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DRAMATIC CLUB



PRESENT

*London
Suite*

By Neil Simon

Directed by Robin Hirsch

26th March -
3rd April 2004

7.45pm

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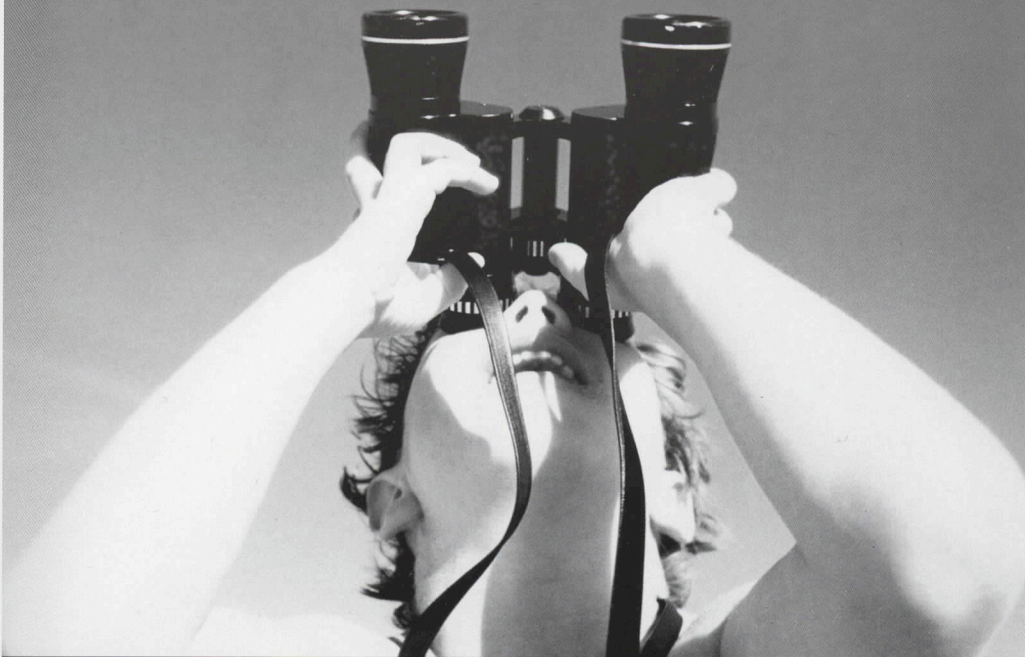
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Director's Notes

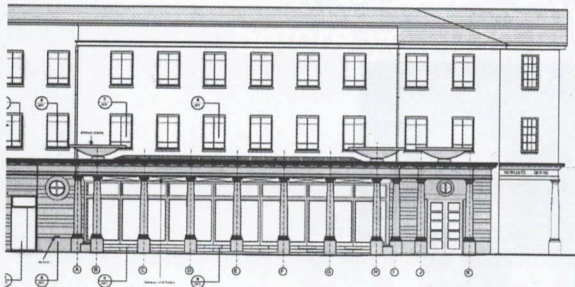


Are you a 'people watcher'? How many times have you walked through a bustling airport or entered a hotel lobby and seen people, singly or in groups, busily going their own way, and wondered to yourself what reason had brought them to that particular venue at that particular moment in time?

Neil Simon, famous for compassionately depicting humanity and all its frailties, has expounded this theory further. In tonight's production of *London Suite* he has created four sets of characters, who all have their own particular story to tell whilst occupying the same hotel suite of rooms - but obviously, not all at the same time!

My cast (or casts) have my undying gratitude, not only for working so hard but for patiently accepting a very spasmodic rehearsal schedule! I could only get around to rehearsing one play every four rehearsal slots! However, now that they have all come together to create the 'whole', we hope you enjoy the result and that you find, during the next couple of hours, something to be warned against, to sympathise with - or be amused by!

Robin Hirsch
Director



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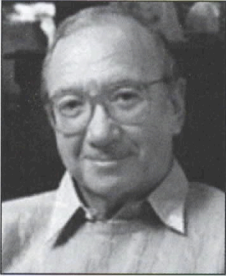
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Neil Simon



Marvin Neil Simon was born in the Bronx on July 4, 1927, and grew up in Washington Heights at the northern tip of Manhattan. He attended New York University briefly (1944-45) and the University of Denver (1945-46) before joining the United States Army where he began his writing career working for the Army camp newspaper.

After being discharged from the army, Simon returned to New York and took a job as a mailroom clerk for Warner Brother's East Coast office. He and his brother Danny began writing comedy revues and eventually found their way into radio, then television where they toiled alongside the likes of Woody Allen, Mel Brooks and Larry Gelbart writing for *The Phil Silvers Show* and Sid Caesar's *Your Show of Shows*.

