COME BLOW YOUR HORN
by NEIL SIMON

ON STAGE
The American Century Theater presents

COME BLOW YOUR HORN

A comedy by NEIL SIMON

September 12–October 12, 2013
Gunston Theatre Two
2700 South Lang Street, Arlington

Production Manager
Ed Moser

Director
Rip Claassen

Stage Manager
Charles Lasky

Set Design/
Master Carpenter
Trena Weiss-Null

Lighting Design
Marianne Meadows (USA)

Sound Design
Ed Moser

Costume Design
Patricia Tinder

Properties Design
Kevin Laughon

Synopsis of scenes

Time
The early ‘60s

Place
Alan’s apartment in the East Sixties, New York City

Act I
Six o’clock in the evening, early fall

Act II
Immediately after

Act III
Late afternoon, three weeks later

There will be one 15- and one 10-minute intermission.

Please—Silence and stow cell phones and other distracting devices. The videotaping or other video or audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited.

Come Blow Your Horn is presented through special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc.

About The American Century Theater

The American Century Theater was founded in 1994. We are a professional nonprofit theater company dedicated to presenting great, important, and worthy American plays of the twentieth century—what Henry Luce called “the American Century.”

The company’s mission is one of rediscovery, enlightenment, and perspective, not nostalgia or preservation. Americans must not lose the extraordinary vision and wisdom of past playwrights, nor can we afford to surrender the moorings to our shared cultural heritage.

Our mission is also driven by a conviction that communities need theater, and theater needs audiences. To those ends, this company is committed to producing plays that challenge and move all Americans, of all ages, origins, and points of view. In particular, we strive to create theatrical experiences that entire families can watch, enjoy, and discuss long afterward.

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This program is supported in part by Arlington County through the Arlington Commission for the Arts and Arlington Cultural Affairs, a division of Arlington Economic Development; the Virginia Commission for the Arts; the National Endowment for the Arts; and many generous donors.
**Artistic Director’s Notes**

**Come Blow Your Horn (1961), by Neil Simon**

Come Blow Your Horn launches The American Century Theater’s 19th season, answering a question that the company posed when it announced its creation: Does the D.C. area theater audience want to experience 20th century stage works that are no longer regularly produced by regional theaters, locally, or anywhere else? The answer is apparently, Yes, or we wouldn’t have been here this long. Thank you for confirming our faith in your wisdom, adventurous spirit, and reverence for great artistry of the past.

This is an appropriate time to make a confession: We launched the company with me saying that we would never do a Neil Simon play. In my defense, I didn’t think TACT would be around long enough to make a liar out of me—I certainly didn’t think I would be Artistic Director long enough to make a liar out of myself. Still, here we are, opening the season with Simon’s first Broadway hit, from 1961, and it is as consistent with TACT’s mission of presenting great, neglected, and significant 20th century stage works as any play could be. Yes, I was stupid.

In 1995, Neil Simon was the best known and most successful playwright in America. He was about to be honored by the Kennedy Center for a career that was still in full bloom; some Simon play, and often more than one, had been playing on Broadway for more than four decades. His 1995 effort, London Suite, was not a hit, but his previous effort, Laughter on the 23rd Floor, was, and his play of just four years before had earned him a Pulitzer Prize. Productions of past successes like The Odd Couple, The Sunshine Boys, and Brighton Beach Memoirs were routine fare in regional theaters, dinner theaters, and community theaters, and he was still churning out screenplays and TV adaptations of his hits. The TV version of The Odd Couple was still easy to find in re-runs, and Tony Randall and Jack Klugman had just done a reunion show.

There were no more hits for Neil Simon (2002’s The Dinner Party was close), however, and regional productions of his plays began declining, increasingly regarded as dated in style and overly familiar, since that day in 1995 when I put my foot in my mouth. Especially scarce have been productions of his early plays, and Come Blow Your Horn has been particularly neglected. Yet not only is that comedy as funny as ever, it is also, viewed in the perspective of what came after, especially fascinating, for it points us both forward and backward, to Simon’s own origins.

Upstairs and never seen in the New York apartment house that serves as the play’s setting is a man named … Felix Ungar. Chronologically, the story of Come Blow Your Horn follows Simon’s decades-later semi-autobiographical trilogy that took him from childhood to New York (Brighton Beach Memoirs, Biloxi Blues, and Broadway Bound). Comically, it establishes the genre of the odd couple who room together, a vaudeville format that Simon turned into a standard and extremely successful comic device, both for himself and other television writers. Today’s TV sitcom hits like The Big Bang Theory and Two and a Half Men can trace their set-ups, plots, and gags directly to Simon.

