

This Side of the Hill Players



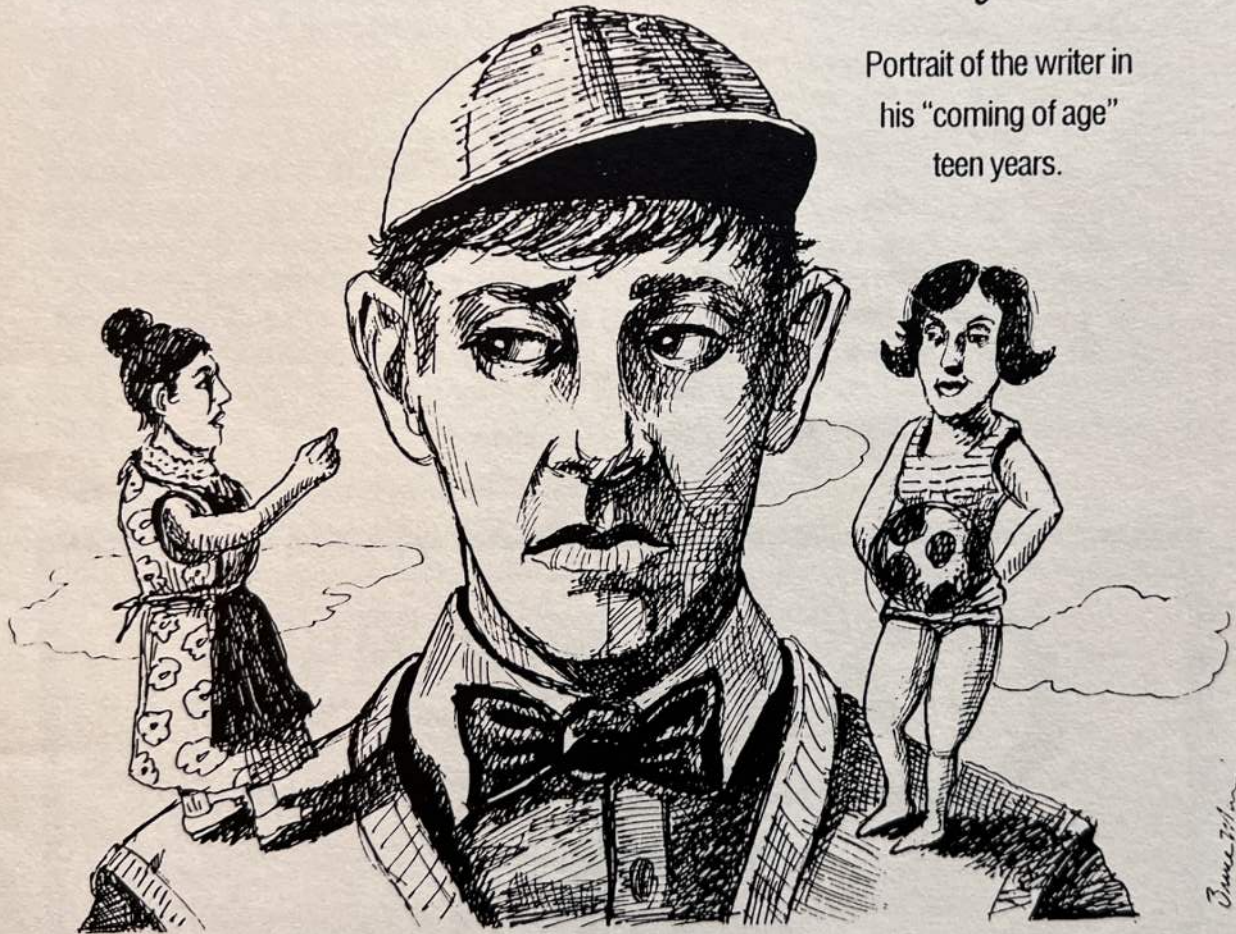
by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc. present

Brighton Beach Memoirs

by Neil Simon

Directed by Ed Pliska

Portrait of the writer in
his "coming of age"
teen years.



James Wilson

October 7 - 22, 1994

Brighton Beach Memoirs

By Neil Simon

Directed by Ed Pliska Assisted by Larry Bostow

Portrait of the writer in his "coming of age" teen years.

THE CAST

(in order of appearance)

Eugene	Jesse McClurg
Blanche	Bev Engel
Kate	Cathy Fithian
Laurie	Melanie Cole
Nora	Heather Lueck
Stanley	Thane Sullivan
	Joey Koomas (Oct. 20, 21, 22)
Jack	Arthur J. Pollock

ACT I

Brighton Beach, Brooklyn, New York
September 1937 - 6:30 p.m.

..... 10 Minute Intermission
Please join us in the lobby for refreshments

ACT II

Wednesday, a week later
About 6:45 in the evening

The Crew

DirectorEd Pliska
Assistant DirectorLarry Bostow
Set DesignerJohn Pliska
Technical DirectorChuck Danskin
LightingSheri Munoz, Hannah Munoz
Sound DesignTom Murphy
Sound Technician.....Hannah Munoz
 Maria Munoz
Costumes.....Judy Larson, Jane Seifert,
 Meredith Lamont
Master Painter.....Robert Rossello
Props.....Dave Johansen, Stan Aitken
 Caryl Hallberg, Pam Lueck
 Judy McClurg, Jerry McClurg
 Mary Danca
Set Construction/Painting John Pliska
 Dick Engel, Paul Anabel
 Chuck Danskin, Larry Bostow
 Dave Johansen, Tom Woosnam
 Bev Engel, Julia Woosman
 Ed Vignos, Astrid Harper
 Ginnie Anable, Sandy Bostow
 Mary Danca, Terry Ramseyer
 Michael Golden, Lynn Doyle
 Louisa Pliska, Laura Pliska
 Jeremy Block
PhotographerMichael Wong
Publicity.....Sandy Bostow
Advertising DirectorBruce Marion
Advertising SalesBob Rogers
Program Coordinator.....Margaret Harris
Poster and Program Design..Bruce Marion
Road Sign.....Toby Pollock
Gala Committee.....Meridith Lamont
 Charles White, Brenda White
 Duncan Lamont
Correspondence Secretary.....Al Rose