Simon received several Emmy Award nominations for his television writing, then moved on to the stage where he quickly established himself as America's most successful commercial playwright by creating an unparalleled string of Broadway hits beginning with *Come Blow Your Horn*. During the 1966-67 season, *Barefoot in the Park*, *The Odd Couple*, *Sweet Charity* and *The Star Spangled Girl* were all running simultaneously. During the 1970-71 season, Broadway theatregoers had their choice of *Plaza Suite*, *Last of the Red Hot Lovers*, and *Promises, Promises*. Still, critical acclaim came slowly for Simon. In spite of the fact that he had had more smash hits than any other American playwright, critics continued to take pleasure in dismissing him as a mere 'writer of gags.'

In 1973, following the death of his wife, Simon reached a low point in his career with two failures: *The Good Doctor* (1973) and *God's Favorite* (1976). A move to California, however, reinvigorated him and he produced a much more successful play later that year in *California Suite*. After marrying actress Marsha Mason, Simon went on to write *Chapter Two* (1977) which was considered by many critics to be his finest play to that date. His fourth musical, *They're Playing Our Song*, proved fairly successful in 1979, but his next three plays (*I Ought to Be in Pictures*, *Fools* and a revised version of *Little Me*) all proved unsuccessful at the box office.

Then, in 1983, Simon began to win over many of his critics with the introduction of his autobiographical trilogy:- *Brighton Beach Memoirs* (1983), *Biloxi Blues* (1985) and *Broadway Bound* (1986)--which chronicled his stormy childhood, his brief Army time, and the beginning of his career in television. Suddenly the critics began taking him seriously. He followed up in 1991 with *Lost in Yonkers* for which he won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

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*.

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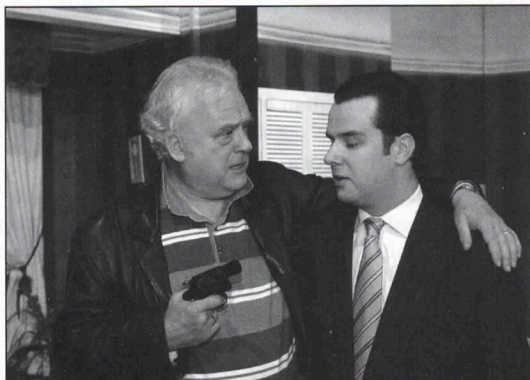
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London Suite



London Suite

by Neil Simon
Directed by Robin Hirsch

Cast

Act I “Settling Accounts”

Brian Cronin (Author)Eryl Lloyd Parry
Billy Fox (his Financial Manager)Matthew Woodhams
Place: A hotel “Suite” of rooms in London
Time: Autumn. 10 o'clock at night

“Going Home”

Mrs SempleMargaret Hodge
Lauren (her daughter)Trudi Hirsch
Scene One. Place: *The same.*
Time: *5 o'clock - a Summer's afternoon.*
Scene Two. Place: *The same*
Time: *Later that night.*

Interval of 20 minutes

Act II “Diana and Sidney”

Diana Nichols (TV presenter).....Celia Pope
Grace Chapman (her secretary)Trudi Hirsch
Sidney (her Ex).....Peter Heslin
Hotel Maid.....Joanne Howat
Place: *The same*
Time: *Mid-morning in December*

“The Man on the Floor”

Mark FerrisRay Mann
Annie Ferris (his wife).....Ann Richards
Mrs Sitgood (Associate Hotel Manager).....Margaret Hodge
The BellmanGary Cain
Doctor McMerlinMatthew Woodhams
Place: *The same.*
Time: *Noon. A hot day in July.*

Staging

Stage Manager	LINDSAY HAYWOOD
Assistant Stage Manager (Book)	SHEILA FURLONG
Crew	CHRIS APPLETON
Properties	BARBARA BEARDSSELL JUDITH GORSE JO HOWAT
Lighting	TONY BERRY ANDREW CONNARD
Sound	BRIAN HODGE BERNIE HOWAT
Set Design	SYD COLEY
Set Constructed by	SDC PRODUCTION TEAM
Scenic Artist	BOB JESSAMINE
Photography by	NEIL HICKSON

Acknowledgements

The Director would like to thank:

Shelbourne Hotel (for Beds & Chairs), Salvation Army (for Furnishings), S&A Furnishings (for loan of Furniture), Pack-it (for the luggage and jewellery), Dunelm (for Fabrics) and David Charters for additional artistic design

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London Suite

Cast



Robin Hirsch

My previous experience of Neil Simon plays has been a great pleasure and privilege. I have been lucky enough to act in *Barefoot in the Park* (twice! - once for the SDC and once for Wigan Little Theatre), *Last of the Red Hot Lovers* and *The Odd Couple* (female version), each time playing a zany, 'not-of-this-world' crazy lady! I wonder why? Subsequently, I was invited to direct *The Sunshine Boys* with two talented and sadly missed members in the lead, Don Anderson and Derek Home.

Fingers crossed, I hope I am beginning to understand a little of how Neil Simon's mind works!



