



STUDY GUIDE
FOR

FOOLS

By NEIL
SIMON

at
Taproot Theatre Company

YIDDISH



FOLK TALES



For centuries Jewish storytellers have preserved and united their community with oral tales, passing the time, history and heritage of their people to future generations.

Yiddish

The Eastern European Jewish Language, spoken in daily life. The language also preserved oral and written literature.

Narrative Art

Storytelling, a central component to Jewish heritage and life. Stories were passed down from grandmothers, mothers, Rabbis, & gifted storytellers in a town or village. Storytellers entertained at weddings & stories were told by vendors at the market to pass the time.



Papirn-shnit

(paper-cutting)

Traditional Jewish folk art, popular in 19th & 20th Century Poland & Russia. Jewish holidays & customs associated with the paper cuts.



Preservation of Yiddish Folksongs with sound recording. This ethnographic expedition recorded 1,800 tales from Jewish Ukrainian communities.

Photo:
YIVO Photographic Archive

Reader's Corner
Yiddish Folktales
Edited by: Beatrice Silverman Weinreich
Translated by:
Leonard Wolf

Ukrainian Village

1890

Fools take place in the remote Ukrainian village of Kulyenchikov, about 1890. We see the day-to-day life of this cursed village and the out of the ordinary visit of the schoolteacher, Leon. Although *Fools* tells a fictional story of a cursed town, the people of Ukraine were cursed with a history of hardship.

Day-to-day life in Ukraine, 1890

*42% of Ukraine was organized into communes.

* Peasants owned 4.75 acres of land (13.6 acres of land could support a peasant family at this time)

* The Ukrainian language was not allowed in schools, journals and books. Russian replaced the Ukrainian language for these purposes.



Kelly Balch as Sophia, Bob Borwick as Leon.

Photo by: Matthew Lawrence

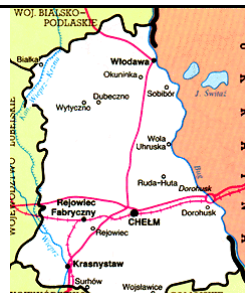
A group of Jewish folktales were told about the people of Chelm, a town located in Poland. However, in the Jewish tales Chelm signified people, rather than a specific locale. In the stories Chelm could be anywhere in Eastern Europe. *Fools*, which takes place in the town of Kulyenchikov, is Neil Simon's tribute to these legends, and his own interpretation of Chelm's inhabitants.

Ukraine- means "borderline." Ukraine was a border country between the east and the west.

Cossack- In Ukraine's history, a group who escaped the feudal system and created self-governing communities.

Below: modern map of Eastern Europe (worldatlas.com)

Right: Chelm, located in Eastern Poland (www.brittany-net.com)



ЎКРАЇНЭ

1890



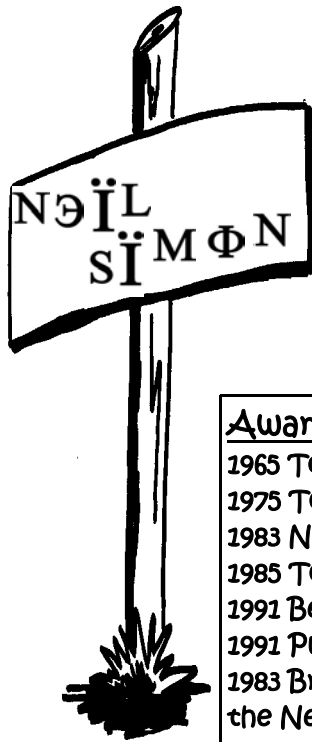
Reader's Corner

The Jar of Fools

By Eric A. Kimmel

Illustrated by:

Mordicai Gerstein



“A dominant feature of Simon’s work is his outlook on life. As is true for all other outstanding writers of comedy, Simon humorously dramatizes his serious basic beliefs. Through his characters, he suggests that the individual should choose to remain within the social network. No Simon hero or heroine makes the ultimate Romantic gesture of thumbing his or her nose at society. This stress not on the primacy of the individual, but on the primary importance of society has triggered negative reactions in several critics. Some critics, assuming that Simon’s “old-fashioned” beliefs constitute no beliefs at all, declare his work flimsy and superficial.”