HMB meets 'Brighton Beach'

By STACY TREVENON
Half Moon Bay Review

Neil Simon dedicated "Brighton Beach Memoirs" to his family and "especially to those who endured the pains, insecurities, fears, joys, love and fellowship of New York City in the Depression Years." This Side of the Hill Players will open Simon's autobiographical play this Friday at the Mel Mello Center for the Arts.

Director Ed Pliska "finds Simon easy because he writes so well. It's the type of play you don't want or need to change anything. You just find actors who . . . relate with the family members."

Fifteen-year-old Eugene M. Jerome — the young Simon, played by 13-year-old Jesse McClurg of San Bruno — dreams of pitching for the Yankees, of writing, or of his pretty cousin as he wrestles with puberty. His witty observations provide Simonesque humor while drawing viewers into a family living in New York Americana amidst personal troubles, scanty cash and the spectre of world war.

His stoic mother Kate (Cathy Fithian) takes the world on her shoulders. His troubled big brother Stanley (played by Thane Sullivan on the first two weekends and Moss Beach resident Joey Koomas, 16, on the third) fields Eugene's constant questions about girls.

There is also Kate's sister Blanche (Bev Engel,) who shunned responsibility until now, her daughter Nora (Heather Lueck, 15) who pines for Broadway stardom and Nora's sickly sister Laurie (Melanie Cole, 11.) Patriarch Jack Jerome (Arthur J. Pollock) works until his health suffers to hold together the family he fears for and loves.

Funny, touching and immediate, the play, as Pliska hoped, gathers



photo courtesy of Michael Wong

Sisters Kate (Cathy Fithian, right) and Blanche (Bev Engel) share a light moment as Jack (Arthur J. Pollock) and Laurie (Melanie Cole) look on in "Brighton Beach Memoirs," opening Friday.

several actors who relate to their characters. McClurg knew from early childhood that he wanted to act. Engel faced raising two children alone as a young widow. And Fithian finds a soulmate in the complex Kate.

The two-story set is designed by Pliska's son John, who also designed sets for the touring production of "Cats" and summer theater.

A gala reception will follow the opening performance.

This Side of the Hill Players gives polished production of Simon gem

By CHRIS HUNTER

Times Correspondent

"Brighton Beach Memoirs" is Neil Simon's love letter to his youth, his family and his own childhood personality.

It is an entertaining play, worlds away from the one-line joke fests that made Simon the richest and most produced playwright since Shakespeare.

Half Moon Bay's This Side of the Hill Players has given this Simon play (one of the playwright's successful trio of memory plays — "Biloxi Blues" and "Broadway Bound" being the other two), a polished production.

Director Ed Pliska, a former San Mateo County judge who has performed and directed in most of the Peninsula's community theaters, has crafted a superlative evening of theater. Taking a well-rounded cast, Pliska adds a sophisticated, professional pace to this play. His performers capture the warm-spirited play with sensitivity, humor and love.

Jesse McClurg brings a wide-eyed, energetic electricity to the role of Eugene Morris Jerome, the playwright's alter ego. This youngster, growing up in Brighton Beach, dreams of being a writer. He views his family, his life, the world and everything else as fodder for his notebook.

McClurg never makes Eugene

less than a smart, funny kid. He never loses sight of his character's enthusiasm for life. Whether he's pleading with his older brother for some more sex education or calming his parents, McClurg is a wonder to behold.

In the role of older brother Stanley, Thane Sullivan provides a good performance. Cocky and sure of himself, Sullivan also shows the vulnerability of a boy just about to become a man. His role will be played by Joey Koomas Oct. 20 to 22.

Equally strong are Cathy Fithian as Kate and Arthur J. Pollock as Jack, Eugene's parents.

Fithian is dynamic as the Jewish mother who worries about her family, worries about European relatives and rules her home with love, compassion and a little bit of compulsion. Fithian, who has often played comic roles, shows she has the creative depth to create a more complex character.

As the father who works practically around the clock, Pollock captures Jack's tired but undefeated spirit. Fathers are supposed to know best, but Pollock's wise counsel to his children comes across with just the right touch of doubt, anxiety and love.

As Blanche, the sister whose husband has died and who brings her two daughters into the home of sister Kate and

What "Brighton Beach Memoirs," by Neil Simon, presented by This Side of the Hill Players.

Where Mel Mello Center for the Arts, 1167 Main St., Half Moon Bay

When 8 p.m. Oct. 13-15, 20-22; 2 p.m. Oct. 16

Price \$12

Call 726-0998

Rating ★★★★★

brother-in-law Jack, Bev Engel is wound up tight with her guilt, depression and lack of independence.

Heather Lueck and Melanie Cole breathe life into the two young sisters forced to live with the Jerome family. Lueck's Nora is a budding young woman eager to leave home for the possibility of an acting career. Cole's Laurie is a prim young woman smothered with care. Both performers create important, memorable moments.

Set designer John Pliska fills the stage with an authentic Brighton Beach house, complete with bedrooms, peeling wallpaper and furniture that seems right out of a time machine.

"Brighton Beach Memoirs" has already climbed to the top of the list of great Neil Simon plays. Now, This Side of the Hill Players offers it in a production that deserves to be seen.