



LOST IN YONKERS



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REVIEWS

THEATER REVIEW

'Lost in Yonkers' but found at the Old Globe

The revival of the sprightly play benefits from its locale — an intimate, new stage.

DARYL H. MILLER
FROM SAN DIEGO

By the end of the first scene of the Old Globe revival of Neil Simon's "Lost in Yonkers," you notice how musical the presentation is.

More drama than comedy, this depiction of a forever-under-pressure family unfolds as a series of show-downs, the first of which builds from a low buzz of anxiety toward an aria of chastisement, delivered by a steely grandma. That crescendo is performed here by a cast that includes Judy Kaye, widely admired for her portrayals of Carlotta in "The Phantom of the Opera" and Florence Foster Jenkins in "Souvenir," directed by Scott Schwartz, best known for his stagings of such musicals as "Bat Boy" and "tick, tick...BOOM!"

Theatergoers' initial exposure to "Yonkers," the most-awarded of Simon's plays, likely was in a large theater, but this piece, with its seven emotionally churning characters, benefits from being presented in a

place where audience members can see the actors' nuances.

As the first production in the Globe's new 250-seat, in-the-round Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre (replacing its similarly configured Cassius Carter Centre Stage), the play is granted that intimacy.

Set in the early 1940s, the story unfolds in the grandma's fussy, old-fashioned apartment above the family-run sweet shop in Yonkers, N.Y.

Outfitted with a below-stage pit that the previous theater didn't have, the new facility allows for an interior stairwell in Ralph Funicello's richly detailed set, so that Grandma's ominous ascensions from the shop actually are made from that direction.

Kaye has the plum role as the matriarch who unwillingly houses her grandsons, ages 15 and 13, while their recently widowed father travels for work. A lifetime of hardship has taught Grandma to be strong just to survive. Kaye conveys this unbending nature in everything from her ramrod posture, which stubbornly resists the curving of age, to the sour look on her face as she accepts the grandchildren's kisses out of obligation rather than pleasure.

A sprightly, comic coun-

terbalance is provided by Steven Kaplan and Austyn Myers as the grandsons whose squabbling but tightly knit dynamic echoes Simon's own relationship with his older comedy-writer brother, Danny.

Other characters embody a hodgepodge of eccentricities. Nearly believable yet determinedly larger than life, they tend to kneecap any production of "Yonkers." Simon may have received his only Pulitzer for this 1991 play, but the writing here isn't his best. Even artists with an ear for the play's musicality are bound to lose pitch now and again.

daryl.miller@latimes.com

'Lost in Yonkers'

Where: Old Globe's Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, San Diego

When: 7 p.m. Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 8 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays, 2 and 8 p.m. Saturdays, 2 and 7 p.m. Sundays. Ends Feb. 28

Price: \$29-\$62

Contact: (619) 234-5623 or www.theoldglobe.org

Running time: 2 hours, 20 minutes

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Theater review: 'Lost in Yonkers' at the Old Globe

February 1, 2010 | **9:00 pm**

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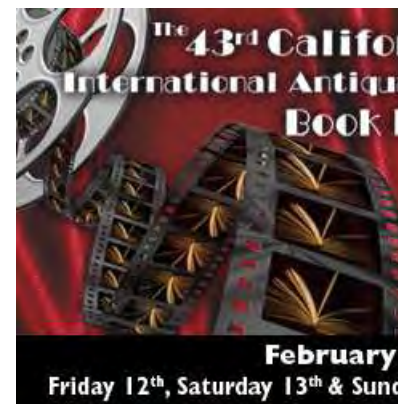
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-- [Daryl H. Miller](#)

Above: Steven Kaplan as Jay, Austyn Myers as Arty and Judy Kaye as Grandma Kurnitz. Credit: Photo by Craig Schwartz

"Lost in Yonkers," the Old Globe's Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, Balboa Park, San Diego. 7 p.m. Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 8 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays, 2 and 8 p.m. Saturdays, 2 and 7 p.m. Sundays. Ends Feb. 28. \$29-\$62. (619) 234-5623 or www.theoldglobe.org. Running time: 2 hours, 20 minutes.

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THEATER REVIEW

Hurt gnaws engagingly in 'Yonkers'

By James Hebert
THEATER CRITIC

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This is Simon that gets under the skin. Yet laughs don't get lost in the Old Globe's absorbing, beautifully acted take on the seldom staged Pulitzer-winner, the first official production in the company's new, arena-style White Theatre.

"Lost in Yonkers" has some surface kinship with Simon standbys like "Brighton Beach Memoirs": It's a coming-of-age story with an adolescent angle. But here, the one coming of age is a sheltered 35-year-old woman, and the family being analyzed through teen-boy eyes isn't just kooky, it's more like cursed.

Resentment and anxiety bubble under the play's brittle humor, byproducts of a molten anger that has flowed through generations, cooling and hardening into bitterness and distance.

The emotional black hole at the center is Grandma Kurnitz (Judy Kaye), the German-born matriarch whose first, limping entrance onto Ralph Funicello's living-room set actually does bring down the lights. (It's an oddly melodramatic touch in a show that, under Scott Schwartz's sure-handed direction, otherwise lets text and performance illuminate mood.)

The widowed Grandma has four surviving (though far from thriving) adult children. Louie (Jeffrey M. Bender) is a small-time hood; Gert (Armanda Naughton) is a waif with breathing issues that tend to flare at Grandma's house; Eddie (Spencer Rowe) is a widower who's flat broke (and just about broken).

The one left at home is Bella (Jennifer Regan), whom Grandma treats like a child. Intellectually, she is one — Bella has been "slow" from the start, although she's swift enough to know what she's missing in life.

Her two young nephews, Eddie's sons, describe her as "closed for repairs," although as they've long since learned, the whole family has unresolved damage.

The pair — jaded 15-year-old Jay (Steven Kaplan) and the more credulous Arty (Austyn Myers), 13 — have been dumped at Grandma's Yonkers



Austyn Myers (left) as Arty and Steven Kaplan as Jay are brothers exasperated by circumstances in Neil Simon's Pulitzer Prize-winning play "Lost in Yonkers," at the Old Globe. Craig Schwartz

apartment by their desperate dad, who has gone south to sell scrap metal for the war effort (this is 1942). He's trying to earn enough cash to pay off a loan shark who funded his late wife's last-ditch cancer treatments.

What Simon pounds home as the boys settle queasily into their new home is the way old patterns of hurt and arbitrary harshness keep rippling into the present. That's a source of laughs as well as pain in the play — as the exasperated boys help Grandma run her candy shop, she tests their competence and honesty with the same tricks Louie and Eddie faced decades earlier.

But the play's central, volcanic conflict is between the limping Grandma, forever crippled (physically and otherwise) by her bleak childhood in Germany, and Bella, for whom Grandma's cold but smothering impulse for control proves as disabling as her developmental issues.

Judy Kaye, a Broadway regular and musical-theater specialist (she won a Tony for originating Carlotta in "The Phantom of the Opera"), shows she doesn't need to sing to be tuned in to a character's inner rhythm, which in Grandma's case is like the icy beat of a requiem. Kaye conveys

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"Lost in Yonkers"

The Old Globe Theatre

When: Tuesdays-Wednesdays, 7 p.m.; Thursdays-Fridays, 8 p.m.; Saturdays, 2 and 8 p.m.; Sundays, 2 and 7 p.m. Through Feb. 28.

Where: Old Globe's Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park

Tickets: \$29-\$62

Phone: (619) 234-5623

Online: theoldglobe.org

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Regan's Bella is as excitable and girlish as Grandma is remote, and while the character's disability can seem circumscribed a bit too conveniently for story's sake (as in "The Light in the Piazza," another stage piece about a young woman in arrested development with a controlling mom), Regan brings a lot of heart and humanity to the piece.

Jeffrey M. Bender (memorable last year in the Globe's "Opus") brings scads of edgy fun as the cut-rate gangster Louie, who schools Jay and Arty in his lifestyle ("Nothin' sweeter than danger, boys, am I right?") and tries to warn them off it.

As Jay, Steven Kaplan is a wise

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Rowe and Naughton have smaller parts, but their nuanced portrayals of two siblings with soft hearts but bottled-up neuroses are crucial to illuminating the Kurnitz clan's spectrum of dysfunction.

The climactic showdown between Bella and Grandma might not come as a huge surprise, but it brings at least one startling revelation and, as played by Kaye and Regan, an authentic sense of catharsis.

"I gotta love somebody who will love me back before I die," Bella laments. But in this Simon saga, not every splinter gets extracted from the soul.

James Hebert: (619) 293-2040; jim.hebert@uniontrib.com



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THEATER REVIEW

Hurt gnaws engagingly in 'Yonkers'

BY [JAMES HEBERT](#), UNION-TRIBUNE THEATER CRITIC

SATURDAY, JANUARY 30, 2010 AT 4:46 A.M.

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/ CRAIG SCHWARTZ

Austyn Myers (left) as Arty and Steven Kaplan as Jay are brothers exasperated by circumstances in Neil Simon's Pulitzer Prize-winning play "Lost in [Yonkers](#)," at the Old Globe.

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"Lost in Yonkers"

The Old Globe Theatre

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Where: Old Globe's Grand and Historic White Theatre

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1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park

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THEATER REVIEW

'Yonkers' delivers at Globe

BY PAM KRAGEN

pkragen@nctimes.com

Neil Simon's plays are a staple of the community theater circuit, but they're rarely produced by the major regional theaters because they're often seen as sentimental and old-fashioned.

So it's refreshing to see Simon's "Lost in Yonkers" given such a first-rate treatment this month at the Old Globe. Billed as the first full-length run in the Globe's newly opened Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, "Yonkers" is well-cast, well-directed and beautifully produced in the new state-of-the-art, in-the-round space.

Like other Simon plays set in the '40s, "Lost in Yonkers" was inspired by his childhood, but it's darker and its laughs are more bittersweet. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award for Best Play, "Yonkers" is set in 1942, where teen brothers Jay and Arty (15 and 13, respectively) learn from their widowed father, Eddie, that they'll be forced to live for 10 months with their cold, mean-spirited Grandma Kurnitz while he travels the South selling scrap iron.

Jay works slavishly in Grandma's downstairs candy store, and Eddie's plan to strike it rich sputters when heart problems keep him laid up for long stretches in distant hospitals. But the boys are buoyed by the colorful stories of their Uncle Louie (an alleged money launderer, who's hiding out from the mob) and the irrepressible spirit of their weak-minded Aunt Bella, who seems to be the only Kurnitz family member capable of standing up to their cruel granny. The show's first act is filled with laughs, but the tables turn in the fiery, emotional second act.