-Robert K. Johnson

In: Robert K. Johnson: Neil Simon, Boston 1983, pp 141-144

Awards

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1965 Tony Award | Best Playwright, <i>The Odd Couple</i> |
| 1975 Tony Award | Overall Contribution to the American Theater |
| 1983 New York Drama Critics Circle Award | for <i>Brighton Beach Memoirs</i> |
| 1985 Tony Award | Best Play, <i>Biloxi Blues</i> |
| 1991 Best Play Tony Award | <i>Lost in Yonkers</i> |
| 1991 Pulitzer Prize | <i>Lost in Yonkers</i> |
| 1983 Broadway paid tribute to Neil Simon by renaming the Alvin Theatre to the Neil Simon theatre. | |

Marvin Neil Simon

July 4, 1927 Bronx, New York

Parents: Irving Simon, a Jewish traveling salesman & wife Mamie Simon

Married: Joan Baim (dancer), September 10, 1953 (died, 1973)

Married: Marsha Mason (actress), October 25, 1973 (divorced, 1982)

Married: Diane Lander, 1987 (divorced, 1988)

Remarried: Diane Lander, 1990

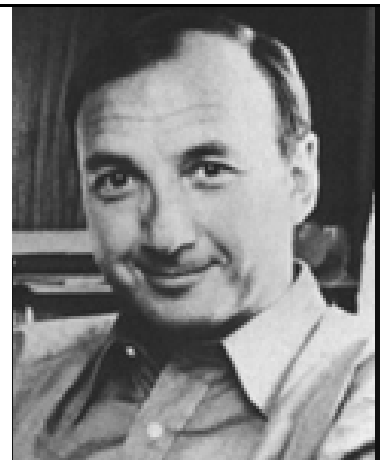
Children: (1st marriage) Ellen, Nancy; (3rd marriage) Bryn (adopted daughter)

Education: New York University, 1946
University of Denver

Career:

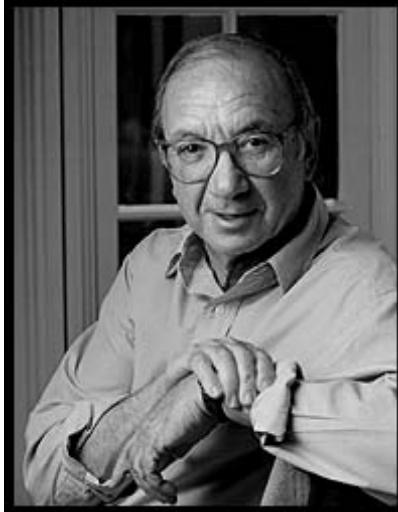
- Producer, playwright, and screenwriter.
- Eugene O’Neill Theatre, New York City, owner
- Warner Brothers, mailroom clerk, 1946
- Camp Tamiment, PA, wrote material for revues, 1952-53
- *Military Service:* U.S. Army Air Forces, sports editor for *Rev-Meter*, 1945-46

Member: Dramatists Guild, Writers Guild of America



“The way I see things, life is both sad and funny. I can’t imagine a comical situation that isn’t at the same time also painful. I used to ask myself: What is a humorous situation? Now I ask: What is a sad situation and how can I tell it humorously?”

-Neil Simon



"I know that I have reached the pinnacle of rewards. There's no more money anyone can pay me that I need...I have no reason to write another play except that I am alive and I like to do it."

-Neil Simon

"Simon's point of view does not arise simply out of a desire to pander to the beliefs of the 'moral majority.' Simon opts for society because he sincerely believes that human beings are frail creatures who will be less vulnerable to attack and more likely to thrive if they seek the nourishment society provides. Although the moral beliefs that Simon advocates are 'old-fashioned' ones, his views of human experience is not blithely sentimental. The happy endings in his best plays are often only minimally happy. What Simon stresses in several plays is that people must make a serious commitment to other human beings."

Robert K. Johnson

Neil Simon, Boston 1983, pp 141-144

Condensed List of Plays

Barefoot in the Park
 Biloxi Blues
 Brighton Beach Memoirs
 California Suite
 Chapter Two
 Come Blow Your Horn
 The Gingerbread Lady
 Jake's Women
 Laughter on the 23rd Floor
 Lost in Yonkers
 The Odd Couple
 Rumors
 The Star-Spangled Girl
 The Sunshine Boys
 Plaza Suite
 Prisoner of Second Avenue
 Promises, Promises
 Proposals

"His best comedies contain not only a host of funny lines, but numerous memorable characters and an incisively dramatized set of beliefs that are not without merit. Simon is, in fact, one of the finest writers of comedy in American literary history."

-Walter Kerr

Walter Kerr,
 "Simon's Funny-Don't Laugh",
 New York Times, Feb. 25, 1968
 Section 2, p1.

