

***THEATRE USA PROUDLY
PRESENTS
NEIL SIMON'S
BRIGHTON BEACH MEMOIRS***

First produced in Los Angeles in December of 1982, *Brighton Beach* is the first of three plays Simon wrote that are specifically autobiographical. Using his alter ego, Eugene Morris Jerome as the central figure of each of the plays, Simon, the most successful American playwright of the twentieth century, gives us a look at the source of the subject matter that has dominated much of his work. Set in his native Brooklyn in the late 1930s, *Brighton Beach* introduces characters that will present themselves again in both *Biloxi Blues* and *Broadway Bound*.

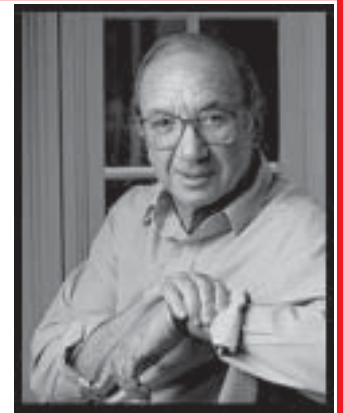
In *Brighton Beach*, Simon's alter ego Eugene is a fourteen year old: dreaming of a career pitching for the Yankees, idolizing his brother, and suffering a guilty attraction to his cousin Nora. His working class neighborhood is peopled with Irish and German immigrants, as well as his own extended Jewish-American family. Indeed, Eugene's house is crowded. He lives with his parents Jack and Kate and older brother Stanley, and his mother's sister and her two daughters, the bookish, sickly Laurie, and the budding starlet with Broadway dreams, Nora. During the action of the play, Eugene's father suffers an apparent heart attack, brought on by overwork and exhaustion, Stanley loses his portion of the family income gambling, and his mother and aunt hash out old family conflicts. The trials and tribulations of growing up in his crowded Jewish household show off Simon's mastery of the family drama.

Matthew Broderick performed as Eugene in *Memoirs* original Los Angeles and New York productions. He would later reprise the role in the stage versions of both *Biloxi Blues* and *Broadway Bound*.
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POSTCARD OF BRIGHTON BEACH CIR. 1920'S

“The way I see things, life is both sad and funny. I can't imagine a comical situation that isn't at the same time also painful. I used to ask myself: What



**About Playwright
Neil Simon**

How “sweet it is!” In describing the American Master's series for P.B.S., the following “bio” has been widely viewed:

Neil Simon is the world's most successful playwright. He has had dozens of plays and nearly as many major motion pictures produced. 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 blockbuster hits from Beijing to Moscow. His true success, however, is in his unique way of exposing something real in the American spirit.

Born in the Bronx on July 4, 1927, Marvin Neil Simon grew up in Manhattan and for a short time attended NYU and the University of Denver. His most significant writing job came in the early 1950s when he joined the staff of *Your Show*

of Shows, a landmark live television comedy series. Sid Caesar's hilariously cutting-edge program had some of the best comic minds in television working for it, including Mel Brooks, Woody Allen, Larry Gelbart, and Carl Reiner. “I knew,” said Simon, “when I walked into *Your Show of Shows*, that this was the most talented group of writers that up until that time had ever been assembled together.” By the 1960s, Simon had begun to concentrate on writing plays for Broadway. His first hit came in 1961 with *Come Blow Your Horn*, and was soon after followed by the very successful comic romance *Barefoot in the Park*.

Simon's brother, Danny, who also worked on *Your Show of Shows*, played a major role in his writing. Eight and a half years older, Danny brought Simon into the business and had shown him the ropes. In fact, it was Danny who provided the inspiration for one of Simon's most enduring hits. After his

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Artist Spotlight Guest Director Jean Galloway

It's hard to call Jean Galloway a Guest. *Brighton Beach Memoirs* is the sixth show she has directed for Theatre USA. As an Adjunct Faculty member of the Department of Dramatic Arts she has also been the driving force behind our productions of *Royal Gambit*, *Eleemosynary*, *A Doll House*, *Dancing at Lughmassa*, and last year's *The Rivals*. Retired from the Mobile Arts Council as Executive Director, Ms. Galloway will quickly tell you how much she enjoys her retirement. "I enjoy doing only what I absolutely have to. I get up, go to the gym, teach a class now and then, visit with friends, travel, whatever I want to." So, with that in mind why does she continue the demanding role of directing a play every year. "Theatre has always been so much a part of my life, I can't imagine not having some involvement. Retired, in some ways, I'm more myself now. I'm loving the comfort of being what I always thought I was, a director, a theatre artist."

That's what she started out to be, a theatre artist. "Every time I planned for one thing I ended up doing something else." She studied theatre at Birmingham Southern College and has a year of graduate work in directing from the University of Illinois at Champagne Urbana. She planned to teach theatre in the high schools. When she started teaching in high schools she discovered, "They didn't want me to teach theatre or direct. Suddenly I was coaching debate, rhetoric and dealing with tournaments." So she returned to school to get her Masters in Speech and Rhetoric at the University of Alabama. When she started teaching at what was then Mobile College, she discovered they didn't want her to coach debate. "No, they wanted me to direct theatre. So I did." Then came her seventeen year stint as the Executive Director of the Mobile Arts Council. "It was a great experience. If not theatre, itself, theatrics has always been a part of my life." She is especially proud of the council's Master Plan for the Arts in Mobile. "It took seventeen years to accomplish it and not always by a direct route, but it is extremely satisfying seeing the plan being used, watching groups and organizations use it as a vital tool to accomplish their goals."