The Globe production, directed in mostly subtle fashion by Scott Schwartz, shows off the multistory space's best features. Set designer Ralph Funicello's apartment windows rise into the rafters with the new fly system, and cast members enter from deep underneath the stage from a basement-level staircase. The White theater re-creates the sightlines of the old



Austyn Myers, left, Steven Kaplan and Jeffrey M. Bender in "Lost in Yonkers." Photo courtesy of Craig Schwartz.

"Lost in Yonkers"

WHEN 7 p.m. Sundays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays; 8 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays; 2 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays; through Feb. 28

WHERE Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, Old Globe complex, Balboa Park, San Diego

TICKETS \$29-\$62

INFO 619-234-5623

www.theoldglobe.org

Cassius Carter theater (where audience members are close to the action and at the actors' eye level) and Schwartz smartly moves the cast around the space so everyone can see their faces most of the time.

Broadway vet Judy Kaye leads the cast as the icy-veined Grandma Kurnitz, whose description of herself as steely is carried through in Alejo Vietti's all-gray costumes and pewter wig design. She's immobile as stone in her emotions and speaks only through clenched lips. Only in the play's closing moments does the glacier begin to melt, and only then, ever so slightly.

The young actors playing Jay and Arty are terrific and natural. Steven Kaplan burns with teen angst and intensity as the indignant, boy-on-the-verge-of-manhood Jay. And local actor Austyn Myers is boyish and effervescent as the plucky Arty.

Jennifer Regan is a mixed bag as Bella, the show's most difficult role. Her mental deficiency is played for laughs in the script's first act, and in some scenes Regan overplays these moments. But she settles in well in the more moving second act, where Bella falls in love and dreams of breaking free to start her own family.

Jeffrey M. Bender, seen at the Globe last year two very different roles (a likable musician in "Opus" and several zany characters in "The Mystery of Irma Vep"), delivers another winning performance here as Uncle Louie. What could be a one-note character takes on unexpected dimension with Bender's unpredictable turn as the good/bad guy.

Spencer Rowe is warm and endearing as the boys' father Eddie, who delivers most of his lines from the audience galleries, reading the increasingly depressing letters he writes home to the boys. And Amanda Naughton completes the cast as Gert, the fourth sibling in the Kurnitz clan.

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THEATER REVIEW: 'Yonkers' delivers in emotional intensity at the Globe

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By PAM KRAGEN - pkragen@nctimes.com | Posted: February 3, 2010 1:25 pm | No Comments Posted | [Print](#)

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Craig Schwartz Austyn Myers as Arty, left, Steven Kaplan as Jay and Jeffrey M. Bender as Louie in Neil Simon's Pulitzer Prize winning play, "Lost in Yonkers" at The Old Globe. Photo by Craig Schwartz.

Neil Simon's plays are a staple of the community theater circuit, but they're rarely produced by the major regional theaters because they're often seen as sentimental and old-fashioned.

So it's refreshing to see Simon's "Lost in Yonkers" given such a first-rate treatment this month at the Old Globe. Billed as the first full-length run in the Globe's newly opened Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, "Yonkers" is well-cast, well-directed and beautifully produced in the new state-of-the-art, in-the-round space.

Like other Simon plays set in the '40s, "Lost in Yonkers" was inspired by his childhood, but it's darker and its laughs are more bittersweet. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award for Best Play, "Yonkers" is set in 1942, where teen brothers Jay and Arty (15 and 13, respectively) learn from their widowed father, Eddie, that they'll be forced to live for 10 months with their cold, mean-spirited Grandma Kurnitz while he travels the South selling scrap iron.

Jay works slavishly in Grandma's downstairs candy store, and Eddie's plan to strike it rich sputters when heart problems keep him laid up for long stretches in distant hospitals. But the boys are buoyed by the colorful stories of

their Uncle Louie (an alleged money launderer, who's hiding out from the mob) and the irrepressible spirit of their weak-minded Aunt Bella, who seems to be the only Kurnitz family member capable of standing up to their cruel granny. The show's first act is filled with laughs, but the tables turn in the fiery, emotional second act.

The Globe production, directed in mostly subtle fashion by Scott Schwartz, shows off the multistory space's best features. Set designer Ralph Funicello's apartment windows rise into the rafters with the new fly system, and cast members enter from deep underneath the stage from a basement-level staircase. The White theater re-creates the sightlines of the old Cassius Carter theater (where audience members are close to the action and at the actors' eye level) and Schwartz smartly moves the cast around the space so everyone can see their faces most of the time.

Broadway vet Judy Kaye leads the cast as the icy-veined Grandma Kurnitz, whose description of herself as steely is carried through in Alejo Vietti's all-gray costumes and pewter wig design. She's immobile as stone in her emotions and speaks only through clenched lips. Only in the play's closing moments does the glacier begin to melt, and only then, ever so slightly.

The young actors playing Jay and Arty are terrific and natural. Steven Kaplan burns with teen angst and intensity as the indignant, boy-on-the-verge-of-manhood Jay. And local actor Austyn Myers is boyish and effervescent as the plucky Arty.

Jennifer Regan is a mixed bag as Bella, the show's most difficult role. Her mental deficiency is played for laughs in the script's first act, and in some scenes Regan overplays these moments. But she settles in well in the more moving second act, where Bella falls in love and dreams of breaking free to start her own family.

Jeffrey M. Bender, seen at the Globe last year two very different roles (a likable musician in "Opus" and several zany characters in "The Mystery of Irma Vep"), delivers another winning performance here as Uncle Louie. What could be a one-note character takes on unexpected dimension with Bender's unpredictable turn as the good/bad guy.

Spencer Rowe is warm and endearing as the boys' father Eddie, who delivers most of his lines from the audience galleries, reading the increasingly depressing letters he writes home to the boys. And Amanda Naughton completes the cast as Gert, the fourth sibling in the Kurnitz clan.

"Lost in Yonkers" isn't flashy or innovative in theatrical technique. Instead, it's a well-written play filled with genuine emotion and realistic characters that gets a first-class treatment in the Globe production.

"Lost in Yonkers"

When: 7 p.m. Sundays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays; 8 p.m. Thursdays -Saturdays; 2 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays; through Feb. 28

When: Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, Old Globe complex, Balboa Park, San Diego

Tickets: \$29-\$62

Info: 619-234-5623

Web: www.theoldglobe.org

Posted in Theatre on *Wednesday, February 3, 2010 1:25 pm* Updated: 2:04 pm. | Tags: Entertainment Preview, Nct, Theater

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REVIEW: 'Lost in Yonkers' still has its charm

Feb 3, 2010

By Diana Saenger

Since its initial staging in 1991, Neil Simon's Pulitzer Prize-winning "Lost in Yonkers" has entertained audiences large and small. The drama about survival takes place in 1942 when a family is facing big changes over the coming year. The all-star cast in The Old Globe production present a wonderful rendition of the play, full of both laughs and poignant moments.

We first meet brothers Jay (Steven Kaplan) and Arty (Austyn Myers) in their Grandmother Kurnitz's immaculate living room where they are scoping the place out and recalling funny moments with their father's side of the family.

Their father, Eddie (Spencer Rowe), runs back and forth from his mother's room reminding the boys not to disturb anything or leave hair oil on the doilies. He's extremely nervous and promising to be finished soon.

Eddie's absence gives the boys time to introduce us to the family through their conversations. It's immediately clear they truly dislike their grandmother, whom they've barely seen during their formative years. Arty erupts with laughter when Jay mimics their Aunt Gert (Amanda Naughton) who says half a sentence while exhaling and the other half while inhaling. They romanticize speculation about Uncle Louie, who Jay explains is a "bag" man, and the more he tries to explain that, the more Arty misconstrues every word.

They've barely begun to discuss Aunt Bella (Jennifer Regan) when she bursts into the room with the energy of a cyclone and about the same unpredictability. She fusses over the boys, smothering them with affection and flapping her hands, before heading downstairs to work in the family's candy store.

Eddie emerges from the bedroom ending the emotional buildup the boys have endured. He explains his real reason for bringing them to grandma's: He's broke from the medical bills



Jay (Steven Kaplan) and Arty (Austyn Myers) are befuddled by their Aunt Bella (Jennifer Regan) in 'Lost in Yonkers.'

Photo: Craig Schwartz

incurred by their recently deceased mother and he had to let their apartment go. The only solution is for the boys to stay with grandma for a year.

As the boys whine and complain - Arty sure he'll grow with the same affliction that Bella has - a very loud thump is heard approaching the living room. In walks grandma (Judy Kaye), as stiff as the Statue of Liberty, but far less welcoming. She's overheard some of the boy's objections about her. As she turns one cheek for Arty to kiss and the other for Jay, she tells them, "You don't survive in the world if you're not like steel."

Grandma has a right to be cruel; life has been cruel to her. She was beaten by German officers during the war; but the young boys can't wrap their minds around that. They just know that grandma is no bear-hugging, cake-making dame, and the sooner their dad comes to get them the better. Made-up far beyond her age, Kaye plays grandma to the hilt. Grandma's icy demeanor never wavers, yet just enough empathy for her seeps from Kaye's proficient performance.

Kaplan and Myers liven up the show's drama with laugh after laugh. Their exuberant innocence feeds every action and they play off each other like Felix and Oscar. When Jay is intent on raising money to get dad home faster, Arty says, "We could cut off grandma's braid and sell it to the army for barbwire."

When Uncle Louie shows up with his mysterious bag and a gun strapped inside his jacket, the boys are all ears as he feeds them Hollywood-themed answers to their questions. When he's out of the room, Jay exhaustingly exclaims, "This is like a James Cagney movie in our own house."

In this obviously dysfunctional home, it's perky Bella who balances the seriousness of the situations with completely absurd solutions. Her emotional arc keeps all eyes upon her as she solidly connects with every character in the play. Aunt Gertie has few scenes, but garners plenty of laughs every time she speaks.

The new Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre worked well for "Lost in Yonkers." Whether seeing the play for the 10th time or the first, the Globe's production is perfect fun for the entire family and will be talked about long after leaving the theater.

'Lost In Yonkers'

- Where: The Globe's Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park
- Performances: 7 p.m. Tuesdays-Wednesdays; 8 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays; 2 p.m. Saturdays-Sundays; and 7 p.m. Sundays through Feb. 28
- Tickets: \$29-\$62, (619) 23-GLOBE, www.TheOldGlobe.org

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"Lost in Yonkers" at the Old Globe Theatre's White Theatre.

Welcome back, Doc Simon

By Welton Jones

Posted on Fri, Jan 29th, 2010

Last updated Fri, Jan 29th, 2010

So nice to see Neil Simon back on the stage. It's been many a season since he was dominating the commercial break has been refreshing, for me, who has reviewed nearly everything he wrote, and for the work, represented Globe by "Lost in Yonkers," his most ambitious play.

