

ABOUT OUR NEXT PLAY

Colonial Players will usher in spring with *The Spitfire Grill*, a musical about redemption and the triumph of the human spirit set in a run-down restaurant in the tiny town of Gilead, WI. This musical by James Valcq and Lee David Alley, which began previews just two days before the 9/11 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, captured the hearts of critics with its upbeat message and infectious blend of country and folk music.

Noted critic Ben Brantley wrote in *The New York Times* that “the songs are shiny with tunefulness, hope and all-American inflections of country and folk. Mr. Valcq’s score has a gentle American vernacular charm. Mr. Alley’s lyrics have a matching ease and simplicity.” Victor Gluck of *The Associated Press* described it as “a lovely new musical in the Rodgers and Hammerstein tradition,” and *USA Today*’s Elysa Gardner said the score had “some of the most engaging and instantly infectious melodies I’ve heard in a musical in some time.”

The Spitfire Grill tells the story of Percy Talbott, recently released from prison, who seeks out Gilead as a new home only because of a photograph of the town she cut from a magazine. Percy is viewed with suspicion by residents of the dispirited community but is hired as a waitress by the owner of the town’s only restaurant. Gradually, as she becomes part of the community, Percy’s love of Gilead and her unstoppable spirit resurrect the optimism and self-respect that Gilead once had.

The Spitfire Grill begins a five-week run March 23. Make your plans now to see this musical gem that produced this praise from Alvin Klein in *The New York Times*: “*The Spitfire Grill* is a complete work of theatrical resourcefulness. A compelling story that flows with grace and carries the rush of anticipation... The musical is freeing. It is penetrated by honesty and it glows.”

DID YOU KNOW?

- ★ Colonial Players is a 100% volunteer organization. The reward for our actors, technical staff, box office workers, ushers, set builders, costumers and the many other volunteers required to keep the theater operating is the joy and satisfaction that comes from creating an entertaining and rewarding theatrical experience for our patrons. We invite you to join our theater community and become part of one of Maryland’s oldest community theaters.
- ★ Colonial Players is an active participant in Annapolis and Anne Arundel County civic affairs. For more than 15 years we have donated at least \$3,000 a year and often more from proceeds of our Christmas productions to a local nonprofit organization. CP’s patrons have donated hundreds of presents to brighten the holidays for poor children through our giving tree. CP awards an annual \$2,000 college scholarship to a student who has demonstrated a commitment to Colonial Players and to community theater. We donate tickets for fundraisers for nonprofit organizations and loan costumes and props for productions at schools and other community theaters.
- ★ Colonial Players has won numerous awards for the quality of our productions in competition with community theater groups in Maryland and the Washington region. CP won *The Capital Readers Choice Award* as the Annapolis area’s Best Theater in 2010 and 2011.
- ★ In our 63-year history we have produced more than 300 regular season productions plus numerous one-act plays, children’s shows, Christmas musicals and other special presentations.



WRITTEN BY **NEIL SIMON**

FEBRUARY 10 – MARCH 3, 2012 2011/2012 SEASON



THE COLONIAL PLAYERS, INC.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Every year at Colonial Players there is discussion of what our theater season should look like. What types of plays should we explore and present to our community? Should we be edgier or more traditional? What proportion of serious drama versus screwball comedy should we offer? What does our audiences want, and what do they need? These are serious questions, since our mission is both to entertain and to educate, to expand the minds and hearts of our patrons.

And so, very often we include plays in our season that seem light-hearted on the surface but cut close to the bone when we look more closely, plays with a quiet undercurrent rich in emotions. That is what we find in *Chapter Two*. Neil Simon has brought to life people and situations that we all can identify with, tickling our funny bones while tugging at our heartstrings, exploring emotional realities we all share.

Why are Neil Simon's plays so universally appreciated? I think the reason lies in the genuine clarity with which he uses words to express the reality of all his characters. He manages to distill truths and emotions from believable people, people we know and can love.

In 1980, I saw a Broadway touring company present *Chapter Two* while I was a student at Virginia Tech. While working backstage for the show I had the pleasure of meeting Dawn Wells, who was playing Jenny Malone. I didn't realize it at the time, but the reason the former "Marianne" from *Gilligan's Island* could portray Jenny so convincingly was not because Ms. Wells was talented, nor because she was genuine on and off stage, but because Neil Simon created a completely accessible and real character we cannot help but find endearing.