Freed from the temporary contempt that was bred by over-familiarity, we can now see that Neil Simon was a major force in American entertainment and the
evolution of comedy, and that *Come Blow Your Horn* is where it all began. He deserves our attention, respect, and gratitude as much as any other great 20th century playwright, and, unlike some of those, he is easy on the soul and the mind. Not only is it time for him to make his American Century Theater entrance, we are proud to have him. And I apologize.

—Jack Marshall
Artistic Director, The American Century Theater

**Director’s Notes**

Why Neil Simon? I use Neil Simon in my comedy classes, and there is a reason: He is master of the form. But when you make an art form look effortless and easy, you risk being called a hack by some and a panderer to popular tastes by others. Comedy, the toughest of all performing art forms, especially cultivates this reaction, bordering on contempt. To work, it has to seem natural, and if it looks too natural, everyone thinks it’s cheap.

I think Simon’s problem may be that he writes too well. His slick dialogue, honed through years of toiling for TV comedy geniuses like Sid Caesar, tempts directors and performers to let the scripts carry his plays, when there lies, beneath the surface, both enduring dramatic truths and the opportunity for classic stage comedy routines . . . and they are there by the playwright’s design.

The family dynamic, swinging wildly between love and dysfunction; the sexual revolution; divorce (as in *The Odd Couple*); stalking (*Star Spangled Girl*); aging (*The Sunshine Boys*) . . . Simon provides wisdom, perception, and laughs, often simultaneously, on these and other serious dilemmas of modern American life. The best Neil Simon plays, and *Come Blow Your Horn* is one of them, are like classic sports cars: Not only are they pretty on the outside, there is great stuff under the hood, and the ride is fantastic.

*That’s* why Neil Simon.

—Rip Claassen
Director, *Come Blow Your Horn*

**Cast**

Lizzi Albert (Peggy) is making her American Century Theater debut. DC area credits: *Anthony and Cleopatra*, *Richard III*, and *Pride and Prejudice* (Chesapeake Shakespeare Company) and *The Storehouse* and *Romeo and Juliet* (Artist’s Initiative). New York credits: *Decade at a Glance* (Harold Clurman Festival of the Arts and Teatro IATI). Lizzi is an Associate Member of Chesapeake Shakespeare Company and earned her BFA in Theater from NYU Tisch/Stella Adler.

Alex Alferov (Buddy) previously appeared with The American Century Theater as Gus in *Babes in Arms*. Regional: Jordan in *Grips* (DC Queer Theatre Festival), Artur (u/s) in *Big Nate* (Adventure Theatre MTC), Adam in *Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)* (National Players at Olney Theatre Center), and Ernst in *Spring Awakening* (The Keegan Theatre).

Heather Benjamin (Connie) previously appeared at The American Century Theater as Ann in *Stage Door*. Other credits in the area include *The Confines of Flattery* (2013 Capital Fringe Festival), *A Doll’s House* (Embassy Players), *Love Me! Why Everyone Hates Actors* (2012 Capital Fringe), *Valentine’s Day* and *The Last of the Thornton* (Quotidian Theatre Company), *Our American Cousin* (New Old Theater), and *The Little Mermaid and the Prince* (Adventure Theatre). Heather recently played principal roles in the films *Proof through the Night* and *The Pardon*. She earned her BA in Theatre from the University of Louisville.

Elliott Kashner (Alan) is a DC-based actor whose recent credits include Wilson in *Lilly’s Plastic Purple Purse* (Adventure Theatre, Helen Hayes Award nominee for Outstanding Production, Theatre for Young Audiences), Joe in *Clockwork Orange* (Scena Theatre), Pentheus in *The Bacchae* (WSC Avant Bard), various roles in *Almost, Maine* (1st Stage Theatre), Roxy in *Golden Boy*, *Keyboard in Rent*, and Watch in *Elizabeth Rex* (The Keegan Theatre); various in *Sportaculture* and *Ereik in Hellspawn* (Active Cultures Theatre), and Pontius Pilate in *Ecce* and Doug in *How To Be A Human* (Capital Fringe Festival). Elliott has studied at the Studio Theatre Conservatory.

Mick Tinder (Mr. Baker) was most recently seen in the *Revenger of the Understudies* cabaret at the Signature Theatre and as Richard in *Irish Carol* at The Keegan Theatre. He has previously been seen at The American Century Theater in *An American Century Christmas*, *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* (staged reading), *The Tenth Man*, and *The Eccentricities of a Nightingale*. A company member at The Keegan Theatre, Mick has also worked at Ford’s Theatre, Olney Theatre Center, and West End Dinner Theatre.