His "masterpiece?" Maybe not for the author of "The Odd Couple" and the autobiographical "three B's" trilogy ("Bri Memoirs," Biloxi Blues" and "Broadway Bound.") But "Yonkers" represents the clown who would play Hamlet at

Simon can't help but write funny, just as he's incapable of create a genuinely evil character. His gifts, though for tightly categorized as dependably facile and perhaps too sentimental to be taken seriously.

Well, there's not much of that in "Yonkers," a bleak story of a family sadly stunted by the fierce austerity of the domestic tyrant whose offspring bear the scars of her survival techniques.

Two of her children are long dead and the others don't come around very often except for the daughter diagnosed case of genial arrested development. For 25 years, she has labored for the old lady, helping in the family shop giving backrubs and fleeing whenever possible to the movies.

What makes this dismal landscape worth visiting is the arrival of two boys, brothers 13 and 15, whose father missing somewhere while he earns the money to pay the loan shark who helped him through his wife's long decline and

It's 1942 and World War II is just getting ramped up, so there are good-paying jobs for men like this father, who murmur that will keep him out of the Army. But he'll have to travel and the boys, sweet and lively lads of the so Simon's autobiographies, are understandably appalled at the prospect of eight months in this Yonkers hell.

The old lady is equally appalled and adamantly opposed. It's the sudden and unexpected assertion of the live-actually launches the plan.

Jennifer Regan plays this child-woman with a giddy, radiant gallantry that would float a much less buoyant play

are other vivid characters – Jeffrey M. Bender, mercurial and swaggering as the family black sheep seeking a h consequences of shady dealings; and Judy Kaye, so flinty she's almost comatose, as the old woman – but it's lodge in most memories, deftly milking every nuance from this flawed and sadly sunny cripple.

And this production, lovingly staged by Scott Schwartz with both a solid grand design and a meritorious attentio enjoys the services of two very appealing and effective young actors, Steven Kaplan as the older brother, strugg and accept the growing demands of adult responsibility, and Austyn Myers, classic Americana in look and actio sweetheart of a kid brother. These two channel precisely Simon's image of youth as hope.

Spencer Rowe as the father does well with a less focused part and Amanda Naughton plays an asthmatic siste necessary.

The Globe's new White Theatre holds Ralph Funicello's memory scenery of well-worn realism very handsomely misses nothing in costume accuracy. (I might mention that a leather football, very hard to find in 1942, would N white rings around it, but I won't.) Matthew McCarty's lighting was invisible – a compliment – except for the mel lady's first entrance.

Altogether, this is a bracing and laudable revival of a major work by a major dramatist.

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Organization	Old Globe Theatre
Phone	619 234-5623
Production Type	Play (http://www.sandiego.com/related/production-type/play)
Region	Balboa Park (http://www.sandiego.com/related/region/balboa-park)
Ticket Prices	\$29-\$62
URL	www.oldglobe.org
Venue	White Theater



Welton Jones

About the author: [Welton Jones](mailto:welton@sandiego.com) (<mailto:welton@sandiego.com>) has been reviewing shows for mor of those years at the San Diego Union-Tribune and, now, nearly 10 for SanDiego.com, where he reviews to appear on the site. [More by this author](http://www.sandiego.com/writers/welton-jones) (<http://www.sandiego.com/writers/welton-jones>)

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SAN DIEGO

Regional Reviews by Bill Eadie

Lost in Yonkers

Old Globe Theatre

Also see Bill's review of [Whisper House](#)

The Old Globe has selected a challenging production to inaugurate its new Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre. Neil Simon's *Lost in Yonkers* requires an expert cast that can play humor and pathos, and pull off credible dramatic elements as a Jewish family doing its best to survive during World War II. The cast and creative team have succeeded admirably, while in the process revealing a bit of creakiness in the play itself.



Austyn Myers and Steven Kaplan

The new space copies to a great extent the former Cassius Carter Center Stage in size and arena configuration, but tearing down the old and starting over has allowed for space underneath the stage, vomitorium entrances in two corners that eliminate the need to make entrances down a set of steps, six aisles through the audience instead of four, and a much higher ceiling that allows for more sophisticated lighting designs than were previously possible.

The designers have taken advantage of all of these elements. Associate Artist Ralph Funicello placed windows on all sides of the audience to make it appear as if we are spying on a family in difficulty and then raised those windows to reveal the family's living/dining room featuring a staircase down to the shop below. Lighting Designer Matthew McCarthy easily simulated different times of the day and provided for smooth scene shifts as well. Sound Designer Paul Peterson made the room's radio into a dramatic device (and if the actors were miked, I didn't notice it). Costume Designer Alejo Vietti blended the muted hues of the furniture with clothes of similar hues, except when a character's nature demanded brighter colors.

The house belongs to Grandma Kurnitz (Judy Kaye), who runs the shop below with the help of her live-in daughter, Bella (Jennifer Regan). Into their lives comes son Eddie (Spencer Rowe) and his two boys, Jay (Steven Kaplan) and Arty (Austyn Myers). Eddie's wife has recently died of cancer, and Eddie has accumulated a large amount of debt as her hospital bills came due. He has decided to become a traveling salesman to raise the money to pay off his debts, but he needs a place for the boys to stay while he goes on the road for an extended period of time. Grandma Kurnitz escaped from Germany, and she always had a reputation for being hard and mean. Still, Bella manages to persuade her to allow the boys to stay. While Eddie struggles with health and other issues during his travels, Bella and the boys plot to escape Grandma's clutches. Eventually, the whole family gathers, including Louie (Jeffrey M. Bender), Grandma's other son and a local thug, and Gert (Amanda Naughton), Grandma's other daughter, who has been so traumatized by Grandma's behavior toward her that she can't breathe properly in Grandma's presence.

Director Scott Schwartz has polished his expert cast's performances to achieve a level of naturalism not usually found in even the best regional theatre productions. Every move, gesture, line delivery and reaction seem to have been carefully thought through and

thoroughly ingrained into how each member of the cast performed with the others. Mr. Schwartz's direction also made excellent use of the new space, down to the traveling Eddie sending and receiving letters from his sons in each of the audience aisles. Even the dialects (as coached by Jan Gist) sound quite specific.

The play, however, has its flaws. The first act is brilliant. The dialogue crackles, the laugh lines are carefully written, and the situations are set up to a tee—it has all of the elements of a "well made play." The second act, however, goes downhill. The subplot with Uncle Louie drags and is repetitive, Bella's dalliance with a movie usher is overwritten, Gert's function as comic relief repeats the same joke a couple of times too often, and there's a certain mushiness about the dénouement that belies the first act setup. After his autobiographical trilogy of plays (*Brighton Beach Memoirs*, *Biloxi Blues*, and *Broadway Bound*), it would not be unreasonable for Mr. Simon to run out of gas in crafting a fourth play based on characters from his family.

Still, the Old Globe's production represents a fine opening for its new space, as well as presaging the kind of quality we might expect from future productions.

The Old Globe presents *Lost in Yonkers*, by Neil Simon, through February 28 in the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre. For performance and ticket information, visit www.theoldglobe.org/.

Directed by Scott Schwartz with scenic design by Ralph Funicello, costume design by Alejo Vietti, lighting design by Matthew McCarthy, and sound design by Paul Peterson. Casting by Samantha Barrie, CSA, Vocal and Dialect Coach Jan Gist, and Stage Manager Diana Moser.

With Steven Kaplan, Austyn Myers, Spencer Rowe, Jennifer Regan, Judy Kaye, Jeffrey M. Bender, and Amanda Naughton.

Photo: Craig Schwartz

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- [Bill Eadie](#)

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By [Pat Launer](#), [SDNN](#)

Wednesday, February 3, 2010

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August Wilson's "The Piano Lesson" at Cygnet Theatre.
(Photo by Daren Scott)

The Past is Prologue

THE SHOW: "The Piano Lesson," a drama by August Wilson, at Cygnet Theatre



The piano of the title is practically a character in this Pulitzer Prize-winning play. For Berniece, it's a shrine, a monument to her family's painful past; its carvings present a specter of slavery and a memory of lost loved ones (who were traded in exchange for the instrument). To her brother, Boy Willie, it's a new beginning; if he can sell the piano, he can buy a piece of the land his ancestors worked as slaves. The piano, like its owners, is haunted — by a ghost that makes unnerving, unsettling appearances.

Ultimately, it's the piano itself that has lessons to teach, about history and legacy, precedent and potential, the delicate balance between reverence for the past and embracing the promise of the future.

"The Piano Lesson" was a 1989 addition to August Wilson's series of ten plays chronicling, decade by decade, the African American experience in the 20th century. This one is set in 1936, against a backdrop of transition:

Southern blacks moving north, but still facing a racial divide; and those remaining in the South, waiting for dramatic change. These harsh realities are played out in the extended Charles family, who sashay in and out of Uncle Doaker's house in Pittsburgh (the setting for most of Wilson's plays, and the city in which he himself

grew up), where Berniece lives with her young daughter, Maretha (Madeline Hornbuckle, convincing). Berniece used to play the beloved piano daily, but since her mother died, she can't even touch it.

Boy Willie, a fast-talking hustler, still a sharecropper in the South, bursts in on their carefully constructed life, demanding his half of the family heirloom. He's already got a little money put aside, and he's got a truck-full of watermelons to sell. Now all he needs to fulfill his dreams is the one thing his sister refuses to give.

Each character weighs in on the family debate: good-natured, hard-working Uncle Doaker (Antonio T.J. Johnson, solid and compelling); and his brother Wining Boy, a hard-drinking piano-man (energetic and amusing Grandison Phelps III). The level-headed preacher, Avery (Keith Jefferson, excellent, especially in his impassioned preaching), wants to set up a church of his own, and take Berniece as his wife. But she's still grieving over the death of her husband, for which she blames her brother; she also suspects he had something to do with the death of the white man who keeps making ghostly appearances. Grace (Tanya Johnson-Herron, pleasant, but usually played more sexy/slutty) is a woman Boy Willie picks up in a bar and brings home, to his straitlaced sister's considerable dismay.

And then there's Lymon (handsome, charming Laurence Brown), Boy Willie's genial buddy, who can't wait to get his hands on all these freewheeling Northern women. He's suckered into buying a suit from Wining Boy, and goes out on the town. But it's Boy Willie who scores the lady he was eyeing. When Lymon returns to the house, he participates in the play's most tender, sensual moment, a lovely near-love scene with Berniece, beautifully and sensitively directed, like

the rest of the piece, by the gifted Delicia Turner Sonnenberg.



Pat Launer

The philosophizing and singing of the men - the soulful reminiscences and the gut-wrenching, hard-driving chain-gang chant - add another musical dimension to Wilson's lyrical language.

But ultimately, the play rests on the fraught relationship between this disparate brother and sister. Mark Christopher Lawrence is a force of nature as Boy Willie, an impulsive whirlwind of crazy ideas and crazed energy. It's a huge and outsized role, and Lawrence fills it with brashness, bravado, flimflam, humor and heart.

