

Issue No 4



November 2022

R E P E R T O I R E

Newsletter of Adelaide's oldest theatre group



■ Left Ira, "I can't breathe! I think it's a heart attack! Ooooooh. Aaah! No, thank God. Only gas."

■ Below Helen, "I'm ready for my close-up, Mr de Mille."



■ Above Max, "Now that's funny! Put it in the show!"



■ Above Milt, "I got it off a dead bullfighter! Ha! He believes me!"

■ Right Ira, Max, Milt and Lucas "I want my Stella joke back and you ate it! Spit it out or I'll give you a real brain tumour!"



Neil Simon's hilarious Laughter on the 23rd Floor

Directed by Dave Grybowski

Inspired by the playwright's youthful experience as a staff writer on Sid Caesar's *Your Show of Shows*, this ensemble comedy features all the attendant comic drama as the harried writing staff frantically scrambles to top each other with gags while competing for the attention of star madman Max Prince.

BOOK NOW at www.adelaiderep.com for:

17 - 19 and 23 - 26 November at 7.30pm

Saturday 26 November, Matinee at

2.00pm and again at 7.30pm

Tickets purchased from Box Office

\$28 and \$25 concession

Tickets purchased online

\$25 and \$22 concession incl. program

R E P E R T O I R E

Newsletter of Adelaide's oldest theatre group

LAUGHTER ON THE 23RD FLOOR

Adelaide Repertory Theatre
presents

Laughter on the 23rd Floor

Written by Neil Simon

Directed by Dave Grybowski



Laughter on the 23rd Floor is a 1993 play by Neil Simon. It focuses on the star and writers of a TV comedy-variety show in the 1950s, inspired by Simon's own early career experience as a junior writer for Your Show of Shows and Caesar's Hour. The play focuses on Sid Caesar-like Max Prince, the star

of a weekly comedy-variety show circa 1953, and his staff, including Simon's alter-ego Lucas Brickman, who maintains a running commentary on the writing, fighting, and wacky antics which take place in the writers' room.

Max has an ongoing battle with NBC executives, who fear his humour is too sophisticated for Middle America. The play is notable not only for its insider's look at the personalities and processes of television comedy writing, but also for its reflection of the political and social undercurrents of its time, in particular the rise of Joseph McCarthy, relationships between various (European) American ethnicities, and attitudes toward women.

The characters in the play are based on Neil Simon's co-writers on Your Show of Shows. There are several real-life inspirations: the "Sid Caesar-inspired Max Prince", "hypochondriac Ira (inspired by Mel Brooks)" ... and "fussy Russian emigre Val (inspired by Mel Tolkin) The dryly witty, sane Kenny was inspired by Larry Gelbart. With The Ira Stone character, Simon was poking fun at Mel Brooks.

Cast

Robert Baulderstone	Lucas		
Chris Gun	Milt	Jo Coventry	Carol
Frank Cwertniak	Val	Gavin Cianci	Max
Thomas Filsell	Brian	Andrew Horwood	Ira
Anthony Vawser	Kenny	Lauren Weber	Helen



Reviews of the play

It's the funniest comedy on Broadway in years and it's likely to remain the funniest comedy on Broadway for years. - *VARIETY*

Funny show – *GOOD READS*

Just plain entertaining, both as an overarching story and in its individual squirrely vignettes. Please keep in mind this is an adult comedy with adult language, some of which is delivered in a hilarious Russian accent. - *ENQUIRER*

"Laughter on the 23rd Floor" is undeniably funny. It has a strong undercurrent of nostalgia, of youthful-paradise lost, which characterizes so many of Simon's plays.

- *NEW YORK TIMES*

The Author Neil Simon

Born on July 4, 1927, Neil Simon has written numerous plays and movie screenplays. Neil Simon has done several works when it



comes to plays and movie screenplays. The award-winning writer is known for his works like Sid Caesar's 'Your Show of Shows', 'Come Blow Your Horn' and 'Barefoot in the Park'. Neil Simon has also collaborated with some writers like Selma Diamond, Mel Brooks and Carl Reiner in some of his works.

