



COMMUNITY PLAYERS

CURTAIN CALLS

Vol. 9.6

May, 2014

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Neil Simon's *The Odd Couple* Completes 2013-14 Season

by John Lieder

The Odd Couple opened on Broadway nearly 50 years ago (in 1965) and won Neil Simon a Tony for Best Author and Walter Matthau a Tony for Best Actor. It was only three years later that, under the direction of James Keeran, the play was first performed at Community Players. Martha Smith was in the director's chair when it played again at CP in 1990. The venerable Carolyn Beyer directed *The Odd Couple – Female Version* in November 2001.

The show has spawned multiple professional stage revivals, a 1968 film with Walter Matthau and Jack Lemmon, a 70's TV show with Jack Klugman and Tony Randall, and a new TV version with Matthew Perry is coming to CBS later this year. There are reasons why the concept of *The Odd Couple* remains so popular: certainly the mismatch between Oscar the slob and Felix the neat freak provides plenty of conflict and humor. The script is Simon at the top of his form, full of witty

dialogue with characters that are easy to relate to. (We all know people who closely resemble Oscar or Felix.)

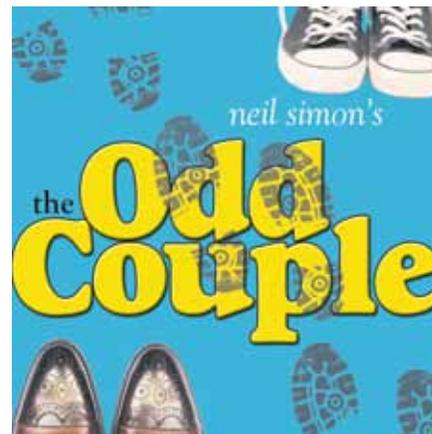
Our 2014 production features CP veterans **Brian Artman** as Oscar Madison and **Tom Smith** as Felix Unger. The action

of the play takes place totally within Oscar's New York apartment and begins with Oscar and his friends around the table for their weekly Friday night poker game.

Missing from the game is Felix, who, despondent from the breakup with his wife, has been wandering around New York. Genuinely concerned for his best friend, Oscar takes him in as his roommate and havoc results.

Artman and Smith have the bulk of the dialogue. They are a splendid tandem and their poker buddies provide wonderful support. With **Andy Carey** as Murray, **Allen Popowski** as Roy, newcomer **Drew German** as Speed and **Thom Rakestraw** as Vinnie, the fellows all have depth of character and great comic timing.

Rounding out the cast are **Bridgette Richard** and newcomer **Stacey Baker** as the effervescent Pigeon sisters. The pair is a hoot and their British accents are rock solid.



From left to right: Andy Carey, Drew German, Tom Smith, Andy Popowski and Brian Artman get ready for poker in Act II.

Continued on page 4 . . .

COMMUNITY PLAYERS
Calendar

May - June 2014

Board Meetings

May 13, 6:00 p.m.
June 10, 6:00 p.m.
Community Players Theatre

The Odd Couple

Preview: May 15
Shows: May 16–18 and 22–25

Shrek

Auditions: May 18-20
Preview: July 10
Shows: July 11–13, 17–20, and
24–27



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Newsletter Committee

Jim Kalmbach
Wendi Fleming
John Lieder
Bob McLaughlin
Bruce Parrish
Sally Parry

We are always looking for writers, artists, designers, and story ideas. Send comments and suggestions to kalmbach@ilstu.edu

Curtain Calls is published six times a year for the voting members of Community Players.

For information about joining us, please contact our membership chair, Wendi Fleming at cplayersmember@aol.com.

Back issues of *Curtain Calls* are available on the Community Players web site. Click on "Newsletter Archive."