Monique Gaffney is his ideal foil as Berniece: upright, uptight, determined, unyielding. She's a strong woman who knows what she wants - and doesn't want.

And when she softens under Lymon's tenderness, it's heart-wrenching. After all the quarrels and conflict - even some physicality, perpetrated by Berniece, who's tried so hard to move away from the violence of the family's past - it's a very emotional moment when these two finally come together at the end.



Turner Sonnenberg has amassed a stellar ensemble, and teased from them stunningly authentic performances. Her husband, Jerry Sonnenberg, has given her a lovely home to work with, rimmed in a proscenium of brick, a tasteful, attractive, two-level retreat sporting wood floors, throw rugs, sconces and comfortably worn furniture (property design by Bonnie L. Durben). The lighting (Eric Lotze) and sound (George Yé) contribute mightily, especially to the eerie, otherworldly moments that are such a signature of Wilson plays.

This piece is chatty; it weighs in at nearly three hours. And yet, it moves with the pace and musicality of a jazz riff. At the end, you're reluctant to bid farewell to these folks. You want to know what happens to them next. That's the mark of a captivating play, and confirmation of a dazzling production.

THE LOCATION: Cygnet Theatre, 4040 Twiggs St., Old Town. (619) 337-1525; www.cygnettheatre.com

THE DETAILS: Tickets: \$17-\$46. Wednesday-Thursday at 7:30 p.m., Friday-Saturday at 8 p.m., Saturday and Sunday at 2 p.m., Sunday at 7 p.m., through February 28.

THE BOTTOM LINE: Best Bet



Austyn Myers (left, as Arty) and Steven Kaplan (as Jay)
in Neil Simon's "Lost in Yonkers" at The Old Globe.
(Photo by Craig Schwartz)

Noo Yawk, Noo Yawk

THE SHOW: "Lost in Yonkers" - a Pulitzer Prize-winner by Neil Simon, at the Old Globe

Neil Simon isn't known for gravitas. Even his Pulitzer Prize-winning drama has numerous laugh-lines. But there's plenty of pain in this dysfunctional New York Jewish family, where autocratic, Germanic Grandma Kurnitz terrorizes everyone: her childlike and barely breathing daughters, her inept and mobster sons.

Those are the four remaining; Kurnitz lost two other children, and also buried her husband, after enduring a terrible childhood in Germany which left her wounded inside and out. Her defense is 20 feet of emotional armor. She is proud to be tough ("You don't survive in this world without being like steel"), and she wields her cruel power as forcefully as she brandishes her cane, threatening one and all, making them cower, driving them to grow up into damaged adults.

They're funny at times, but no less broken.

"Anger has been in me for a long time," Grandma Kurnitz admits, and she's not about to lose it over the two young boys she's forced to take in when their father, the hapless Eddie, has to go off to earn some money, being deeply in hock to a loan-shark. He borrowed the money to pay for his dying wife's medical care. It's wartime, 1942, and Eddie has gotten a job traveling the South, selling scrap iron for shipbuilding. He'll be gone for ten months, and he had nowhere to leave his sons - Jay, age 15, and Arty, 13 - except with the grandmother they fear and loathe (kissing her, they say, is "like putting your lips on a wrinkled ice cube").

So the kids settle in, earning their keep by tending the candy store downstairs (though Grandma keeps trying to trip them up on the job), and being diverted by

their loving but nervously infantile Aunt Bella. She's 35 years old, but as Jay puts it, pointing to his head, she's "closed for repairs." Pretty soon, their henchman/bagman Uncle Louie comes in, hiding out from some guys in a big black car. And then there's Aunt Gert, who "says the first half of a sentence breathing out and the second half sucking in." A motley crew, still under their mother's thumb, still desperate for just one kind word or glimmer of approval. Fat chance.

Over the course of the boys' stay, things change a little. The kids get a glimpse at what makes Grandma so mad and nasty, Grandma is forced to lighten up a bit. But it's Bella who takes the greatest emotional journey.

On opening night, the cast hadn't quite mastered the rat-a-tat rhythms of New York Jewish jokesters. Under the direction of Scott Schwartz ("Golda's Balcony," "Bat Boy" and

"Jane Eyre" — in La Jolla and on Broadway), Bella (Jennifer Regan) started out so hyper and fluttery, she seemed like she'd spiral herself right up into the flyspace of the new Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre. But Regan gained more centered balance as she went on, still deftly conveying the flighty childlike wonder (and angst) without being catapulted over the top. And her final confrontation with her mother is thrilling.

Spencer Rowe is likable as the nice-guy father, Eddie. Jeffrey M. Bender (excellent in last year's "Opus" at the Globe), is terrific as Uncle Louie. He's got the patter down, the bravado, the comic tease. Amanda Naughton does a fine comic turn as breathless Aunt Gert. The boys (especially local actor Austyn Myers) still need work on their New York accents and comic timing, though Steven Kaplan is very nearly there in the cynical/comical role of Jay. As in many other Simon works, these two are the stand-ins for the wisecracking young playwright and his older brother, Danny. They have to be the crackerjack comic centerpiece of the play, to offset their stern Grandma. They weren't there yet on opening night.

Judy Kaye, best known for her musical theater work (she originated the roles of Carlotta in "Phantom of the Opera," for which she won a Tony; Emma Goldman in "Ragtime," and Rosie in "Mamma Mia!"), has the perfect mien for mean old Grandma. She's ramrod straight and thoroughly unbending. The ferocity of the character is unequivocally there. But she doesn't quite make the character sympathetic, which is also necessary. And her final gesture, that buttons the play, feels unlikely and inauthentic, not organic to the character. Hopefully, over the course of the run, these wrinkles will be ironed out.

Ralph Funicello's set highlights the state-of-the-art capabilities of the new theater, with a fusty living room up above, and stairs down to the trap space (i.e., the candy store) that work wonderfully. The sound (Paul Peterson) and lighting (Matthew McCarthy) also make the most of the space, and the costumes (Alejo Vietti) are excellent exemplars of the period and pitch-perfect for the characters. Bella even graduates from saddle shoes to heels.

There are many delights to be had in this production; with a few tweaks, it could be spot-on.

THE LOCATION: The Old Globe Theatre, Balboa Park. (619) 234-5623; www.theoldglobe.org

THE DETAILS: Tickets: \$29-\$62. Tuesday-Wednesday at 7 p.m., Thursday-Saturday at 8 p.m., Saturday and Sunday at 2 p.m., Sunday at 7 p.m., through February 28.

QUICKIES



"Mandragola" at UC San Diego. (Photo by Manuel Rotenberg)

"Mandragola" - So there I was, standing out near the loading dock of the Mandell Weiss Theatre, where the latest UC San Diego production began. Being there brought back memories of one of the most unforgettable productions *ever* at the La Jolla Playhouse: "Children of Paradise" brought here in 1993 by the fantastically imaginative theater company (alas, no longer extant), Théâtre de la Jeune Lune. And who would be standing next to me but the director of that extraordinary piece, Dominique Serrand, who's in town to meet with acclaimed Romanian director Gabor Tompa, who's part of UCSD's directing faculty. Dominique and I reminisced about his remarkable production and troupe (they also presented their jaw-dropping production of "The Miser" at the Playhouse, in 2005). As in "Children of Paradise," the actors mingled among us, heavily made up, creating havoc, making a little trouble. But the similarity ended there. We followed the players into the Ted and Adele Shank Theatre (formerly the Weiss Forum Studio) and the highjinks began for real, though the wild tone was set outside.

"Mandragola" is Italian for Mandrake (a hallucinogenic plant that's part of the nightshade family). The satire was written in 1518 by Italian Renaissance writer Niccolò Machiavelli (who's better known for his controversial political treatise, "The Prince"). The play, a sendup of the corruption of Italian society, was written while Machiavelli was in exile, allegedly having plotted against the Medici.

The themes of mankind's endless capacity for greed, self-interest, deceit and venality spoke to director Isis Saratial Misdary, who reconceived the piece in terms of corporate control gone haywire (translation by Mera Flaumenhaft). The marriage broker Ligurio is transformed into the sleazy head of Ren Corp (formerly the Renaissance Corporation), "the world's largest religious, healing services company." Callimaco, the Florentine who solicits his help, has been turned into a foppish hedonist (almost all the men are played fey and bisexual, for no apparent reason). Callimaco insists on having, at any cost, the most beautiful woman in Florence, though she's married and her virtue is beyond reproach. In a series of mad schemes, Ligurio solicits the help of Lucrezia's ridiculous, incredulous



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Entertainment :: Theatre

Lost in Yonkers

by Steve Heyl
EDGE Contributor
Tuesday Jan 26, 2010



(l. to r.) Judy Kaye as Grandma Kurnitz and Jennifer Regan as Bella in Neil Simon's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, *Lost in Yonkers*, at The Old Globe. Photo by Craig Schwartz. (Source: http://theoldglobe.org/pressphotos/lost_yonkers_press.html)

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It seems as though The Old Globe in San Diego is starting 2010 with a fascination for family dynamics in 1942--both the previously reviewed *Whisper House* and current show, *Lost in Yonkers*, are set in that year, and both follow children sent to live with relatives after the death of a parent, although the former is a musical and the latter is a drama. Yes, there is some humor, but this is not a Neil Simon comedy.

Often cited as Mr. Simon's most critically acclaimed work, the Pulitzer and Tony winning *Lost in Yonkers* concerns two young brothers, Arty and Jay, who are sent to live with their grandmother when their financially strapped father takes a job that requires full time travel. In addition to the dominating Grandma Kurnitz, who runs the family-owned candy store, the boys must deal with a variety of family members such as their mentally-challenged Aunt Bella and their Uncle Louie, a small-time hood.

The small cast is headlined by Broadway veteran Judy Kaye as Grandma Kurnitz. It takes a talented actress to keep the role of Kurnitz from becoming caricature, and Ms. Kaye more than up to the task. She played the old woman so well, I had to check her biography to confirm that she is so many years younger than her character.

Austyn Myers and Steven Kaplan are spectacular as the boys Arty and Jay respectively. Many of the comedy relief lines are spoken by their characters, and each actor seems to have an excellent sense of comedic timing.

The cast also features Jeffrey Bender as Louie, Amanda Naughton as Aunt Gert, and Spencer Rowe as Eddie, the boys' father. Jennifer Regan's portrayal of Bella is truly amazing; I would go so far as to say it's the first "best performance" of the new year. She captures Bella's childlike moments and adult insights with equal perfection. Whether she's being ditzy ("Sometimes I daydream so much I think I should carry an alarm clock") or serious, Bella's manic shifts in mood seem perfectly natural in Regan's performance.