I trust we will all share in the laughter and the tears that make *Chapter Two* a truly memorable experience.

~ Terry

PRODUCTION STAFF

Director.....Gwen Morton
Assistant Director / Stage Manager.....Danny Brooks
Producer.....Beth Terranova
Set / Floor Designer.....Edd Miller
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Carpenters.....Lee Craft, Norm James, Bob Mumfer, Jim Robinson, Ted Yablonski
Set / Floor Painting.....Lois Banscher, Richard McGraw, Edd Miller, Tom Stuckey
Set Decoration.....Edd Miller
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Jeff Mocho, Dan Snyder, Beth Terranova
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MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of Colonial Players shall be to provide facilities, education, training and encouragement to all members of the community who are interested in participating in the dramatic arts and further to educate the community to the appreciation of the dramatic arts by providing a variety of dramatic entertainment.

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Gwen Morton grew up wanting to be Liza Minelli. As she became older, she recognized many obstacles to this ambition. One, she grew up in a small town in Arkansas rather than New York. Two, she never took dance lessons. But when she went to college at Arkansas Tech University, she jumped into the voice and drama programs, finishing with a B.A. in Speech and Theater. She thought she was ready to fulfill her ambition at the University of Arkansas when she read a casting notice for Sally Bowles in *Cabaret*. Failing to get the part, she realized it was time for a new ambition. Gwen began directing while working on her M.A. in Drama at the U. of A. She has since alternated acting and directing, with an occasional credit as stage manager and a five-year stint as a board member of Juneau-Douglas Little Theater in Juneau, AK.

Her acting credits include Mrs. Paroo in *The Music Man*; four seasons, including the world premiere production, of *King Island Christmas* at Perseverance Theater in Douglas, AK, and Mrs. Fezziwig in *A Christmas Carol* here at Colonial Players. In 1999, she was named best director for *Steel Magnolias*, which was named best production at the Alaska Association of Community Theatre Festival. She made her Colonial Players directing debut in 2008 with *The Curious Savage*. She is currently a student at the Community College of Baltimore County in the Sign Language Interpreter Preparation Program. While Gwen wouldn't trade her husband Ernie, daughter Lyann, son Sam or dog Cadhla for Liza's Tonys, her Emmy, her Oscar or any of her other awards, the next time she grows up she wants to be Stephanie J. Block.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Dear Audience:

I would like to request your patience. I know you've been promised a lot of laughs – and, don't worry, they'll be there. But right now, George Schneider and Jennie Malone are hurting. George's wife of 12 years died recently, and he isn't coping very well. Jenny's six-year marriage (to a professional football player – yeah, those always work out well) just broke up. They need some time to heal. Fortunately, George's brother Leo and Jennie's best friend Faye are there to take up the comic slack until George and Jennie are ready to get on with their lives (and repartee).

By the 1970's, Neil Simon had developed a reputation as the country's best writer of lightweight comedy. But the death of his wife of 20 years led to a darker tone in his plays. And yet, a closer examination reveals that darker tone was always there – Felix Unger, after all, has a half-hearted attempt at suicide in *The Odd Couple* after his wife throws him out. And the part that didn't change was the truth in Simon's characters. His characters are never comic caricatures. They

are real people who happen to think and talk fast and funny. George and Jennie are not Neil Simon and Marsha Mason. One of the reasons I chose to set this production in the present is to emphasize the universality of the characters. We encountered a few problems along the way. For example, in the original, Jennie and Faye are both actresses working in soap operas, and there are now NO soap operas filming in New York. But, just as actors and writers throughout history have adapted to changing times, so have Jennie, George, Faye and Leo.

The pleasure of directing a play at Colonial Players is tied to the great people that are always there to provide assistance. Special thanks on this production must go to Heather Quinn, who filled in until we could find a producer; Beth Terranova, who stepped in as producer despite an already full schedule; Danny Brooks, who was my right hand throughout; Edd Miller, who is an extraordinary source of advice and ideas, and a fabulous team of designers and technicians. (Please take the time to look at their names, because I'm running out of room and can't list them all here.) And to four special actors who made rehearsals a joy. Thank you all.