Neil Simon has won Emmy, Tony, and Oscar awards for plays and screenplays. According to Simon he went into writing to escape the troubling and fights of his parents. This also served as an inspiration for most of his writing. Many of his plays were centred on his childhood life experience and tackle subjects such as fear of ageing, marital conflicts, siblings rivalry and infidelity in a humorous way.

Director's quote

"In *Laughter on the 23rd Floor*, Neil Simon embraces his early days as a writer when he invites us to join his fellow comedians in the Writers's Room as they hammer out the skits for Sid Caesar's hit television variety program, *Your Show of Shows*. Although Simon changes the names and the narrative, you're right in there facing the pressure of television comedy writing in New York in 1953 when TV was just getting started."

Jews in Television: 1950s & 1960s

During its so-called "Golden Age," television had many variety show hosts who were Jewish – e.g., Jack Benny, George Burns, Groucho Marx, Red Buttons, Phil Silvers, George Jessel, Morey Amsterdam, Sid Caesar, and "Mr. Television" himself, Milton Berle.

Star of the variety show Texaco Star Theater, Berle drew in over 75 percent of the viewing audience in the program's first years (1948-1951), when its audience was almost exclusively urban. To the increasing number of rural



■ George Burns (Allen Warren)



■ Sid Caesar

receive the show over the coaxial cable, however, Berle's abrasive style (not to mention his cross-dressing) seemed "objectionable," "loud," and "vulgar." What some critics call Berle's "Jewish shtick" and "ethnic vaudeville humour" quickly lost their appeal; by 1956, the show was off the air. "Too fast, too urban, and too Jewish to be broadly acceptable;" Berle's show could not meet the medium's

requirement that its stars emanate from mainstream America or at least blend in with "heartland" values."

The demise of the program signified how quickly television had come to "disdain ethnic and racial differences, in both program content and the look of its performers." Sid Caesar, like Berle, brought broad physical comedy and other



■ Mel Brooks

characteristic Yiddishisms into his show (which was written by a stable of Jewish writers, including Mel Brooks, Woody Allen, Larry Gelbart, and Neil Simon). Contrast the "Jewing-out" of such "electronic toornlers" to the more subdued sitcom characters like Jack Benny and George Burns, who played themselves as fully American characters who celebrated Christmas, joined golf clubs, and seemed, in every way, non-Jewish. While most Jewish variety show comedians avoided explicitly Jewish impersonations, their portrayals were implicitly coded as Jewish—for example, Sid Caesar's gibberish-talking European refugee intellectual. Romeyn and

Kugelmass suggest that TV's "Yiddishization of American humour" replicated the vaudeville model of gags, skits, and improvisations but also embodied a particular Jewish "outlook," portrayed through the "klutz" body language of a Jerry Lewis or Danny Kaye or the scheming of a Buddy Hackett or Don Rickles.

Roots and Structure of Yiddish

Yiddish is a hybrid language and takes much of its vocabulary from medieval German and Hebrew, but with a smattering of words from Aramaic, Slavic, and Romance languages as well. Many of the words come from the specific cultures within Central and Eastern Europe.

Yiddish should not be confused with the Hebrew language. Yiddish comes from the Jews that inhabited Central and Eastern Europe. The earliest record of Yiddish as a language dates back to the 10th century. It was a universal language to aid the Jews in communicating with each other from geographically diverse areas. As the diaspora beginning in the 19th century brought Jews to the New World (predominantly New York), Yiddish came with them and words and expressions spread throughout even the non-Jewish population of the city and eventually worldwide.

Some common Yiddish words that have crept into the English language.