Director Scott Schwartz uses the in-the-round stage of the new Sheryl and Harvey White Theater (of which this is the inaugural production) to free the actors, so the action can take place in every direction. One great example is that every one of Eddie's letters from the road is read in a different part of the theater. Instead of a curtain scenic designer Ralph Funicello has windows on every side of the set that raise out of the way at the start of each act.

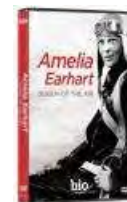
For all the quality of the production, one leaves the theater a bit uneasy. The Kurnitz clan is about as dysfunctional as they come and the ending is somewhat ambiguous. Uncle Louie would say this show and this production have "moxie". Plan to spend some time to reflect on it.

Lost in Yonkers continues through February 28 in the new Sheryl and Harvey White Theater at the Old Globe theater in San Diego. For more information visit theoldglobe.org

A computer geek by day, one of Steve's evening loves is San Diego theater (the other is his husband of 20 years), which he enjoys sharing with others (theater, not the husband).



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theater

Grandma and ghosts

BY JEAN LOWERISON

Published Thursday, 04-Feb-2010 in [issue 1154](#)

'Lost in Yonkers'

Most kids like to visit Grandma. But 15-year-old Jay (Steven Kaplan) and 13-year-old Arty (Austyn Myers) are reminded why they don't when dad Eddie (Spencer Rowe) makes them sit in starched and sweaty discomfort in the sweltering living room, waiting for the old dragon to emerge from the bedroom.

Grandma Kurnitz (Judy Kaye) is a Holocaust escapee with a thick German accent and cane who raised her kids with sharp words and harsh punishment in order to teach them that "you don't survive in this world without being like steel." She doesn't like noise, disorder or, apparently, children. She ruled the family by intimidation and still terrorizes at-home, mildly retarded but sunny 35-year-old daughter Bella (Jennifer Regan) – and anyone else within earshot.

The script indicates that Bella was born with scarlet fever which could have affected her brain; sister Gert (Amanda Naughton) gasps for breath when visiting her mother (but only then). The fourth sib is smalltime gangster Louie (Jeffrey M. Bender). Though Grandma regards Eddie as weak (he cries), he is the most normal of the quartet.

It's 1942, and Jay and Arty have recently lost their mother to a long bout with cancer. Dad, deep in hock to a loan shark for her care, intends to leave the kids with Grandma while he moves South to sell scrap metal for the war industry – a trade he thinks will raise the money relatively quickly. Can the boys survive life with Grandma?

Neil Simon's family dramedy *Lost in Yonkers* plays through Sunday, Feb. 28, at the Old Globe's new Sheryl & Harvey White Theatre, wonderfully directed by Scott Schwartz.

A far cry from the usual Simon collection of one-liners, *Lost in Yonkers* may well be his best play. Winner of both Tony and Pulitzer prizes for best play in 1991, it offers fully realized characters and an engaging narrative arc. The Globe has added a sterling cast, fine direction, an appropriate set and costumes; the result is a superb production.

Kaplan and local favorite Myers are stage naturals and terrific as the boys, saying as much with expressions and movements as with words.

Regan is heartbreaking as Bella, the girl-woman so desperate for love that she wants to take up with an inappropriate man.

Rowe is heart-tugging as Eddie, who only wants the best for his boys but knows what they're in for at Grandma's.

Bender is convincing as Louie and Naughton does well in a small but difficult role.

But this show belongs to Kaye's Grandma, the dragon with the cane, who reportedly "could swing the cane so fast, she could have been one of the greatest golfers in the world," and thanks to great makeup and acting is a frightening presence indeed.

Lost in Yonkers is set during the war, but this is a family saga, not a war story.

Tolstoy said that happy families are alike but unhappy families are unhappy in their own way. This family is certainly distinctive, this production riveting.

Lost in Yonkers plays through Sunday, Feb. 28, at the Old Globe's Sheryl & Harvey White Theatre. Shows Sunday, Tuesday and Wednesday at 7 p.m.; Thursday through Saturday at 8 p.m.; matinees Saturday and Sunday at 2 p.m. For tickets, call 619-23-GLOBE or visit www.theoldglobe.org.

'Whisper House'



'Lost in Yonkers': (l. to r.) Jennifer Regan as Bella and Judy Kaye as Grandma Kurnitz in Neil Simon's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, *Lost in Yonkers*, at The Old Globe, through Feb. 28. CREDIT: PHOTO BY CRAIG SCHWARTZ



'Whisper House': (bottom) Holly Brook as a Ghost, (top) Eric Brent Zutty as Christopher and David Poe as a Ghost, in the World Premiere of Duncan Sheik and Kyle Jarrow's *Whisper House* at The Old Globe, through Feb. 28.

CREDIT: PHOTO BY CRAIG SCHWARTZ.

Ghost stories may be a lot of things – murky, misty, foggy, maybe even a little out of focus. But most of all, they are supposed to be scary.

Whisper House is murky, all right, getting lost in its tripartite plot strands encompassing ghost story, coming-of-age saga and political morality tale. This new musical by Tony-winning songwriter Duncan Sheik and book writer and co-lyricist Kyle Jarrow plays through Sunday, Feb. 21, at the Old Globe Theatre, with Peter Askin directing.

Eleven-year-old Christopher (A.J. Foggiano) sees dead people cavorting around the old Maine lighthouse where he's been sent to stay with his taciturn Aunt Lilly (Mare Winningham), keeper of the lighthouse since her father's death.

Lilly demands to be called "Miss Lilly," acknowledges that she doesn't dig kids and opines that "I think the best thing is to speak to each other as little as possible," which doesn't exactly make Christopher feel welcome.

But it's 1942, Christopher's dad has been killed in action in the South Pacific and his mom's hospitalized with a breakdown. And now he's stuck in this drafty old lighthouse with his weird aunt and her Japanese handyman Yasuhiro (Arthur Acuña), whom Chris regards as the enemy because of his nationality.

So for company he's left with two spiffily-clad ghosts (David Poe and Holly Brook), the sources of the titular whispers. They serve as narrators, Greek chorus and soundtrack, as this overmiked duo sings all the songs – in cabaret style, with frequently mushy diction.

They also have designs on the kid. Seems in 1912 they died at a fancy Halloween yacht party on a night when Lilly's father got drunk and forgot to turn the light on; the boat ran aground

and sank. They need to take a life in order to be released.

Or something. The problem is, there's nothing particularly ghostly (and certainly nothing scary) about them, other than the fact that only Christopher sees them. These two sound like club singers, look like they stepped out of "Topper" and seem downright sensual.

The World War II plot strand reports the (real) danger of German U-boats patrolling U.S. coastlines and burning American merchant ships, and also notes the U.S. government decree that no resident of German, Italian or Japanese ancestry can live near a "sensitive location." This underdeveloped part of the plot offers two underwritten characters. Coast Guard Lt. Rando (Kevin Hoffmann) arrives to install a radio so Lilly can be signaled when to turn off the lights. And genial Sheriff Charles (Ted Kych) comes to tell Lilly that Yasuhiro must leave. Both characters are too sketchy to be more than mere plot devices.

Foggiano is effective as Christopher, though he seems more puzzled than scared by the spectral spirits, and perhaps even attracted to the female ghost. But will he grow up and realize who his real friends are? His story needs to be more sharply written.

Winningham is reliably terrific as the tight-lipped spinster lighthouse keeper, a model of New England self-sufficiency who, as far as we can tell, neither wants nor needs human connection.

Acuña is to be congratulated for managing to create a layered character from the script's stereotype of the Japanese immigrant.

The show's technical aspects are generally first-rate, starting with Michael Schweikardt's set: the interior of the lighthouse, with winding staircase, a small room on the second level and a big (but, oddly, not revolving) light at the top, enclosed by a railing and a narrow widow's walk. Matthew Richards' lighting design, eerie sound effects by Don Moses Schreier and Aaron Rhyne's back projections are equally effective. And Jason Hart's fine seven-piece band, arrayed in a ghostly, top hat-clad line to the rear, add to the otherworldly look.

But the show itself needs work, beginning with the banal sitcom-level script. If this is a ghost story, scare me a little. If it's about war, give me an explosion that shakes the rafters. If it's about scared people learning to connect, show me a connection.

"If you're terrified, that's how you're supposed to be," the ghosts sing.

Alas, I wasn't terrified. I was looking at my watch.

Whisper House plays through Sunday, Feb. 21, at the Old Globe Theatre. Shows Tuesday and Wednesday at 7 p.m.; Thursday through Saturday at 8 p.m.; Sunday at 7 p.m.; matinees Saturday and Sunday at 2 p.m. For tickets, call 619-23-GLOBE or visit www.theoldglobe.org.

No comments yet

"Lost In Yonkers" Scores High Marks On All Fronts

February 1, 6:17 AM - [San Diego Theater Examiner](#)



Judy Kaye and Jennifer Regan in scene from "Lost In Yonkers" by Neil Simon.
Craig Schwartz

By Carol Davis

San Diego, California--Call me a sentimental old fool, but I was moved to laughter and tears sitting through Neil Simon's "Lost In Yonkers" at The Old Globe on what is now the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, formally the Cassius Carter.

For so many years Simon's plays, comedies and rat-tat-tat repartee were at the forefront on every local theatre's marquee. It grew tiresome and soon disappeared but not before folks were Neil Simon-ed out. For a time Simon even tested some of his new works at The Globe before they went on to Broadway.

Since it has been a while now since Neil Simon's works have been mounted here it was with interest that when the Globe's Executive Producer Louis G. Spisto announced at a press event that "Lost In Yonkers"(considered by those who decide seasons to be a 'classic') would be revived and officially open the White Theatre in 2010, some brows were raised.

Thoughts of what constitutes classic raced through my mind as well; *classic*: timeless, masterpiece, traditional as defined in my Thesaurus. I must admit it is timeless and while still using his formulated one liner's and rat-tat-tat give and take, "Yonkers" is quite different from his semi autobiographical triple "B" plays; "Brighton Beach Memoirs", "Biloxi Blues" and "Broadway Bound," and /or his later plays "Rumors" and "Jake's Women". The latter two were mounted at The Globe in their early stages.

Frank Rich of The New York Times said of "Lost In Yonkers", "The wounds run so deep that one feels (this) just may be his most honest play". It won four Tony Awards including best play and the 1991 Pulitzer Prize. It opened in New York at the Richard Rodger's Theatre on Feb. 21; 1991 and was his twenty-fourth play to reach Broadway.

Armed with an outstanding and overall strong cast, director Scott Schwartz recreates, with care, attention to detail and a loving but firm hand a time in the life of two young, coming of age boys, Jay and Arthur (Arty) Kurnitz (Steven Kaplan and Austyn Myers) just 15 1/2 and 13 1/2 respectively; who were put into a situation that most young boys would have been OK with had the circumstances been different. They are having to spend about eight or nine months living with their grandmother and aunt Bella (Jennifer Regan) who live in Yonkers just above "Kurnitz's Kandy Store" the family business, to help their Dad out.

