

# 'Odd Couple' Gives Entertaining Evening

By Bill McDaniel  
Special to the Tar Heel

For the benefit of those few people who are so far back in the cultural backwash that they haven't heard—Neil Simon is the funniest playwright in American theatre today.

Ever since the first opening of "Come Blow Your Horn" he has sent audiences rolling on the floor with such zany comedies as "Plaza Suite" and "Barefoot in the Park". Last night he had them on the floor again, laughing at the Carolina Playmaker's production of the "Odd Couple."

"The Odd Couple" is the story of two divorced poker playing buddies, Oscar Madison and Felix Unger, trying to make a go of living together. Oscar is a sportswriter by vocation and an irresponsible slob by choice.

He lives in an apartment that hasn't been cleaned since Dempsey K.O.'d Willard. He can't pay his bills, his poker debts or his alimony. And why did his wife leave him? Well as Oscar says, "Blanche used to say, 'What time do you want dinner?' And I'd say, 'I don't know. I'm not hungry.' Then at three o'clock in the morning I'd wake her up and say, 'Now!'"

Felix on the other hand is a priss to end all prisses. "I can't help it. I like things clean. Blame it on my mother. I was toilet trained at five months old."

He lives in a world of fear, guilt, and lysol. He shrieks over a burnt london broil, he mutters over footprints on the kitchen floor and weeps over pictures of his old apartment.

Naturally a relationship like this one can only end in divorce. And end it does in one of the funniest blow ups in comedy.

Director Clark Rogers has fulfilled the first requirement of the "Odd Couple" by coming up with a production that made the audience laugh; and did they laugh.

However, the show does have its weak points. A great deal of Simon's comedy is in the pacing. His scenes usually build from nuttiness to nuttiness climaxing in a curtain line that leaves the audience holding its sides in laughter and agony.

At times, though, the director let the pace slip, which made the show seem to drag and lose a good deal of its humor.

Taking the principal roles of Oscar and Felix, Tom Smith and Elias Roochvarg played well but not brilliantly.

Smith seemed to lack some of the energy that is needed to play a good Oscar. At times his low keyed delivery was perfect but at other times it seemed to be too little for what he was saying.

Elias Roochvarg's Felix seemed to lack consistency. One got the feeling that at times he was dropping in and out of character like a jack-in-the-box.

However, let me say in both these gentlemen's defense that they were handling tricky and difficult roles and for the most part they handled them very well.

The two principals were aided by a very good

supporting cast. Jim Greenwood, Donald Farthing, Kestal Phillips, and Walter Spearman were very believable and very funny as the boy's poker buddies.

Jean Spearman and Gay Baynes almost stole the show with their portrayals of Oscar's dumb-dumb English neighbors Cecily and Gwendolyn (shades of Oscar Wilde).

Cecily. What field of endeavor are you engaged in? Felix. I write the news for C.B.S.

Cecily. Oh! Fascinating! Gwendolyn. Where do you get your ideas from?

Felix. From the news. In fact Miss Baynes

wouldn't even have had to open her mouth. Her takes and expressions were whole soliloquies of dialogue.

Set designer Gordon Pearlmar had his problems with the theatre in the round. But for the most part his set was clean and functional. It should be pointed out, however, that gigantic lamp shades are not really that effective with a 360 degree sight line. They tended to get in the way of the action.

Despite these minor shortcomings the entire production was quite good. The play moved, the audience laughed and the gods smiled. It was a delightful evening of theatre.

## 2 Profs Get Fellowship

Two faculty members of the Department of Economics have been awarded Brookings Economics Policy Fellowships to analyze and evaluate programs of the federal government in state funding and FCC goals.

Robert P. Strauss and Douglas W. Webbink, both assistant professors of

economics are among eleven fellows selected from university faculties throughout the U.S. to participate in the program, which begins July 6.

The men will spend fourteen months in Washington analyzing programs of federal agencies and developing related research projects at the Brookings Institution.

Professor Strauss will be assigned to the Department of Treasury under Assistant Secretary Murray Weidenbaum. He will work on the technical aspects of a bill now before Congress concerning federal revenue sharing to the states.

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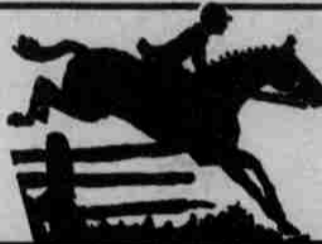
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