Allison Turkel (Mrs. Baker) returns to The American Century Theater, having performed in last season’s production of *J.B.* as Mrs. Adams and four other roles. She recently appeared as Veronica Shultz in *Five Lesbians Eating a Quiche* and the short film *H2No* and *Real Hipsters of Meridian Hill* (48-Hour Film Project). She studied at the Studio Theatre Acting Conservatory and Theatre Lab.

**Production Staff**

Rip Claassen is the owner and impresario of The American Backstage Company in Alexandria. A fixture on the Washington theatre scene for many years, Rip has taught theatre and acting at the Institute for the Arts for Fairfax County Public Schools, Duke Ellington School of the Arts, and other local theatre programs. For The American Century Theater, he has directed (*J.B.*, *Visit to a Small Planet*, *Babes in Arms*, and *Life with Father*), produced (*One Night with Fanny Brice*, *Native Son*, and *The Tenth Man*), and costumed innumerable shows. Rip founded the Northern Virginia Theatre Festival for high schools, and coaches theatre students seeking admission to competitive programs. He is Artistic Director of Teens and Theatre (TnT), a nonprofit theatre education company.

Ed Moser (Production Manager, Sound Design) is a regional audio-production veteran whose designs include *Long Day’s Journey into Night*, *A Little Trick*, *Afterplay*, and *Master Harold and the Boys* (Quotidian Theatre), *Amelia* (a Kennedy Center Page-to-Stage reading), and *A Christmas Carol*, *Underneath the Lintel*, and *Tuesdays*.
Charles Lasky (Stage Manager) most recently was Assistant Stage Manager for The American Century Theater production of Biography. Charles interned at the Kennedy Center.

Kevin Laughon (Properties Design) has designed properties for The American Century Theater productions of Sister Mary Ignatius… and Little Murders and for Company (Signature Theatre), The Personal(s) (No Rules Theatre Company), No Man’s Land (WSC Avant Bard), Boged (Theater J), Taking Steps and Zorro (Constellation Theatre Company), The Seafarer and Hedda Gabler (Scena Theatre), and The Musical of Musicals (The Musical!) and A Broadway Christmas Carol (MetroStage, where he was also Production Manager). He is also an actor/singer/dancer and choreographer/teacher who has worked at area theaters, schools, and dance studios for over 20 years.

Marianne Meadows (Lighting Design) is a member of United Scenic Artists Local #829, is the Resident Lighting Designer for the Washington Stage Guild (since 1994) and for Solas Nua (Johnny Meister and the Stitch, Scenes from the Big Picture, and La Corbière). Her designs for The Adding Machine (Washington Jewish Theater), Quills (Woolly Mammoth Theatre), The Chosen (Theater J), and Old Wicked Songs (Studio Theatre) earned her Helen Hayes Award nominations. Other design credits include A Couple of Blaguards (Ford’s Theatre), The Dead Monkey (Woolly), The Chosen and Miss Margarida’s Way (Studio Theatre), Eva and Songs from a New World, (Open Theatre, Gay Men’s Chorus of Washington (ten seasons), and national tours of Antony and Cleopatra, Kiss Me Kate, and Young (the original Three Mo’ Tenors) and The Acting Company. She received a Theatre Lobby Mary Goldwater Award in 2004.

Lindsey E. Moore (Assistant Stage Manager) has been Stage Manager for The American Century Theater productions of I Do! I Do!, Voodoo Macbeth, The Show-Off, Marathon ’33, and Stage Door and Properties Designer for Biography. She worked in stage management in Roanoke VA for shows including Antigone, The Laramie Project, and The Good Woman of Setzuan. Lindsey is a graduate of Roanoke College with a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre and Design.

Patricia Tinder (Costume Design) has costume credits for The Iceman Cometh (Elden Street Players), Laughing Stock (Reston Community Players), 1776 (The Keegan Theatre), and Colder Than Here and Taking Leave (Vienna Theatre Company, Ruby Griffith Award winners). Performance credits include Miss Adelaide in Guys and Dolls (West End Dinner Theatre), Abigail Adams in 1776 (Keegan), and An American Century Christmas (The American Century Theater).

Trena Weiss-Null (Scenic Design/Master Carpenter) has designed and built the sets for The American Century Theater productions of J.B., Life with Father, Dr. Cook’s Garden, The Titans, Happy Birthday, Wanda June, and Caps. She works as a director, designer, and theatre teacher in professional, community, and educational venues and has a Bachelor’s in Acting-Directing and Master’s in both Theatre and Education.

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