Their Dad Eddie (Spencer Rowe) is in dire need of a cash infusion to pay off some loan sharks he was forced to borrow from because when his wife, their mother was dying of cancer he did everything possible including borrowing money, to keep her comfortable. It's payback time now and Eddie has to come up with seven thousand dollars he doesn't have. The time is 1942, war time and there are wartime jobs in the south in metal scrap yards that help the cause, but it involves being on the road for months at a time. The boys need a place to stay because Eddie gave up their apartment to save money and to travel.

When we meet up with Jay and Arty they are in the living room (Ralph Funicello) of Grandma Kurnitz's (Judy Kaye) apartment waiting for their Dad who is speaking with grandma in her room. Every now and then he pops his head out to make sure the boys aren't wrinkling the doilies, or putting their heads on them because it gets grease on them. "She just laundered them, he admonishes." Arty counters back to Jay, "You mean only people who just had a shampoo can sit here?"

To say that things just aren't right at Grandma Kurnitz's is an understatement. You see Grandma is a woman of steel and nothing penetrates her outer armor. She grew up in Germany where Jews were the scapegoat for everything. She learned at an early age not to cry. "I was raised to be strong," she tells them. "When they beat us with sticks, I didn't cry". "You don't survive in this world without being like steel."

Two of Grandma Kurnitz's offspring died in childhood (she hasn't cried since) and the four remaining are scarred, scared, repressed, lonely, and suffering from an overall lack of good old fashioned nurturing and the feeling of being loved.

Bella, who has grown into her woman's body in reality has a child's mind but with all the emotions of what a woman needs; to be held and loved. Her sister Gert (Amanda Naughton) who is a bit eccentric has a breathing problem when she's around her mother, brother Louie (Jeffrey M. Bender) is a two bit gangster who comes home to hide because he's on the run from his enemies and Eddie their father is labeled the weak one because he still shows emotions like crying.

So is Grandma going to change her ways, take the boys in because they are her only grandchildren and are in need of a place to stay? Her first reaction is a flat out "NO!" She's old, likes being alone, doesn't listen to the radio after the six o'clock news, goes to sleep at nine, neither she nor Bella have friends (Grandma has lived in Yonkers thirty years and has not one friend) and Yonkers is no place for them.

But Bella, their mentally challenged aunt will hear none of it threatening her mother that she too will leave and go to 'the home for mentally ill if she does not let the boys stay'. Stay they do and we have the opportunity to be witness to their coming of age in the most peculiar, often in the most funny and moving of circumstances given the dysfunction of the family dynamic.

With such a strong cast it's difficult to single any one actor out. Jennifer Regan is simply superb as the 'slow sister'. We watch in amazement her arc as she sputters, jumps up and down like a child, gets mixed up, reveals her secret trips to the movies to escape while gradually finding her footing as more woman than girl/child who wants and needs what she claims every other woman needs to be held, loved touched and set free from her mother's iron fist to be happy.

Just as powerful and compelling, Judy Kaye (she won a Tony for her role as Carlotta in the original "Phantom Of The Opera) is an icon as the cold, impenetrable matriarch whose claim to fame is teaching her children and grandchildren to be hard, cruel and non feeling adults in order to make them strong and able to take care of themselves.

Before we see her we hear her as her cane comes thumping down on the wooden floors while walking from her bedroom through the hall to the living room. Her straight and solid composure never let her down even though she is in constant pain from a childhood injury crushing that leg.

Both Kaplan and Myers are on track as Jay and Arty learning the ropes of helping out in the family store to finding ways of defending themselves against grandma's 'teachings' or her verbal assaults. Both represent a new generation for the Kurnitz family but not without their own set of scars.

Myers is funny and adorable as the younger of the two who seems less involved in the complicated ups and downs of the dysfunctional families going on. He is more of a foil and comic to Kaplan's Jay who is borderline boy/ man bearing the brunt of the grandmother's harshness while wanting to be respected and treated like a young man.

In the end though, it's Bella and Grandma Kurnitz who get one more chance at redemption but it will take work on both fronts. Watching their breakthrough is enough to break anyone's heart. Bella begs for what she must have to survive and her mother, embarrassed and uncomfortable by being put in this position yet pooh-poohing all the while not quite absorbing the real ramifications of her daughter's pleas, is a hold your breath moment. Both Kaye and Regan are more than up to the task. It's a brilliant moment. Predictable? So what? But do bring tissues.

Bender, Naughton and Rowe round out the rest of the talented cast lending credibility to their imperfect family experiences and bringing to the fore three more broken spirits. They as the other systematically damaged siblings make this Simon work one of the 'classics' to be to be brought out, dusted off and told over and over again just for a reality check.

Ralph Funicello's set is detailed from doilies on the furniture to the silver Sabbath candle stick holders on the dining room table to the stairway leading down to the candy store to two hallways, one to the bedrooms the other to the bathroom showing family pictures lining the wall papered walls.

Hanging apartment windows before and during intermission are discretely lifted so as not to obstruct any of the audience's vision. An old radio statically (Paul Peterson) blurts out news every now and then; some discordant chords are heard before the lights come up as a preamble to the discord in the Kurnitz family. Alejo Vietti's period costume design is spot on. Matthew McCarthy's lighting design is subtle yet effective.

As live theatre goes, "Lost In Yonkers" scores A in every category.

Dates: January 23-February 28, 201

Organization: Old Globe Theatre

Production Type: Play

Where: Balboa Park

Phone: (619) 234-5623

Ticket Prices: \$29-\$62.00

WEB: theoldglobe.org



Steven Kaplan (from left) as Jay, Jennifer Regan as Bella and Austyn Myers as Arty in Neil Simon's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, "Lost in Yonkers," at The Old Globe. PHOTO BY CRAIG SCHWARTZ

Warm, wonderful 'Yonkers' opens new White Theatre

By CHARLENE BALDRIDGE | VILLAGE NEWS

When it comes to getting inside a family, Neil Simon may be one of the greatest American playwrights. Among the most underrated. A case in point is the Old Globe's production of his 1991 Pulitzer Prize- and Tony Award-winning "Lost in Yonkers," which officially launched the new, 250-seat Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre Thursday, Jan. 28. The poignant comedy, set in 1942, continues through March 7.

Scott Schwartz's casting and direction of the comedy is superb. Judy Kaye portrays Grandma Kunitz, surely one of the great female roles in American theatrical literature. As a youth she escaped the Holocaust, but not without injuries, physical and psychological. These injuries, the loss of two children and a husband, and Kaye's humane portrayal make this Grandma understandable if not sympathetic. She has raised her family by running a candy and ice cream shop below the Yonkers apartment in which she lives with her developmentally challenged child, Bella (a gut-wrenching, bravura performance by Jennifer Regan), whose body has matured, leaving her mind and judg-

ment far behind. Bella, however, has common sense and a certain practicality to go along with her challenges.

When the play opens, Grandma's son Eddie (Spencer Rowe) is offstage in the bedroom, talking to her. It's a rare visit. Over the years of Eddie's marriage, his life was devoted to his recently deceased wife and his two sons, 15 ½-year-old Jay (Steven Kaplan) and 13 1/2-year-old Arty (Austyn Myers), who we find onstage complaining about the heat and wondering why their dad's been talking to Grandma so long.

Eddie was forced to borrow money from a loan shark to pay his wife's final medical expenses, and he's been offered a job traveling, which of course means he won't be able to care for the boys. Grandma says no way. The loving Bella settles the matter by opening the sleeper sofa, and the boys become part of the chaotic household dominated by the bruised, first-generation immigrant woman. Eddie regretfully hits the road, with a goal of making enough money in 10 months to repay his debt.

Grandma's other grown children, shady Louie (Jeffrey M. Bender) and

'YONKERS'

CONTINUED FROM Page 8

emotionally challenged Gert (Amanda Naughton), add flavor and substance to the family saga, which engages and informs, bringing much laughter to the audience and tears to the characters, who from youngest to oldest are brutally forthright in expressing themselves.

Rather than playing for the laughs, Schwartz goes for depth. The laughs come naturally and so does understanding of how courageous survivors of this catastrophe were, leaving their countries behind, learning a new language and doing what they must to support their families. Grandma Kunitz may have damaged her children, but one is left with hope, especially for Jay and Arty, so remarkably played by Kaplan and Myers. These two young actors, one from New York, the other a San Diego lad, seem to have bonded as if they are real brothers.

Associate artist Ralph Funicello creates the period flat in Yonkers, with costume design (love the crooked seams and white socks) by Alejo Vietti, lighting by Matthew McCarthy and sound by Paul Peterson. The fully trapped theater space allows Funicello to create a stairway to the candy shop and the street, making the flat appear like the little island it is.

"Lost in Yonkers" plays at 7 p.m. Tuesdays and Wednesdays; 8 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays; 2 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays; and 7 p.m. Sundays through March 7 in the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, at the Old Globe's Conrad Prebys Theatre Center, 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park.

For tickets (\$29-\$62) and information, visit www.theoldglobe.org or call (619) 23-GLOBE. ■

Play REVIEWS Commentary (As seen in Preview 1/26/10)
SD OLD GLOBE Theatre:



Neil Simon's Lost In Yonkers

...Finds A Home In San Diego !

In a TIME Magazine story, the late William Henry III wrote that "Neil Simon" ability to find humor in unlikely places, then shift emotional gears with no machinery showing, makes Simon a great comedist!"

Good as GOLD! That is what a *Neil Simon* play is to theater ... and, so it is here at the **Sheryl & Harvey**

White Theatre thru the 28th of February ... as *Neil Simon's LOST IN YONKERS* commands the presence of the new theatre... at the **Old Globe Theatre**. As smoothly staged-in-the-round by *Scott Schwartz*, on a scenic design by *Ralph Funicello*, the all-Equity seven member cast of *Steven Kaplan, Austyn Myers, Spencer Rowe, Jenifer Regan, Judy Kaye, Jeffrey M. Bender* and *Amanda Naughton*...tell the Pulitzer-Prize winning story of a slightly askew family in Yonkers, New York in 1942.



Steven Kaplan, Jenifer Regan, Austyn Myers Judy Kaye

In a 10-month slice of their collective lives, thrown together by circumstances beyond their individual control, brother EDDIE (*Spencer Rowe*) deposits his two sons JAY & ARTY (*played by Steven Kaplan and Austyn Myers*), with his domineering, strong-willed mother – Grandma KURNITZ (*played by Judy Kaye*) for safe-keeping, and some growing-up education, as he goes out into the world (*actually, the deep south*) to earn a living. Also living in the close quarters Grandma's home is EDDIE's sister BELLA – played brilliantly by *Jennifer Regan* ... all, rounded-out by the Grandma KURNITZ's other grown children ... brother LOUIE (*Jeffrey M. Bender*) on-the-run from questionable business acquaintances (*hoods...*) and sister GERT – played with good (*inhale/exhale*) humor by *Amanda Naughton*.