Shrek Auditions

In a faraway kingdom turned upside down, things get ugly when an unseemly ogre—not a handsome prince—shows up to rescue a feisty princess. Throw in a donkey who won't shut up, a bad guy with a SHORT temper, a cookie with an attitude, and over a dozen other fairy tale misfits, and you've got the kind of mess that calls for a real hero. Luckily, there's one on hand...and his name is Shrek.



Full of all-new songs, great dancing, and breathtaking scenery, *Shrek The Musical* is part romance, part twisted fairy tale and all irreverent fun for everyone! Based on the hit movie, the stage version, with music by Jeanine Tesori and book and lyrics by David Lindsay-Abaire, opened on Broadway in 2008 and ran for over a year. Now it's coming to Community Players.

Director **Alan Wilson** and Producer **Jay Hartzler** will be holding separate auditions for children (3rd grade through 8th grade) and adults (9th grade and up).

Both sets of auditions be held on three days, May 18-20, at the theatre:

3rd Grade through 8th Grade from 6 pm-7 pm. Be prepared to sing (16 bars) and dance only.

9th Grade through Adults starting at 7 pm. Be prepared to sing (16 bars), dance, and read selections from script.

Contact Alan Wilson at albry.wilson57@gmail.com with questions.

Mystery Photo!

We once again challenge our readers with a mystery photo. Be the first to identify this new photo. Extra credit for identifying year and the performers. Answers must be sent via e-mail to rmclaugh@ilstu.edu. The winner and runners up will be announced in the next issue.



Getting the Tony Awards Right: An Editorial

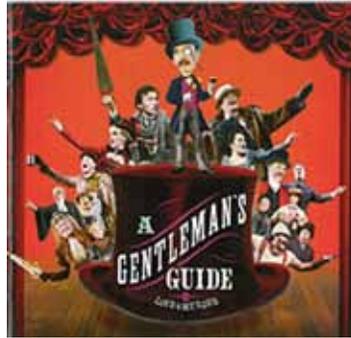
by Bob McLaughlin

I'm not naïve. I've heard the perennial complaints about the Tony Awards, about the disjunction between their claim to recognize excellence in the theater and their aim to put fannies in the seats. That a more accurate description would be that the Tony Awards honor excellence in the theater, theater defined as shows presented in a geographic area bound by 41st and 53rd Streets and 6th and 8th Avenues in New York City; that opened in the spring, preferably April, or, if opened in the fall, are still running in the spring; that are doing well, preferably smashingly, at the box office; that star Hollywood or television personalities and/or present plots and songs that are already familiar from movies, TV, or classic radio stations; and that will be successful on the road. I've heard all this. And I've accepted this compromised notion of excellence because I love the theater and recognize that, as theater has become increasingly culturally marginalized, audiences have dwindled. If the price for inspiring interest in the theater and developing new audiences is a three-hour commercial wherein aesthetically and intellectually vapid plays and musicals are rewarded for being popular, then so be it. If looking back at the list of Best Musical winners over the last couple decades reveals few shows I've liked and only two I've loved, oh well, somebody must have liked them, right?

Well, this year's nominations are the straw that's broken this camel's back. Of the four Best Musical nominees, only one—one!—has a wholly original score. This in a season with an unusually large number of new musicals with scores by exciting young composers and lyricists, including Jason Robert Brown, Andrew Lippa, and the team of Tom Kitt and Brian Yorkey. This in a season when an unusually large number of new musicals star Broadway talent instead of "names" from the west coast.

I'll argue to anyone who'll listen that the Tony Awards need to be more than a popularity contest, building audiences by giving them what they already know. Awards are one way, an important way, in which playwrights, composers, actors, and audiences can be nurtured. If the theater community complains all year long about the paucity of new plays and musicals—and it does—don't forget to reward them when awards season comes around. A season like this, with a cornucopia of new plays and musicals, should be

celebrated instead of inspiring complaints that "they all could have been better." If the theater community complains all year about the lack of opportunity for homegrown acting talent—and it does—don't ignore those actors and the shows they're in when the nominations roll out. If the theater community complains all year that audiences want their plays and musicals predigested—and it does—don't honor those shows that mount a movie on a Broadway stage. In short, awards are one way the theater community can shape the theater the way they want it to be. They help create the future of the theater, and to create the future, you need to think past this season's box office receipts.