~ Gwen

THE CAST

Laura Ivey (*Faye*) - Laura is thrilled to return to the Colonial Players stage, this time for her first full-length production. She recently appeared in CP's 2010 One Act Festival as Marisol in *Clean*. Other stage experience includes the role of Laura in a production of *Laura* at Tyler Civic Theatre in Tyler, TX. Laura is a Tennessee native who has now lived in Severna Park for 13 years. She spends her time being mom to her three young sons, Gavin, Nick and Keith. She gives many thanks to a wonderful cast, crew and director for their support and much love to her patient and understanding husband, Kurt.

Richard McGraw (*George*) - "Actors are fortunate people. All artists are fortunate people, but one speaks here specifically of those involved in the performing arts. Once a piece has been completed, they must let it go. It no longer belongs to them, if it ever did in the first place. One could easily claim that one of the themes of *Chapter Two* is learning the art of let-go. In the theater, the plays and projects, the frustration and satisfaction and the people all come and go. Yet there are those gems you come across and hold onto for as long as you can. It is for those gems, those people I've met in the theater that I consider true friends that I dedicate these performances. So as not to bore the reader with a list of roles performed, editing happened. All productions and characters are special and affectionately remembered. However, a few remain as personal favorites: Werner Heisenberg in *Copenhagen* at the Cedar Lane Stage in Bethesda, Gregory Mitchell in *Love! Valour! Compassion!* at the Fells Point Corner Theater in Baltimore and Dr. Miller/Dr. Gachet in *Inventing van Gogh* here at Colonial Players. There are somewhere in the neighborhood of a dozen other roles played on the CP stage. Training: The Stella Adler Conservatory of Acting in New York City and the National Shakespeare Academy. I now let this bio go..."

Jeff Sprague (*Leo*) - *Chapter Two* marks Jeff's return to CP after a two-year hiatus. Previous credits include *Over My Dead Body*, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, *Kiss Me, Kate*, *Kindertransport* (2007 WATCH Award recipient), *Jekyll and*

Hyde and *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change*. Elsewhere locally, Jeff has performed with Annapolis Summer Garden Theatre and Dignity Players. Most recently, he played Edna Turnblad in ASGT's production of *Hairspray*. Other area credits include *Sight Unseen*, *The Crucible*, *Blue/Orange* and *Thoroughly Modern Millie*. Jeff directed Terrence McNally's *Botticelli* for CP's 2010 One-Act Festival, and he has been on the theater's Artistic Team for the past two years. By day, Jeff is an attorney with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. He lives in Severna Park with his beautiful wife, Kathleen. He sends his thanks to the cast, crew and production team and dedicates his performance, as he does all performances, to the memory of his mom and dad.

Jo Sullivan (*Jennie*) - Jo is thrilled to be performing for the first time with Colonial Players. A transplant from New York City, Jo has most recently worked with Bowie Community Theatre in productions of *The Cocktail Hour* and *Grace and Glorie*. But no stranger to the stage, she has been working in community theater most of her life with most of her performances in and around New York City. For 12 years you could find Jo performing everything from Viola in *Twelfth Night* and other summer Shakespeare productions to Alice in *You Can't Take it With You*. Jo serves as Interim Executive Director for UNHCR US, the UN agency supporting refugees globally. Prior to UNHCR, Jo was the Executive Vice President of External Affairs for the ASPCA headquartered in New York City. Currently she shares her home, sofa, bed, bathroom, meals and car ... with two rescue critters: Marlena "the little black and brown dog" and Hank the hound. There is sometimes room for her patient and kind husband, but that's usually after the dogs have settled and claimed their spot. A huge thank you to Gwen, this fantastic cast and especially Terry Averill, who gave her the courage to audition for a show with this amazing and talented theater group. In many ways Jennie is firmly a part of Jo, and she even lived three blocks from Jennie's apartment in New York, which didn't make the visualization out of Jennie's window too difficult to imagine.

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Thank you for your support. Your generous gifts help us to continue to provide educational and training programs, encouragement and entertainment to all who are interested in dramatic arts.