Austyn Myers & Steven Kaplan



All of the actors are in top form, as they challenge the German-stock firmness of old-world grandma KURNITZ. It is the chemistry of *Jennifer Regan's* BELLA, who previously appeared at the Old Globe, in Arthur Miller's "Resurrection Blues" and "The Trojan Women", in her body language and voice patterns – reflecting the retarded Aunt BELLA....she is mesmerizing to watch. Together with the boys – the brother-tightness of JAY, played by *Steven Kaplan*, last seen on stage

as 'Henry' in "Terrible Infant" at the New York International Fringe Festival, and ARTY – played by *Austyn Myers*, who also appeared in the Old Globe's "The First Wives Club" with *Sam Harris*, and who also appeared on Broadway in the revival of "Les Miserables"...all three actors, from the top of the play, are the source of most of the humor and sassy one-liners! Director *Scott Schwartz*... co-directed "Jane Eyre" at La Jolla Playhouse in 1999, and his Off Broadway work included, directing "Bat Boy – The Musical" and "Tick Tick...Boom!".



Steven Kaplan & Austyn Myers



On *Neil Simon* (as noted) – the inspiration for *LOST IN YONKERS* ... between his semi-autobiographical trilogy of plays in the 1980s, and two revealing memoirs in the 1990s, *Neil Simon* was at a turning point. The most successful playwright in American history had written 25 of his 33 plays, virtually all of them hits...that spawned successful films! This play *LOST IN YONKERS* would prove to be *Simon's* masterpiece, earning him the 1991 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and a third Tony Award. Almost twenty years later, it marks *Simon's* return to the *Old Globe*, and the Inaugural production of the *Sheryl & Harvey White Theatre*. *LOST IN YONKERS* is the eighth *Old Globe* production of a *Neil Simon* play. The *Globe's* relationship with the playwright, began with his first play of the 1964-65 Season, and includes two world premieres – *RUMORS* and *JAKE'S WOMEN*. Beginning with *COME BLOW YOUR HORN* in 1962, *Simon* rolled out an unprecedented string of hit plays and musicals. He dominated commercial theatre in the 1960s and 70s, and then lit up the Great White Way in the 1980s with the "*Eugene Trilogy*" of *BRIGHTON BEACH MEMOIRS*, *BILOXI BLUES* and *BROADWAY BOUND*.



Full Cast of ... **LOST IN YONKERS**

Before the Broadway opening of **LOST IN YONKERS** in February, 1991, **Neil Simon** confided to critic David Richards, that despite being America's most successful playwright, or perhaps because of it – he would never win a *Pulitzer Prize*. Two months later, the Pulitzer Prize for DRAMA went to **Simon** for **LOST IN YONKERS**. In its recommendation to the Pulitzer Advisory Board, the Jury had written that **LOST IN YONKERS** was the only play nominated by all five members, who judged it "*a mature work by an enduring, and often under-valued, American playwright.*"



Next up...will be the 2008 Tony Award winner for Best Revival of a Play – Marc Camoletti and Beverly Cross's **BOEING BOEING** on March 13th – April 18th. For ticketing information, call (619) 23-GLOBE, or go online at www.theoldglobe.org.

Sheryl & Harvey White Theatre



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Lost in Yonkers

By January Riddle



Regan, Kaye
Photo by Craig Schwartz

Clichéd and corny, square and safe, Neil Simon's *Lost in Yonkers* has found itself the inaugural production on the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre stage of San Diego's Old Globe Theatre. Despite its dated style and old-fashioned humor, this Pulitzer prize-winning comedy by one of America's favorite playwrights still offers a surprise or two, and it has not lost its way to Chuckletown.

Credit for that belongs to a superb cast, especially the two young men playing the lead roles, and Scott Schwartz's capable direction.

Bringing this old warhorse to renewed life as a lively trotter could not have been an easy task on the White's

diminutive, theatre-in-the-round stage, but the production does not suffer from the lack of space.

Ralph Funicello's scenic design replicates the 1940s living room of a middle class Jewish family home with a staircase to the unseen, family-owned candy store below. The staging takes advantage of the aisles, which resemble spokes from the central stage that lead to the exterior tunnel-like corridor "wheel," to allow exits and entrances that stretch out the action.

Not that there is a lot of action in this Simon-typical talky play. The story showcases a family in flux, turned inside out by financial and bereavement disruptions, leaving all its dysfunctions showing. Two adolescent brothers, Arty and Jay, must come to live with their controlling and humorless Grandma Kurnitz while their erstwhile father Eddie travels the country selling scrap metal to earn the money to pay back the thousands he borrowed from the mob. With their mother recently dead of the cancer that racked up the medical bills necessitating the ill-conceived loan, the boys have no choice but to adapt.

Making it somewhat easier for them are their odd aunts, the child-like Bella and the speech-afflicted Gert, and their uncle Louie, a small-time hood. The characters are caricatures, typical of this playwright's brand of comedy, but the exaggeration creates easy understanding.

Convincingly, even frighteningly, played by Tony-award winner, Judy Kaye, Grandma Kurnitz is a mean old lady. She thumps around, dragging one foot like Quasimodo and stomping her cane menacingly, and she makes it quite clear that her grandsons are not welcome guests but undesirable obligations. (What is it with the Globe's current season of plays featuring

such unpleasant old women as this Grandma and Lilly of the currently running *Whisper House*?) Justified in the script as a product of war-torn Germany and its Darwinian survival of the fittest culture, Grandma's callous nature denies love, for herself and everyone else.

She makes Eddie (adroitly played as a nervous nebbish by Spencer Rowe) her youngest son and a new widower beg for refuge for his two boys. She terrorizes Gert (a hilarious and deft Amanda Naughton), whose asthmatic wheeze is the symptom of stress born of a very unpleasant life, but it makes for some of the play's funniest moments.

Ironically, it is the least capable family member, the simple-minded but exuberantly weird Bella, who manages to win the life she wants. Jennifer Regan nearly steals the show with her Carol Burnett interpretation of the dingy aunt, delicately balancing the comedy with pathos and sensitivity.

Fortunately, Steven Kaplan (as Jay) and Austyn Myers (as little brother Arty) are accomplished beyond their years, quite up to the tasks of their respective roles. Kaplan plays the older, quieter, perhaps wiser brother without letting him disappear among the play's wildly excited characters. He shows Jay's strength and sensitivity, yet makes his several angry flare-ups rise naturally rather than melodramatically.

There is drama enough in Arty's character, and the perfectly cast Myers handles his cheeky charm with adorable aplomb. Arty is the kid who instinctively understands how to play up to each family member, and he may win over even his reluctant grandmother. Myers could be that kid, so adept is he at the role.

Louie (Jeffrey M. Bender) was once like Arty, but life and his angry mother have made him cynical, at times emotionally abusive. Bender's interpretation contains too much yelling. If he were to temper that bellowing somewhat, Louie would have as much depth throughout as he has in the (best and funniest) scene where the entire family has gathered to hear Bella's unexpected news.

This is not a deep play. It is a somewhat simple play. But it has its charm and funny moments, and the actors make a visit to the old neighborhood worthwhile.

Neil Simon's "Lost in Yonkers" runs through February 28 on the Old Globe's Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre stage in San Diego's Balboa Park. Show times: Tues-Weds at 7 pm; Thurs-Sat at 8 pm; Sun at 7 pm. Sat & Sun matinees at 2 pm. Tickets: \$29-62, with discounts for full-time students, patrons 29 year of age and younger, seniors and groups of 10 or more. Reservations: www.TheOldGlobe.org or phone (619) 23-GLOBE.

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'This production may not be an A-plus but it's definitely an A.'

Simon fave launches theater

theatre review

By Patricia Morris Buckley
SDUN Theatre Critic

For its inaugural production in the new Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre (which replaces the old Cassius Carter Stage), the Old Globe chose a play that will fit most tastes. "Lost in Yonkers" is a dark drama laced with comedy. It's also the play that won playwright Neil Simon the Pulitzer Prize.

Unlike many of Simon's works, "Lost in Yonkers" is not autobiographical. It centers around a Jewish German family during WWII. Two teenage boys, Jay and Arty, are dropped off at their grandmother's house because their father needs them to stay there while he goes on the road to sell scrap metal. He's \$9,000 in debt to a loan shark because he needed the money to pay for his recently deceased wife's medical bills. Problem is, Jay and Arty don't want to stay with their ultra-strict, tyrannical grandmother who never hugged her children because she feared it would make them "soft."

There is one silver lining to the boys' new living arrangement and that's their Aunt Bella. Bella is a bit slow (what we call "mentally challenged" today), quite excitable and almost childlike. She gives the boys the warmth they miss getting from their mother and that their grandmother will never provide.

This episodic show has only a slight dramatic arc as the boys spend 10 months living in Yonkers. There's a storyline about Bella asserting her independence by having a boyfriend, Uncle Louie, a smalltime henchman who is hiding out from other criminals, and the boys' continuing struggle to live with their granite-like grandmother.

The actors have varying degrees of success with their roles. Oddly enough, it's the two young actors as Jay and Arty who are the most impressive. That's fortunate, as the brothers' relationship is the backbone of the show.

Steven Kaplan plays the put upon Jay as a teenager almost ready to go out on his own but who values his family more than anything else. Kaplan swings between the comedy and



Steven Kaplan as Jay (left), Jennifer Regan as Bella, and Austyn Myers as Arty in Neil Simon's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, "Lost in Yonkers," at the Old Globe. (Craig Schwartz)

"LOST IN YONKERS"

WHEN: Through Feb. 28

WHERE: Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, at the Old Globe

TICKETS: \$29-\$62

INFO: (619) 234-5623

WEB: www.TheOldGlobe.org

drama easily and his New York accent is totally convincing. Austin Myers, a San Diego boy who also appeared in the Old Globe's "First Wives Club," plays Arty with a more youthful energy and a mischievous sense of humor. It's a compliment to both boys to say that they really come across as brothers. As their father, Spencer Rowe has the same easy energy that makes them truly feel like a family.

The real star of the production is Judy Kaye as the grandmother. Kaye is a Broadway actress who has been nominated several times

for a Tony Award. She plays this role completely somber and has a strong presence on the stage. You almost feel the temperature in the theater plummet when she's in a scene.

