his own. His first play, *Come Blow Your Horn*, was a comedy about two brothers who don't want to take over their father's fruit business. First staged in 1961 it racked up 677 performances on Broadway and hinted at a promising career. Two years later, *Barefoot in the Park* fulfilled the promise and launched a legend.

In the '60s and '70s, Simon turned out hit after hit for the stage and screen, most of them depicting life in New York City - *The Odd Couple* (1965), *Sweet Charity* (1966), *Plaza Suite* (1968), *The Out of Towners* (1970), *Promises, Promises* (1968), *The Prisoner of Second Avenue* (1971), *The Goodbye Girl* (1993), *Chapter Two* (1977) - all these give a very funny picture of the people crazy and lucky enough to call New York home.



Walter Matthau and Art Carney in the 1965 production of *The Odd Couple*



Simon has drawn extensively on his own life and experience for materials for his plays. Many of his works take place in the working-class New York neighborhoods he knew so well as a child. His landmark autobiographical trilogy - *Brighton Beach Memoirs* (1988), *Biloxi Blues* (1985), and *Broadway Bound* (1986), chronicled his stormy childhood, Army days, and entry into show business. With these plays Simon not only got laughs, he also got awards. He crowned this streak with *Lost in Yonkers*, which won the Pulitzer Prize for drama in 1991.

During the course of his career, Simon has won three Tony Awards for Best Play (*The Odd Couple*, *Biloxi Blues* and *Lost in Yonkers*.) He has had more plays adapted to film than any other American playwright and, in addition, has written nearly a dozen original screenplays himself. He received Academy Award nominations for his screenplays *The Odd Couple* (1968), *The Sunshine Boys* (1975) and *California Suite* (1978). He has also been the recipient of the Antoinette Perry Award, the Writers Guild Award, the Evening Standard Award, the New York Drama Critics Circle Award, the Shubert Award, the Outer Circle Award, and a 1978 Golden Globe Award for his screenplay, *The Goodbye Girl*.

Simon has been married five times, to dancer Joan Baim (1953-1978), actress Marsha Mason (1975-1981), twice to Diane Lander (1987-1988 and 1990-1998), and actress Elaine Joyce (1999-present). He is the father of Nancy and Ellen, from his first marriage, and Bryn, whom he adopted with Lander.



For fifty years Neil Simon has populated the stage with zany characters and their touching stories, but possibly his greatest contribution has been the ability to create humour from the lives and troubles of everyday people. Actor Jack Lemon said of Simon, "Neil has the ability to write characters - even the leading characters that we're supposed to root for - that are absolutely flawed. They have foibles. They have faults. But, they are human beings. They are not all bad or all good; they are people we know."

CALIFORNIA SUITE



Cast

Oscar Madison	Tony Sully
Felix Unger	Tom Rigby
Speed	Gray Thomas
Murray	Brian Pearce
Vinnie	Clifton Smythe
Roy	J. Walter Harbland
Gwendolyn Pigeon	Paula Brady
Cecily Pigeon	Caroline Mitchell

The action takes place in the Mid Sixties in an Apartment on Riverside Drive New York City.

Act I

A hot summer night

Interval

Act II

Scene 1 Two weeks later About 11pm

Scene 2 A few days later About 8pm

Act III


The next evening About 7.30pm

About the director - Wyn Parry





Wyn Parry first appeared with the OCT in the chorus of *Robinson Crusoe* in 2002 having previously been a director at the Dylan Thomas Theatre Swansea. He subsequently appeared in 'The Happiest Day of your Life', 'The Importance of being Earnest' and most recently as 'Badger' in 'The Wind in the Willows'. He has also directed and appeared in 'Lord Arthur Savile's Crime'.

Production Team



Producer / Director	Wyn Parry
Stage manager	Terry Cane
Set design	Tony Sully
Set Construction	Terry Cane, Adam Wells, Tony Sully, David Wells & Tony Wells
Backstage Crew	Jenny Weston, Trudy Risk, Wayne Weston & Peter Risk
Lighting	David Wells
Transport	Richard Wadley
Sound	Charles Winfour
Costumes	Members of the cast
Prompts	Ann Harbland
Props	Jenny Weston & Trudy Risk
Front of House	Caroline Pearce & Team
Printing	Pastorprint
Box Office	Brian Williams, St Mary St Nelson Museum, Priory St
Marketing & Publicity	Elaine & Dave Andrews
Programme & Poster	Barbara Spence



 Off Centre Theatre



The Wizard of Oz

at this theatre - 30 May - 2 June 2007



Auditions will be taking place in February.

If you are interested in taking part contact Barbara Spence 01600 715699 - all ages welcome



Thank you from
OFF CENTRE
THEATRE



Thank you to the following, for raffle prizes, help with this production and throughout 2006

Brian Williams Watch & Clock Repairs, Gladys Rathbone, Church Wardens & PCC of St Mary's Church Monmouth, Haberdashers' Monmouth School for Girls, Free Press, Chris Jones, Monmouth School, Monmouthshire Beacon Nelson Museum Monmouth, Waitrose, The Royal Oak, Duncan Wills at 'Le Gourmet', St John Ambulance and anyone else we have forgotten to mention.

About the play - **The Odd Couple**

Neil Simon's play, *The Odd Couple*, is based on his brother Danny's true-life experience when he moved in with another divorced man. *The Odd Couple* is best described in the one-sentence treatment Simon submitted to Paramount, who financed the stage play sight-unseen. "Two men—one divorced and one estranged and neither quite sure why their marriages fell apart—move in together to save money for alimony and suddenly discover they're having the same conflicts and fights they had in their marriages."

The play was a hit when it was staged on Broadway in 1965 and ran for 966 performances. It won several Tony awards including that for Best Play. The original cast had Walther Matthau as the slovenly Oscar and Art Carney as the neurotic Felix. The plot of the original play has resulted in many derivative works and spin-offs.

In 1968 *The Odd Couple* was made into a highly successful film starring Jack Lemmon as Felix and Walter Matthau again as Oscar. Most of the film script is the same as the play although the setting is expanded with scenes taking place outside Oscar's apartment. Neil Simon wrote the screenplay and was nominated for an Academy award.

From 1970 to 1975 *The Odd Couple* was the basis for a television series. This time Felix was played by Tony Randall and Oscar by Jack Klugman. Klugman had replaced Matthau in the original stage production in the 1960's. Both actors won Emmy awards for their roles. The series ran for five seasons and has since blossomed in syndication, appearing in major domestic and foreign markets to this day.



Tony Randall & Jack Klugman, in the 1970s TV series

The Oddball Couple was a cartoon series based on the characters. In this the Felix character is a cat called Spiffy and Oscar is a dog called Fleabag. 32 episodes were produced between 1976 and 1977.



The Oddball Couple

The TV show *The New Odd Couple*, was produced in 1982. This new version had a predominantly black cast and was not successful being cancelled after just 13 episodes.

In 1985 *The Odd Couple* was revised by Neil Simon for a female cast. This ran on Broadway for 295 performances.

In 1992, Klugman and Randall reprised their TV roles in a special two-hour reunion episode. In 1998 Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau resurrected their roles for the film *The Odd Couple II*

In 2005 Matthew Broderick and Nathan Lane, following their success in *The Producers* performed in a revival of the play. In the UK, in 2005, Bill Bailey and Alan Davies appeared in a production at the Edinburgh Festival where the tickets were the fastest sellers of the Festival that year.

The Odd Couple is probably being produced now by another company somewhere in the UK. You are seeing the first new production in 2007 here in Monmouth.