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THE STAFF (continued)

Andy Serb (*Sound Designer*) - Andy showed up at Colonial Players back in May, 2009, and the following day found himself operating the sound system for *Over My Dead Body*. He went on to run sound and lights for *Wonder of the World* and *Little Women* and to design sound for *The Curious Savage*. Andy began by running sound systems for numerous churches and bands, which sparked his interest and led him to broaden his horizons into more technical venues. During his four years attending the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London, CT., Andy first managed sound for the academy's praise band, and then stepped up as the lead sound tech and lighting coordinator for *Anything Goes*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Me and My Girl* and *Oliver*.

Beth Terranova (*Producer*) - With *Chapter Two*, Beth once again puts on the producer hat for Colonial Players. She previously produced two One Act Festivals. In addition, Beth has shared her talents in many other positions in support of Colonial Players productions. Most recently, she received critical acclaim for designing the

quirky fairy tale costumes for Colonial Players' *Cinderella Waltz*. Her costume designs have also been seen on the Players' stage in *Lettice and Lovage*, *The Diviners*, *A Lion In Winter*, *She Loves Me*, *Hauptmann*, *The Philadelphia Story* and *Moon Over Buffalo*. Other work "behind the scenes" at CP includes stage manager, set designer, play consultant, production consultant, sound board operator and stage crew. For CP, Beth directed *She Loves Me*, *Fin and Euba* and the WATCH Award-winning *Hauptmann* (Outstanding Director, Outstanding Play). She is an award-nominated actor (*Two Rooms*), and was most recently seen onstage as Aunt March in *Little Women*. She has just rejoined the Colonial Players Board of Directors as production director – her fourth position and sixth year on the board. In addition, she produces the News and Cues newsletter and serves as a CP costume consultant/wardrobe curator, Bylaws Committee member and CP WATCH judge. Beth has also worked with three other area theaters in roles on and off stage.

ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Neil Simon's success as a playwright is unquestioned. He is the only author to have four Broadway productions running simultaneously, and no author can match the number of nominations for Tonys, Emmys and Academy Awards showered on him by the theater, television and movie industries. He won the Pulitzer Prize for drama in 1991 for *Lost in Yonkers*, a more serious, less sentimental play than much of his work.

Simon began his career as a television writer in the 1950s, displaying his sharp wit and comedic edge for Phil Silvers and for Sid Caesar's *Your Show of Shows*, where he worked with such comic geniuses as Woody Allen, Mel Brooks and Carl Reiner. "I knew 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," Simon said.

In the 1960s, he began to concentrate on writing for Broadway and turned out a string of critical and commercial successes such as *The Odd Couple*, *Barefoot in the Park*, *The Star-Spangled Girl*, *They're Playing Our Song* and a trilogy -- *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, *Biloxi Blues* and *Broadway Bound* -- based loosely on the experiences of a young Neil Simon and his brother, Danny.

By 1973, with Simon firmly established as one of America's top comic writers, he entered a low point in his life when his wife of 20 years died. He was introduced to actress Marsha Mason and began a tentative romance that culminated in marriage. *Chapter Two*, considered one of his finest plays, is reflective of that period in Simon's life as he dealt with his grief and began to rebuild his life.

Colonial Players is a proud member of ACT, the Annapolis Consortium of Theaters.

THE STAFF

Danny Brooks (*Assistant Director, Stage Manager*) - After 16 onstage performances here Danny steps behind the scenes for the first time at CP. An attorney, his last show here was this past season's *Lettice and Lovage*, in which he was doubly typecast as the solicitor Bardolph and as Surly Man. Danny has appeared in more than 70 productions, primarily here and at his first theater home, Prince George's Little Theatre. His all-time favorite role was Atticus Finch in PGLT's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Other favorite parts include Chater (*Arcadia*), Niels Bohr (*Copenhagen*) and Scrooge (*A Christmas Carol*), all at CP, and, at other venues, Einstein (*Arsenic and Old Lace*), Felix (*The Odd Couple*), Juror #3 (*Twelve Angry Men*), Saunders (*Lend Me a Tenor*) and the multiple roles of Judge, St. Matthew and Caiaphas in *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*. Thanks to his family for their love and support.