- bagel - bread roll in the shape of a ring
- bubkas - nothing; least amount
- chutzpah – shameless; ballsy
- futz – be idle; waste time
- glitch - malfunction
- goyim – non-Jewish people
- huck - bother; nag
- klutz - uncoordinated; clumsy person
- lox – smoked salmon ("Belly" or "Novi")
- mazel – luck
- mazel-tov – Congratulations
- putz - literal: foreskin; usage: jerk; foolish person (similar to schmuck)
- schlep - carry something by oneself
- schlemiel – fool; easily duped (same as schnook)
- schlock - cheap
- schlub - clumsy; unkempt
- schmaltz – literal: chicken fat; usage: excessive sentiment
- schmo - idiot; stupid person
- schmooze - converse; make small talk
- schmuck – literal: head of a penis; usage: jerk; foolish person
- schnook - fool; easily duped
- shiksa – non-Jewish woman
- shtick - comic theme; gimmick
- shtook – to fuck
- spiel - persuasive story or speech (pronounced schpiel)
- tush - rear end
- zaftig - curvy, full-figured woman

A proud history - Focus on a past actor

Patrick Taggart: 1942 – 2020

Patrick was encouraged by his father Jack, who was a part time actor. He acted in radio dramas produced at the ABC and in a number of productions for the Rep in the 1950s.

He starred as Peter in the Rep's production of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, the Australian premiere of this play. The Rep produced this play again in a 2017 production directed by Geoff Brittain.

Patrick is on the wall of photos in the Thomas Nave room in *Anne Frank* plus another play.

He was the 12 year old lead in the program/reviews of *'The Happy Time'*. This program is signed by Dame Ruby Litchfield herself.

Patrick joined Channel 9 in 1959 aged 17 as a props boy. He quickly rose through the ranks as a cameraman, eventually director and producer of Adelaide Tonight in the Ernie Sigley days. He was the creator of and voice behind Wilbur Worm.



■ Patrick Taggart



■ Patrick and Wilbur Worm

The Taggart family emigrated to the UK in 1970, the complete opposite of what European families were doing in that time period.

There, he was a regional television producer in Leeds and Southampton, producing mostly documentaries and children's series. He was a two times Royal Television Society award winner.

The family returned to Adelaide in 1984, where Patrick devised and produced the top rating national children's TV show *C'mon Kids*.

He subsequently returned to the UK at the end of the 80s and was a freelance television producer for the next ten or so years.

Patrick's children: Brendan (who managed a community radio station in the 80s-90s), Rachel (an actress), James (a natural history film editor, the David Attenborough ones!) so the media bug was throughout the family. He was married three times to Jeannette, Lea, Jill (his last wife was the longest at 25 years).

WANT TO EAT BEFORE THE SHOW?

Here is a great offer for Rep patrons



The Wakefield Hotel on Wakefield Street offers 50% off the 2nd meal when you produce your Rep tickets

Focus on a current sound operator

Brendan Taggart: You will notice his name in the Laughter program.

Brendan did a scriptwriting course through TAFE in 2016 where it was suggested that he get involved in local theatre so he rocked up to the Arts Theatre where he first met the Rep's Immediate Past President, Ray Trowbridge.

Brendan's grandfather acted on radio with the ABC and may have also acted with the Rep. Brendan's background was in radio in the 80s and 90s so he was drawn to be involved in the performing arts.

When the Taggart family emigrated to the UK in 1970 guess who took over as the voice and operator of Wilbur Worm? The Rep's very own Vice President, Penni Hamilton-Smith. What a crazy connection.

Brendan says "It's just a nice full circle kind of thing and I'm happy to have been able to share my dad's history with the Rep."



■ Brendan Taggart

SA's own internet guide to Theatre in and around Adelaide



Supporting local theatre productions. What's On in Drama, Musicals, Comedy and more
www.theatreguide.com.au

Official Website for the Theatre Assoc of South Australia

Floral Image

Flower rentals for your home or office



1300 136 066

for more information

floral-image@hotmail.com

Message from the chair

Hi there members, subscribers and theatre goers. Our last show "Sweet Road" was very well received by the critics.

"Jackson Barnard gave a crackling performance: hyper, genial and totally unpredictable at all times... Cheryl Douglas demonstrated a satisfyingly broad acting range, excellent focus and splendid energy." *Glam Adelaide 12 September 2022.*

"It's a strong performance from the ensemble, a good study of a broad cross-section of society dealing with grief, set amongst a uniquely Australian experience of the Outback road trip.