Reader's Corner

Rewrites by Neil Simon

The Play Goes On

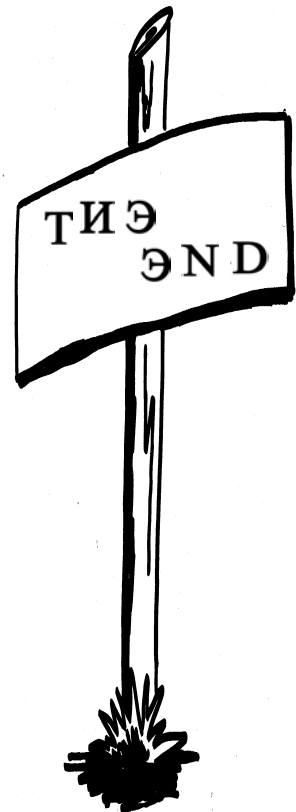
by Neil Simon

Understanding Neil Simon

By Susan Koprince

Condensed List of Screenplays

The Out-of-Towners	(1999)
The Odd Couple II	(1998)
Lost in Yonkers	(1993)
The Marrying Man	(1991)
Brighton Beach Memoirs	(1986)
Chapter Two	(1979)
The Goodbye Girl	(1977)
The Sunshine Boys	(1975)
The Prisoner of 2nd Avenue	(1975)
The Heartbreak Kid	(1972)
Last of the Red Hot Lovers	(1972)
Star Spangled Girl	(1971)
The Odd Couple	(1968)
Barefoot in the Park	(1967)





Leon * * * * * Bob Borwick
Snetsky * * * * * Rick Waites
Magistrate * * * * * Deems Urquhart
Slovitch * * * * * Mark Wilt
Mishki * * * * * Robert Gallaher
Yenchna * * * * * Melanie Calderwood
Dr. Zubritsky * * * * * Bill Johns
Lenya * * * * * Kim Morris
Sophia Zubritsky * * * * * Kelly Balch
Gregor Yousekevitch * * * * * Tim Hornor

PRÖDUCTION TEAM

Karen Lund * * * * * Director
Phyllis Wilson * * * * * Directing Intern
Mark Lund * * * * * Scenic, Sound & Props Designer
Kendra Rai * * * * * Costume Designer
Angela Smith * * * * * Costume Intern/ Assistant Designer
Jody Briggs * * * * * Lighting Designer
Katie Tibbits * * * * * Props Master
Jen King * * * * * Stage Manager
Teresa Morin * * * * * Assistant Stage Manager
Tammy Lykins * * * * * Light Board Operator
Scott Klauber * * * * * Sound Board Operator
Marie Frederickson * * * * * Dramaturg



C O M P A N Y

Administrative Offices

204 N. 85th St. Seattle, WA 98103

Box Office

(206) 781-9705

www.taproottheatre.org

(206) 781-9707



Taproot Theatre Education & Outreach Department

Educational Touring • Acting Studio • Student Matinees • Community Outreach

"Encouraging - Educating - Entertaining"

Sarah Brown • Director of Outreach Marie Frederickson • Education & Outreach Associate
Karen Lund • Director of Education Sara Willy • Associate Director of Education

The mission of Taproot Theatre Company's education and outreach department is to make TTC's live theatre productions, social issue plays and educational programming accessible to students and all members of PugetSound's diverse communities. We seek to develop programs that cultivate future artists, encourage an appreciation for the art of theatre and explore the beauty and questions of life while bringing hope to our search for meaning.

2004 Education & Outreach Opportunities

If you've always wanted to be on stage...

...It's time to act.

There's something for everyone this summer at Taproot Theatre. Whether you want to sing and dance, brush up on acting skills, or explore the world of Shakespeare, there is a place for you on Taproot's stage.

For more information about acting classes, contact: Sara Willy, (206) 781-9705
saraw@taproottheatre.org

**Educational Touring
Bullying, harassment?**

Turn it around this year!
With Taproot Theatre Company
Educational Touring

3 great shows with anti-bullying messages

For more information contact:
Sarah Brown, (206) 781-9705
Sarahb@taproottheatre.org

Shadowlands

By William Nicholson

May 21—June 19

Student Matinee: May 26 10:00am

Love was nothing but a profound idea until she came into his life. Then love became a powerful reality. Shadowlands, the love story of Oxford don C.S. Lewis and American poet Joy Davidman, touches the mind and probes the spirit as it quietly uncovers the mysteries of the heart.

Much Ado About Nothing

By William Shakespeare

September 24—October 23

Student Matinee: September 29 10:00am

It's love at first sight for young Hero and Claudio. But sparks of a different kind fly between the older and wiser Beatrice and Benedick, who prefer to be ruled by their minds rather than their hearts. Shakespeare's famous sparring lovers bring a wealth of wit and wisdom to the stage in the Bard's sparkling romantic comedy.

For more information contact:
Marie Frederickson, (206) 781-9705
Marie@taproottheatre.org