Peter Branscomb (*Properties Designer*) - This is Peter's third production with The Colonial Players. Previously, he worked on the productions of *Inventing Van Gogh* and *Private Lives*.

Rebecca Feibel (*Costume Coordinator*) - Rebecca enjoys a double life as a stay-at-home mom for two young boys and a performer, teacher, director and more in the performing arts. She was stage manager for *Cindrella Waltz*, CP's January production. Recent roles include Matron Wick in *The Christmas Doll*, Ensemble in *She Loves Me*, Fred's Wife/Ensemble in *A Christmas Carol* (all at Colonial Players) and Sonia in *Godspell* at Annapolis Summer Garden Theatre. "Costume design is a process of working with the actors and the director to fulfill the visual image they hold for the character. It has been a balancing act, and I hope the director's vision for the characters is communicated, in part, through the costumes chosen. Thank you for patronizing Colonial Players and love to my three roommates: Joe, Joey, and Charlie."

Frank Florentine (*Lighting Designer*) - Frank's background covers a wide array of lighting projects from ballet to museums to special events to show caves. He retired as the lighting designer of the Smithsonian Institution National Air and Space Museum on December 31, 2009, after

25 years in that position. His responsibilities included the lighting design for all exhibitions within the National Air and Space Museum, Washington, DC, and the Udvar-Hazy Center near Dulles Airport. Frank has also designed the lighting for three show caves over the past ten years: Kartchner Caverns State Park, Benson, AZ; Alabaster Caverns, Freedom, OK, and Lewis and Clark Caverns State Park, Whitehall, MT. Frank resides in the Annapolis area and has designed lighting for a sail boat in the Eastport Yacht Club's annual Christmas Parade of Lights for the past 20 years. Most recently, he designed the lighting for the 9/11 Memorial of Anne Arundel County. Frank worked in professional theater as a production manager, stage manager and associate lighting designer. He traveled nationally and internationally with several ballet companies, including a 65,000 mile tour with the late Rudolf Nureyev. Frank is a Fellow of the Illuminating Engineering Society and is Lighting Certified by the National Council of Qualified Lighting Professionals.

Edd Miller (*Set Designer*) - Edd has worked with Colonial Players since 1964 in any capacity they would have him: actor, director, crew, sweeper, usher, whatever. This time it is set design that is the assignment, and he gets to apply some of the things he learned as an interior designer. Some of you might remember his design work for CP. He has done sets more recently for *The Diviners*, *The Philadelphia Story*, *Moon Over Buffalo*, *The Tale of the Allergist's Wife* and, to go back a ways, *I Never Sang for My Father*, *On Golden Pond* and *Blythe Spirit*, among others. Edd is also the play consultant for *Chapter Two*.

Shirley Panek (*Lighting Designer*) - Shirley has appeared many times onstage at Colonial Players, but *Chapter Two* marks the first time she is venturing into the tech booth. Most recently, CP audiences have seen her in *Little Women: The Musical* (Mrs. Kirk), *The Unexpected Guest* (Laura Warwick), *Lettice and Lovage* (Ms. Framer), *Private Lives* (Sybil Chase) and *Dog Logic* (Kaye). Shirley would like to thank Gwen for giving her the opportunity to take on this important role, and Frank for sharing his valuable experience and skills and mentoring this production newbie. Love to Drew and Emma.

THE COLONIAL PLAYERS, INC.
presents



Written by
NEIL SIMON

Directed by
GWEN MORTON

THE CAST

(in order of appearance)

George Schneider.....Richard McGraw
Leo Schneider.....Jeff Sprague
Jennie Malone.....Jo Sullivan
Faye Medwich.....Laura Ivey

TIME

The present. Late February through mid-Spring.

PLACE

Jennifer Malone's upper East Side
apartment and George Schneider's lower
Central Park West apartment.

THERE WILL BE ONE 10-MINUTE INTERMISSION BETWEEN ACT I AND ACT II.

Produced by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc.

Taking photographs and using any recording devices are strictly prohibited. Smoking is prohibited throughout the building.

The Colonial Players, Inc. is funded in part by an operating grant from the Maryland State Arts Council,
an agency dedicated to cultivating a vibrant cultural community where the arts thrive.