

2009-2010 Season

ZERO HOUR

Written & performed by Jim Brochu
August 29–September 27

LOST IN YONKERS

By Neil Simon
October 21–November 29

MOMMY QUEEREST

Written & performed by Judy Gold
December 16–January 3

THE FOUR OF US

A new play by Itamar Moses
January 20–February 21

ANDY WARHOL: GOOD FOR THE JEWS?

A world premiere written &
performed by Josh Kornbluth
March 6–March 21

IN DARFUR

A new play by Winter Miller
March 31–April 18

MIKVEH

An English language premiere
by Hadar Galron
May 5–June 5

NEW JERUSALEM: THE INTERROGATION OF BARUCH DE SPINOZA

A new play by David Ives
June 26–July 25

Theater J

Washington DC JCC
1529 16th Street NW
In the Aaron & Cecile
Goldman Theater
Washington DCJCC

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TANA HICKEN AND HOLLY TWYFORD STAR IN THE FIRST *LOST IN YONKERS* PRODUCTION IN THE DC AREA SINCE ITS PRE-BROADWAY RUN

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(Washington, DC) – In the first full-length Neil Simon production ever on stage at the Aaron & Cecile Goldman Theater, Theater J brings what is arguably Simon's best play, Pulitzer Prize-winner and four-time Tony Award recipient, *LOST IN YONKERS* back to DC for its first major production since its pre-Broadway run at the National Theatre in 1991. This fresh look at an American classic, directed by Jerry Whiddon, stars DC powerhouse actresses Tana Hicken and Holly Twyford, reunited after their remarkable performance together last season in *The Road to Mecca*.

LOST IN YONKERS runs October 21–November 29 at the Washington DCJCC. Performances on Wednesday, October 21 and Thursday October 22 at 7:30 pm are pay-what-you-can previews. Performances on Saturday, October 24 at 8:00 pm and Sunday, October 25 at 3:00 pm are \$30 previews. Press night is Sunday, October 25 at 7:30 pm. On Thursday, November 12 at 7:30 pm, the show will have open captioning for the hearing-impaired. A talk-back with the cast will follow the performance on Thursday, October 29. Tickets are available for \$30-\$55 at boxofficetickets.com or (800) 494-TIXS. Tickets for patrons 35 and under are half-price for all performances!

In a remarkable coming of age comic drama, two brothers (Max Talisman and Kyle Schliefer) are left to fend for themselves with their formidable immigrant grandmother (Tana Hicken); a sweet but simple-minded aunt (Holly Twyford); a hyperventilating, excitable aunt (Lise Bruneau) and a hoodlum of an uncle (Marcus Kyd), who is mixed up with the mob. With their dad (Kevin Bergen), on the road selling scrap, the boys learn a lesson about the resourcefulness of family in this classic American tale set during the 1940s, an economically challenged time looking eerily similar to our own. Seen through the youthful perspective of a 13-year-old and a 15-year-old, this tale of a dysfunctional family leaning on each other financially and emotionally during hard times is pointedly comic, gritty, and heart-breakingly poignant. At the heart of the play is Bella, who is child-like herself, but finally takes a stand against her embittered, co-dependent mother to permanently transform her family's dynamic.

Artistic Director Ari Roth hopes to introduce the next generation to Neil Simon's work. "Neil Simon," Roth says, "really is the gold standard of American playwriting in the twentieth century. In the late 80s and 90s, he managed to combine a popular aesthetic with a corpus of work that was increasingly significant and substantial." With *Brighton Beach Memoirs* and *Broadway Bound* opening in repertory at the Nederlander Theatre on Broadway in October, directed by the celebrated Chicago-based director David Cromer (*Our Town*, *Picnic*) and starring Laurie Metcalf, this is the year of Neil Simon revivals. Roth notes that "What's happening with these Broadway revivals of Simon's work is not dissimilar to what happened to Mamet's work on Broadway. Their

staying power has been rediscovered by a new group of theater-goers. With this production we're bringing the best of DC talent to pay homage to this canonical play."

Neil Simon, one of the most reliable hit makers in Broadway history with *The Odd Couple*, *Barefoot in the Park*, *Brighton Beach Memoirs* and *Biloxi Blues* among many others, is one of the most performed playwrights in the world. In fact, he is the only playwright to ever have four plays running simultaneously on Broadway. Though primarily a comic writer, his plays often reflect on the 20th-Century Jewish-American experience. **LOST IN YONKERS**, directed by Gene Saks, starring Mercedes Ruehl, Kevin Spacey and the late Irene Worth, premiered on Broadway in 1992 at the Richard Rogers Theatre and ran for 780 performances.

Director Jerry Whiddon, former artistic director of Round House Theatre, says, "I actually get more enthused with each passing day about the prospects of getting in the room with this script and these actors. I find the play more compelling with each reading; it's quite a wild ride and at the same time an affectionate look at family, survival, the endurance of all children. The themes of survival, identity and the family at war-time are so enduring that it seems this play will be around for a while, so "now" is easily the right time to do it." Whiddon returns to Theater J having most recently performed in *The Seagull on 16th Street* this past summer; he also directed *Speed-the-Plow* for the company in 2007.

Both making their first appearances at Theater J, Tana Hicken (13 Helen Hayes nominations, including 3 awards) and Holly Twyford (10 Helen Hayes nominations, including 3 awards), performing together for the third time, make a formidable pair as Grandma and Belle. Lise Bruneau (*King Lear* at the Shakespeare Theatre, *Legacy of Light* at Arena Stage) who will be seen later this season in *Mikveh*, plays Aunt Gert. Kevin Bergen, as the father Eddie, joins the cast from Philadelphia. Uncle Louie will be played by Marcus Kyd (*A Sleeping Country* and *Alice* at Round House Theatre, *Henry IV, Part I* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Folger Theatre). Max Talisman (concert reading of *Schlemiel the First* at Theater J; *Caroline, or Change* at Studio Theatre) as younger brother Arty and Kyle Schliefer (*Lord of the Flies* at Roundhouse Theatre, *Arcadia* at Folger Theatre) as older brother Jay bring an authentic youthfulness to the production.

Recent Helen Hayes Award-winner for his work on *Stunning*, Daniel Conway (*Born Guilty*, *Tattooed Girl*, *Talley's Folly*, *Speed-the-Plow*) will design the set for **LOST IN YONKERS**. Daniel MacLean Wagner, who has received 27 Helen Hayes Nominations, most recently for *Camille* at Round House Theatre, and awarded Outstanding Lighting Design 9 times, will create his first mainstage lighting design for Theater J. Resident Artist Micha Kachman (*The Seagull on 16th Street*, *Honey Brown Eyes*, *David in Shadow and Light*) will design costumes. The design team is completed with Neil McFadden designing sound (*Speed-the-Plow*, nine Helen Hayes nominations, most recently for *Boom* at Woolly Mammoth) and Michelle Elwyn (*The Seagull on 16th Street*, *The Accident*, *Honey Brown Eyes*) designing props.

Artistic Director's Roundtable Discussions will immediately follow most Sunday matinee performances at approximately 5:15 pm. These discussions, which are free, bring together panels of leading journalists, authors, scholars, and artists exploring a variety of topics raised by the play, in conversation with the audience. Visit Theater J's website at theaterj.org for up-to-date information on discussions.

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