Now she's given up planning. "Whatever looks like fun or seems exciting I'm going to do it." And fun for her is directing. As a director, she enjoys sitting back and watching the end result of her efforts on opening night, but her favorite part of directing is the process. "I love watching actors grasp the individual characteristics of these people. Every actor is different with different life experiences and each brings something new to the stage." And directing *Brighton Beach Memoirs*? "What I love about this play is that Neil Simon helps us understand how memory helps us erase the hard edges of life. So when we look back we see it more warmly and appreciate it for what it was."

So this longtime Guest has not worn out her welcome. Theatre USA is very happy that she has chosen to share her talents and experience with us. Besides, it's always fun to see what she's chosen to be up to next.



DAVID MIMS WORKS ON THE STAIRS FOR BRIGHTON BEACH MEMOIRS

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divorce, Danny moved in with another divorced man, and this situation became the set-up for *The Odd Couple* (1966). Though Danny had begun writing the story himself, he reached a block and eventually handed it off to Simon who soon made it a smash on Broadway. Starring Jack Lemon and Walter Mathau, the 1968 film version was equally successful and prompted a popular television series.

By 1973, Simon was a major voice in contemporary comedy. But, that year he entered a low period in his life, when his wife of twenty years, died. Some time later, he met the actress Marsha Mason, and they were married. His 1977 play, *Chapter Two*, dramatizes the grief of a newly remarried man trying to start over after his wife has died. *Chapter Two* was considered one of his finest works and he followed it with a musical, *They're Playing Our Song*.

Throughout his four-decade career, 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. One of Simon's great achievements has been the insightful representation of the social atmosphere of those times in New York. With his autobiographical trilogy, *Brighton Beach Memoirs* (1983), *Biloxi Blues* (1985), and *Broadway Bound* (1986), Simon created a touching portrait of an individual, his family, and the world around them. With these plays, Simon found his greatest critical acclaim, and for his 1991 follow-up, *Lost in Yonkers*, Simon was awarded a Pulitzer Prize.

Neil Simon has for almost forty years invigorated the stage with touching stories and zany characters, but possibly his greatest contribution has been the ability to create humor from the lives and troubles of everyday people. Of Simon, actor Jack Lemon said, "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."

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Other well-known actors in the premiere version of the play included Joyce Van Patten as Eugene's Aunt Blanche and Zelko Ivanek as big brother Stanley. The production was directed by long time Simon collaborator Gene Saks,

Best known before the Eugene Morris Jerome trilogy for lightweight comic material like *The Odd Couple* and *Plaza Suite*; *Memoirs* marks a major turning point in subject matter and themes in Simon's work. The three "Eugene" plays, 1990's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Lost in Yonkers*, and his recent Broadway work fall much more into the "serio-comic" category that dominates the American stage today. *Memoirs* is filled with rich comic moments, but its characters are also possessed of a yearning for a better life and an innate humanity that elevates them above the one-dimensional comic character.

Time Magazine has called Simon the "patron saint of laughter" and hardly a

Broadway season has gone by in the last forty years without one of Simon's plays being produced. *Memoirs* has been produced all over the world, including a production as part of Alabama Shakespeare's 2002-2003 season. We hope this story of a young man's coming of age in Depression era, pre-WWII America resonates with you as it does with us. Eugene's growing awareness of the greater forces at work outside his little corner of the world anticipates the loss of innocence America as a whole will soon face, and arguably solidifies Simon's position as one of the greatest chroniclers of American life.

The Cast of *Brighton Beach Memoirs*

Eugene Jared Perego
Blanche Camryn Duff
Kate Danielle Norwood
Laurie Nicole Telhiard
Nora Nichole Drew
Stanley Nicholas Yohn
Jack David Mims

SEASON TICKET SUBSCRIPTIONS

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See all of Theatre USA's exciting season for one low price and save up to **25%** off the regular price. **buying your season tickets now!**

Season Rates

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For more information on Season Tickets call the Theatre USA Box Office.

TICKET & BOX OFFICE INFORMATION PHONE (251) 460-6306

Tickets for Theatre USA's Production of *Brighton Beach Memoirs*

General Admission \$10.00 Students * \$7.00

The Box Office will be open Monday through Friday, 12:00 pm till 5:00 pm and one hour before each performance.

The Box Office is located in the lobby of the Laidlaw Performing Arts Center on the main campus of The University of South Alabama. Tickets are sold on a first come first served basis. All seats reserved. All sales final. No refund or exchange.

*Students tickets available for all students with valid ID. One ticket per ID.

From the Director Jean Galloway

Memories have a wonderful way of softening the hard edges of the past. Harshness and pain mellow in recollection. So it is with Eugene Morris Jerome as he recalls a time in his youth when difficulties were handled with compassion and the hard realities of life blended frustration with great humor.

Brighton Beach Memoirs takes us to a time in 1937 when Eugene's life was beset with the cloud of a world war; held concern for relatives living in Europe, had extended family creating crowded conditions in the home, and rejuvenated a fierce need to find and understand his place in life.

In his inimitable way, Neil Simon presents these serious issues with humor and compassion. He shows us the world of "37" through the warm glow of Eugene's memory in which even the severest pain is eased through loving family relationships. Only after that fact can the challenges, growing pains, and crises of life be viewed with warmth and understanding.



NICHOLE DREW (LEFT) & NICOLE TELHARD (RIGHT) ALONG WITH CAMRYN DUFF, JARED PEREGO AND NICHOLAS YOHN REHEARSE SCENE FROM BRIGHTON BEACH MEMOIRS



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Neil Simon's
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Memoirs**

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