Eryl Lloyd Parry

Eryl has often appeared in SDC productions, many under the direction of Robin Hirsch. His most recent being last season in *Bedroom Farce* and *Nobody's Perfect*.

Last autumn he played Sir Robert Morton in *The Winslow Boy* for Sefton Theatre Company.



Margaret Hodge

This is Margaret's second appearance in a play written by Neil Simon, the first one being *Rumors* four years ago. He is a favourite writer of hers, his dialogue being so witty and sharply observed. She hopes for more to come



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Cast



Celia Pope

Celia has appeared in: *Ladies who Lunch*, Lady Amelia Sasson; *Philadelphia Story*, Margaret Lord; *Spring and Port Wine*, Daisy Crompton and *Kingfisher* as Lady Evelyn. She has also appeared in musicals: *Annie*, Miss Hannigan; *Me and My Girl*, Dutchess of Dene and *My Fair Lady* as Mrs. Higgins.

Film: *The Well Oiled Body*, on location in Spain, directed by 'ER Partner', edited by Boots (video available shortly).

TV: *All the Answers*, *From the Sofa Millionaire*.

Celia has directed: *Talking Heads*, SDC; *Once A Catholic*, Sefton Theatre Company; *42nd Street*, SAOS and *Tilting Ground* for SDC.



Peter Heslin

Peter has been involved both on stage and backstage for a number of years. He has taken both large and small roles at the Little Theatre including in *Strickly for the Birds*, *Ladies who Lunch*, *Shadowlands*, *Business Affairs* and *The Perfect Murder*.

He has also appeared in musicals for local operatic societies and has happy memories of *Kiss me Kate* and *South Pacific*. He enjoys serious productions as well as comedy, which is why he remembers particularly Ray Cooney's *Funny Money* and was last seen here for SDC in *Star Quality*.



Ray Mann

Until now, with one exception, Ray has enjoyed Neil Simon's comedies from the comfort of a seat in the stalls. The exception was the exhilarating experience of directing *The Odd Couple* (female version) in 1992, which is still a very pleasant memory. Now that at last he has been given the chance to act in one, the actual experience is far from comfortable, as you will see!

London Suite

Cast



Ann Richards

During a 30-year membership of the SDC Ann has been cast in a variety of roles. As Harriet, in last season's *Nobody's Perfect*, she appeared in a selection of stylish ensembles. She therefore wonders if anyone will recognise her in the more casual outfit she wears for *London Suite*.



Matthew Woodhams

Matthew is thrilled to be doing another play with Robin, having previously been in *Philadelphia Story* and *Bedroom Farce*. Coincidentally it is the first play where Celia has played his mother. Seeing that Celia was recently Mrs Higgins to Ray's Professor Higgins, does that make Ray, Matthew's on-stage brother? It all becomes a bit incestuous when you consider other previous stage relationships with cast members: Eryl, Uncle; Ann, Mother-in-law; Ray, Father-in-law.



Gary Cain

A member of the SDC for just over a year. He has performed in *Loot*, *Star Quality* and very recently in *Mrs Warren's Profession*, as the cleverly good-for-nothing, Frank Gardner. Gary has been acting since the age of eight in some capacity or other, so he is told.

London Suite

Cast



Trudi Hirsch

Trudi is relieved to be playing two relatively normal roles this time after the last two parts in *Bedroom Farce* and *Star Quality* which were nervous and neurotic. She is thoroughly enjoying being the daughter to dotty mothers, on stage and off.

London Suite



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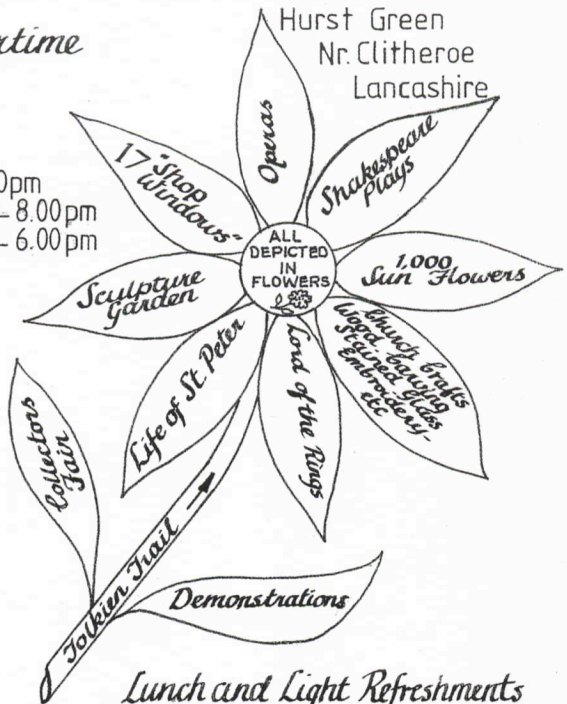
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