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Press photos <http://www.americancentury.org/photos/horn> (available after 9/10)

The American Century Theater presents the Neil Simon comedy

Come Blow Your Horn

The American Century Theater launches its 19th season to laughter with the Neil Simon comedy, *Come Blow Your Horn*, directed by Rip Claassen, opening Thursday, September 12 and running through October 12 at Gunston Arts Center's Theatre Two in Arlington.

Come Blow Your Horn is The American Century Theater's first production of a Neil Simon play, and it was Neil Simon's first Broadway show, a hit that ran for 641 performances. Not only was the comedy a warm and funny evening with real human insight, it was also the beginning of one of the most successful playwriting careers in the history of the American stage.

Come Blow Your Horn tells the story of a young man's decision to leave his parents' home to live in New York with his brother. Buddy is a 21-year-old virgin, while older brother Alan is living the swinging bachelor's life of the early 1960s, as memorialized in a dozen Rock Hudson movies. Foreshadowing the more sensitive and thoughtful comedy of Simon's prime years that produced such plays as *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, the play contrasts Alan's dissatisfaction with his hedonistic existence and search for meaningful love with Buddy's gradual corruption, as he becomes a clone of the rogue Alan pretends to be.

Neil Simon has written twenty-eight plays and holds the record for the greatest number of hits in the American theater, the only playwright in Broadway history to have four hit productions running simultaneously. He has had more plays adapted to film than any other author and also has written numerous original film comedies, including the Academy Award-winning *The Goodbye Girl*. He is a 1995 Kennedy Center Honoree and recipient of the Mark Twain Prize, and received Tony Awards for *The Odd Couple*, *Biloxi Blues* and *Lost in Yonkers*. He was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for *Lost in*

Yonkers, numerous Drama Desk, Writers Guild, Golden Globe and NY Drama Critics awards, and is the author of two memoirs, *Neil Simon Rewrites: A Memoir* (1996) and *Neil Simon The Play Goes On: A Memoir* (1999).

Yet, says TACT artistic director Jack Marshall, he gets no respect these days. “Neil Simon came to personify the modern, gag-a-minute style of comedy that critics disdained as inferior to his predecessors, like S.N. Behrman (*Biography*), Philip Barry (*The Philadelphia Story*) and his more hard edged contemporaries, like Murray Schisgal (*Luv*), Terrence McNally (*The Ritz*) and Wendy Wasserstein (*The Heidi Chronicles*). His biggest hits, like *The Odd Couple*, became staples of dinner and community theater as well as popular movies, so Simon often has been dismissed as an artist and denigrated as ‘commercial.’

“But Neil Simon is a craftsman, and his plays reflect an era, a style and a genre that has been tremendously influential on our popular culture. Today the ‘odd couple’ theme that he began exploring in *Come Blow Your Horn* is the foundation of TV’s most popular comedy, *Big Bang Theory* as well as others, like *Two Broke Girls* and *Two and a Half Men*. He has been a major cultural force, but more importantly, his plays are still as funny as ever. American theater and the culture owe a big debt to Neil Simon, for nobody has given us more laughs than he.”

TACT assigned its first Simon show to Rip Claassen, who comes from a vaudeville background and previously pleased TACT’s audiences with his handling of the classic comedies *Life With Father* and *Visit to a Small Planet*. He directs a fine ensemble cast led by Elliot Kashner as Alan Baker, and TACT veteran Mick Tinder as Mr. Baker. The role of Buddy is played by Alex Alferov. Lizzie Albert, Heather Benjamin and Allison Turkel round out the cast, handpicked by the director for their grasp of the unique Simon timing and comic repartee.

The show is produced by Ed Moser, who is also Sound Designer. Technical team includes Stage Manager Charles Lasky, Lighting Designer Marianne Meadows, Costume Designer Patricia Tinder, et Designer Trena Weiss-Null, and Props Designer Kevin Laughon. Lindsey E. Moore is the Assistant Stage Manager.

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Performance Information

EDITORS: The press is invited to the **Saturday, September 14, 8:00 pm** performance in Gunston Theatre Two, 2700 South Lang Street, Arlington.

Come Blow Your Horn opens **Thursday, September 12** and runs through **Saturday, October 12, 2013**, with a **Pay-What-You-Can preview** on Wednesday, September 11 at 8:00 pm and a **Pay-What-You-Can performance** on Wednesday, September 25 at 8:00 pm. There is a **post-show talk-back** on Thursday, September 19. Please note that opening night is Thursday, September 12.

Regular show times are Thursday through Saturday evenings at 8 pm with Saturday/Sunday matinees at 2:30 pm (no matinee Saturday, September 14). Tickets can be ordered online at americancentury.org or by calling 703-998-4555.

Directions

The American Century Theater performs at Theatre Two in the Gunston Arts Center, located at 2700 South Lang Street, Arlington VA 22206. Gunston is roughly ten minutes from downtown Washington DC and minutes from Arlington’s Shirlington Village. Free, ample, well-lit parking is available. For directions, visit americancentury.org/directions

About TACT

The American Century Theater is a 501(c)(3) professional nonprofit theater company dedicated to producing significant 20th-century American plays and musicals at risk of being forgotten. TACT 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.