" *Stage Whispers, 13 September 2022.*

"All credit to the Rep for making this choice. The production challenged and entertained in fair measure, and provided us with a genuinely worthy piece of Australian theatre" *TASA 10 September 2022.*

The TASA review also mentioned "It's not always comfortable to watch" and The Rep had a number of



complaints about the strong language in the play. So my question to you, dear readers, is should Theatre sometimes challenge and risk offending some people?

NOTE. Laughter on the 23rd Floor has Adult language

Cheers *Rose* 

MEET the Rep's new front of house manager, the lovely Skye Wild

Some may recognise Skye from her past volunteer work behind the scenes for the Arts Theatre in the early 2000's for many years, this led her to other opportunities with such companies as the Theatre Guild and the Adelaide Fringe.

Skye has spent time in all types of theatrical and non-theatrical fields discovering where her true passions sit while gaining some incredible opportunities and life experiences. Some include children's drama teacher, paranormal investigator, youth theatre play writer, fitness club motivator and even holding a diploma in music and sound production.

Now at 34 years old, Skye is in her final year at Adelaide University, completing her Bachelor in Event Management and Tourism and has found her way back to the theatre to find a way to infuse her love of theatre with an event style career, which comes as no surprise as manager style roles are right up Skye's alley, be that as a Stage Manager, a solopreneur with animal sitting or as a Café Manager.

She now hopes for a long and successful time with the Rep, while doing justice to her role as the FOH manager, where she promises to always bring both efficiency and an enjoyable experience.



Moore St Parking

\$8.00 Undercover parking
6pm 'til midnight

Located on Moore St
opposite the Arts Theatre
stage door!!



The Adelaide Repertory Theatre Inc.

Patron: Her Excellency the Honourable Frances Adamson AC, Governor of South Australia

Vice Patron: The Right Honourable The Lord Mayor of Adelaide, Sandy Verschoor

Venue: ARTS Theatre, 53 Angas St, Adelaide 5000

Ph: 8212 5777 **Web:** www.adelaiderep.com
Email: enquiries@adelaiderep.com

Rep Photography: Richard Parkhill

Editor: Penni Hamilton-Smith

Board:

Rose Vallen, Therese Hornby, Penni Hamilton-Smith, Brian Nolan, Elizabeth Olsson, Gaynor Kowald, Laura Antoniazzi, Sam Christodoulou, David Sinclair.

REP

Newsletter of Adelaide's oldest theatre group

Introducing Jae Bower

Next time you are in the ARTS Theatre say hello to barman Jae and buy yourself a drink. He can't wait to meet you all.



Set constructors

Set construction can be a daunting task and the two fellows who have the task ahead of them are Barry Blakebrough and Patrick Derham.

They have to create the writer's room for a hit TV show in New York's Rockefeller Plaza, the Max Prince show!



Rehearsal Pics



■ Above Max, "I don't think this is right for the Statue of Liberty. I look like I just peed my diapers, for God's sake!"



■ Above Full cast, We'll never have this much fun again in our entire lives!

■ Above Right Lucas, "I did write one funny line for Max in my first week here. Unfortunately, he coughed on that line and nobody in America heard it."

■ Right Brian, "I can't wait to take my film script to Hollywood and get away from these schmucks!"



■ Left Kenny and Val, OK, OK! Jewish-Irish names! Uri O'Murray! Dot's funny! You get a raise! Maybe. We'll see. Who knows?

■ Right Milt, Carol and Val, "My paediatrician said my baby is going to be THIS BIG in show business! Before I even give birth!"



Volunteer Publicity Officer Situations Vacant

The Rep is looking for a Publicity Officer. This work involves managing or assisting in promoting the productions, services and public image of the Adelaide Repertory theatre.

Publicity Assistant

We also need a volunteer to assist Laura in publicity. If you love writing, networking and social media, contact Laura at atplayreading@adelaiderrep.com as she'd love you to join the team!