Bob will be rooting for *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* to win at the Tonys.

In my imaginary Tony Awards, Kitt and Yorkey's *If/Then* wins Best Musical, with *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* (actually nominated!) a close second. Brown's *The Bridges of Madison County* and Lippa's *Big Fish* certainly get nominated. As it is, on Sunday, June 8, as I watch CBS, I'll be

rooting for *Gentleman's Guide* but banging my head against the wall as the exceptionally lousy *Aladdin* walks away with the prize. Tony Awards, why can't I quit you?



2014-2015 Directors and Producers

The Board of Governors recently announced the following directors and producers for our 2014-2015 shows:

The Philadelphia Story-Jeremy Stiller, director; Deb Smith, producer

Rent - Brett Cottone, director; Alan Wilson, producer

Of Mice and Men - Penny Wilson, director; Chris Terven, producer

Dirty Rotten Scoundrels - Alan Wilson, director; Jake Rathman, producer

Laughter on the 23rd Floor - Marcia Weiss, director;

Seussical - To be Announced.

Historian's Corner

As you enter the theatre to go to your seats, have you ever wondered about the large box on the back wall of the auditorium? It is located right behind the sound area.

From 1962 until 1965, that area was a window. At the end of year meeting for the 1964-1965 season, President Dick Anderson outlined some improvements for the upcoming season. Among the items he mentioned was putting in a fan for the rear window. He also mentioned putting the name Community Players on the west side exterior wall. The fan President Anderson spoke of was in use from 1965 until the 1992-1993 season.

During the winter months, the large box that you see was put over the fan to help keep the weather out. However, before the air conditioning was put in, during the fall and spring shows, the fan would be turned on by the first person to open the building for that evenings performance. The fan was also turned on at the intermission break and as the audiences were leaving the theatre.

Before 1973, the backstage exit door was opened to allow the air to be pulled through by the fan. Once the shop area was built in 1973, the garage door in the shop was opened for the air to be pulled through by the fan.

The box has now been in its place since 1992-1993, Players' 70th Season. It was during that summer that the air conditioning was installed.

As for the Community Players name on the exterior west side wall, most of it remains on the building. It is now located in the shop area just above the large sliding door that separates the stage from the shop. In 1973, the shop was added to the original building and the west facing exterior wall was changed.

—Bruce Parrish, *Community Players Historian*



...*The Odd Couple* Preview continued from page 1

The Odd Couple is being directed by Players' veteran **Jeremy Stiller** who is also Set Designer. **Hannah Kerns** is Assistant Director and Stage Manager. **Chris Terven** is Producer and **Mark Wright** is Lighting Designer. **Eli Mundy** is doing the sound design with mentorship from **Rich Plotkin**, and **Opal Virtue** is doing costumes. Properties are being done by the triumvirate of **Carol Plotkin**, **Dorothy Mundy**, and **Judy Stroh**.

The play is set in the 1960's and cultural references (such as 38 cents for a pack of cigarettes and \$120 rent for an eight-room NYC apartment) will be cause for additional snickering. Although not intended for very young children, *The Odd Couple* is not inappropriate for any age group.

The pay-what-you-can Preview performance is Thursday, May 15 with regular performances May 16-18 and May 22-25. Remember, only two weekends for this non-musical!

New Board of Governors Members Elected

The following people were elected to the Board of Governors at the annual membership meeting in April:

House and Grounds - Jay Hartzler
Treasurer - Chris Terven
Technology - Brett Cottone
Set/Shop and Props - Jake Rathman
Ad Sales and PR - Sara Schramm
Playreading - Tyler McWhorter
Membership - Wendy Baugh