The two other main characters in the cast don't fare as well, which is sad because the Broadway actors in the parts won Tony Awards. Jennifer Regan is sweet as Bella and has many nice mannerisms that add to the character, but somehow she just barely misses the mark on making the character totally believable. On the other hand, Jeffrey M. Bender tries too hard playing Louie, even overplaying a few moments.

Director Scott Schwartz provides a sure hand with the production, making the action flow easily and at a clipped pace. Ralph Funicello's set seems designed to show off the new theater's features, which isn't a bad

FROM PAGE 24

SIMON

thing. The living room set is flexible, the stage exits double as hallways very nicely and the stairway down to the ice cream parlor is just what the play asks for. But there's a gap around the entire in-the-round set, showing how deep the stage goes down that's a bit distracting, even though it does play up the fact that this family and all their dysfunction is an

island unto itself. Another visually interesting touch is the windows that come down on four sides of the stage when the actors aren't onstage.

There's a good reason that "Lost in Yonkers" won the Pulitzer. It's a compelling, truthful drama about family and how they define each other, but there are also many light-hearted, funny moments. This production may not be an A-plus, but it's definitely an A. And that's a great way to christen a new theater. ♦

Theater Review: 'Lost in Yonkers'

'Lost in Yonkers' finds success at new White Theatre

By Patricia Morris Buckley

SDUN Theatre Critic



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The actors have varying degrees of success with their roles. Oddly enough, it's the two young actors as Jay and Arty who are the most impressive. That's fortunate, as the brothers' relationship is the backbone of the show.

Steven Kaplan plays the put upon Jay as a teenager almost ready to go out on his own but who values his family more than anything else. Kaplan swings between the comedy and drama easily and his New York accent is totally convincing. Austin Myers, a San Diego boy who also appeared in the Old Globe's "First Wives Club," plays Arty with a more youthful energy and a mischievous sense of humor. It's a compliment to both boys to say that they really come across as brothers. As their father, Spencer Rowe has the same easy energy that makes them truly feel like a family.

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Director Scott Schwartz provides a sure hand with the production, making the action flow easily and at a clipped pace. Ralph Funicello's set seems designed to show off the new theater's features, which isn't a bad thing. The living room set is flexible, the stage exits double as hallways very nicely and the stairway down to the ice cream parlor is just what the play asks for. But there's a gap around the entire in-the-round set, showing how deep the stage goes down that's a bit distracting, even though it does play up the fact that this family and all their dysfunction is an island unto itself. Another visually interesting touch is the windows that come down on four sides of the stage when the actors aren't onstage.

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"Lost in Yonkers"

When: Through Feb. 28

Where: Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, at the Old Globe

Tickets: \$29-\$62

Info: (619) 234-5623

Web: www.TheOldGlobe.org



The Old Globe Theatre Complex Debuts New \$30-Million Stage Venue

Thursday, January 28, 2010
Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre
Old Globe Theatre Complex
San Diego, California

Review by *Palm Springs Guides* Theatre & Cinema Critic/Reviewer Jack Lyons
Photos by Craig Schwartz

Never let it be said that the city of San Diego, Calif., its City Fathers and its many generous sponsors and supporters are not true and loyal patrons of the Arts. The world-famous regional playhouse raised the curtain on its recently renovated and newly named Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, with an absolutely first-rate production of one of Neil Simon's rare dramas, "Lost In Yonkers."



Simon's 1991 Pulitzer prize-winning play is a fitting choice to open the new theater. How can one go wrong in presenting one of Simon's best-written plays? In a way, it's a pity that today's younger theatre audiences haven't been able to relate to the stories and style of America's most successful and popular playwright of the last 40 years. Simon, with 33 highly successful (think money) plays to his credit, is the only playwright in history to have three smash hits running concurrently on Broadway.

But theatre-going audiences have been changing during the last 10 years or so. Not only have the demographics, content and style changed, but the stories the younger technology-driven audiences are drawn to have changed as well. It's only a matter of time, I guess, before we will

have car chases, end-of-the-world on-stage pyrotechnics, (oh, what the heck, throw in a teenage vampire or two, as well) and that will be the look of theatre in the future. Let's hope my cynicism is not rewarded. But I digress.



“Lost in Yonkers” is a coming-of-age tale that focuses on brothers Arty (Austyn Myers) and Jay (Steven Kaplan) — think of Neil as Arty and Jay as Danny Simon — left in the care of Grandma Kurnitz (Judy Kaye) and Aunt Bella (Jennifer Regan) in Yonkers, New York. Their anxious father, Eddie (Spencer Rowe), works as a traveling salesman to pay off debts incurred due to the death of his wife. Grandma is a severe, frightfully intimidating immigrant who terrified her children as they were growing up, damaging each of them to varying degrees.

Bella is a sweet, but mentally challenged and highly excitable, woman who longs to marry an usher at the local movie house in order to escape the oppressive household and create a life of her own. Her brother Louie (Jeffery M. Bender) is a small-time tough-talking hoodlum who is on the run, while her sister Gert (Amanda Naughton) suffers from a breathing problem, the cause of which is probably more psychological than physical. Dysfunctional families are rich goldmines, ripe for exploration as subject matter either in comedy, or this case, drama.

Because it is Simon, however, there are always comedy situations and zingers lurking just beneath the surface of the characters' various personal stories.

The first-rate cast, insightfully directed by Scott Schwartz, couldn't be improved upon. Anchoring the strong ensemble group is Kaye. As terrifying and unapproachable as Grandma is to her family, Kaye manages to find the vulnerable soft spots in her armor. Regan's Bella may be a little too jiggly at times, but she delivers on the emotional side, the wallop and impact of a woman tired of being treated as a young girl; ultimately challenging her mother for independence.



Rowe's Eddie perfectly sets the tone and the opening scene for his two sons Jay and Arty, as they inject the famous Simon comedy lines into an otherwise serious situation. Kaplan and Myers work, not only the audience, but, each other, like ham-and-eggs throughout the entire evening. The young actors are impressive indeed, with both boasting long lists of professional credits. Naughton's Aunt Gert, is properly subdued, until she has to explain herself or a situation, and then "it's the breathing thing" that defines her role in the family.

Bender is an absolute delight on stage. Bender's slightly unstable, passive-aggressive portrayal of Uncle Louie — who's another casualty from Grandma's subjugation list — fascinates his young, impressionable nephews at first. However, it soon becomes apparent that Uncle Louie is a Freudian delight, and a guy who may be on the lam from one scrape to another for the rest of his life. But what a performance to watch!

The entire creative team of Ralph Funicelo, scenic design; Mathew McCarthy lighting design; along with Alejo Vietti's wartime period costumes and the always reliable sound design from Paul Peterson; perfectly complements Director Schwartz's vision of how best to present this production "in the round" at the 250-seat Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre. "Yonkers" is exactly the sort of show that pleases practitioners of the art form as well as audiences.

The production is a wonderful choice to open the new complex and reintroduce Simon to younger audiences and to reward the many long-time fans of Simon's plays.

"Lost in Yonkers" runs through Feb. 28. Don't miss this terrific production.

For more about ["Lost in Yonkers,"](#) click here.

For more about the [Olde Globe Theatre,](#) click here.

THE STAR NEWS

February 5, 2010

'Lost in Yonkers' speaks of a universal story

By Maria Patrice Amon

SPECIAL TO THE STAR-NEWS

Neil Simon's semi-autobiographical 1991 Pulitzer Prize-winning play "Lost in Yonkers" chronicles a tumultuous year in the lives of a Jewish family in Yonkers, N.Y. The Old Globe's production speaks a universal story of family dynamics in an understated and emotionally resonant language.

Set entirely in the living room of an apartment the indomitable matriarch Grandmother Kurnitz and her developmentally delayed daughter Bella share, the play is about two young boys, Jay and Arty. The boys' father, Eddie, needs to go

away for a little while to make some money for a loan he took out to pay their departed mother's hospital bills. The two boys, of course, need a place to stay since the road is no place for a child. The father arranges for the boys to stay at their grandmother's.

During the stay we are introduced to Aunt Bella, whose marbles aren't all there, Uncle Louie, a tough man who the boys believe works for the mafia, Aunt Gert, another aunt who speaks funny

because she grew up afraid of her mother, and finally Grandma, a very strong woman who basically everyone in Yonkers is afraid of.

Especially enjoyable was how well the characters interacted with one another and how fluidly they moved around the set. The way the comedy centered more around the youngest character Arty, seemed somewhat unfair to the other characters. The dialogue was well written and seemed appropriate to the time period.

"Lost in Yonkers" is playing through Feb. 28 in the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre at the Old Globe Theatre with performances Tuesday through Sunday.

Tickets are available by calling 23-GLOBE, via the Internet at www.TheOldGlobe.org or at the Old Globe box office. Ticket prices range from \$29 to \$62.

'Lost in Yonkers' still has its charm

BY DIANA SAENGER

Critic

Since its initial staging in 1991, Neil Simon's Pulitzer Prize-winning "Lost in Yonkers" has entertained audiences large and small. The drama about survival takes place in 1942 when a family is facing big changes over the coming year. The all-star cast in The Old Globe production present a wonderful rendition of the play, full of both laughs and poignant moments.

We first meet brothers Jay (Steven Kaplan) and Arty (Austyn Myers) in their Grandmother Kurnitz's immaculate living room where they are scoping the place out and recalling funny moments with their father's side of the family. Their father, Eddie (Spencer Rowe), runs back and forth from his mother's room reminding the boys not to disturb anything or leave hair oil on the doilies. He's extremely nervous and promising to be finished soon.

Eddie's absence gives the boys time to introduce us to the family through their con-

REVIEW

versations. It's immediately clear they truly dislike their grandmother, whom they've barely seen during their formative years. Arty erupts with laughter when Jay mimics their Aunt Gert (Amanda Naughton) who says half a sentence while exhaling and the other half while inhaling. They romanticize speculation about Uncle Louie, who Jay explains is a "bag" man, and the more he tries to explain that, the more Arty misconstrues every word.

They've barely begun to discuss Aunt Bella (Jennifer Regan) when she bursts into the room with the energy of a cyclone and about the same unpredictability. She fusses over the boys, smothering them with affection and flapping her hands, before heading downstairs to work in the family's candy store.

Eddie emerges from the bedroom ending the emotional buildup the boys have endured. He explains his real reason for bringing them to

grandma's: He's broke from the medical bills incurred by their recently deceased mother and he had to let their apartment go. The only solution is for the boys to stay with grandma for a year.

As the boys whine and complain — Arty sure he'll grow with the same affliction that Bella has — a very loud thump is heard approaching the living room. In walks grandma (Judy Kaye), as stiff as the Statue of Liberty, but far less welcoming. She's overheard some of the boy's objections about her. As she turns one cheek for Arty to kiss and the other for Jay, she tells them, "You don't survive in the world if you're not like

steel."

Grandma has a right to be cruel; life has been cruel to her. She was beaten by German officers during the war; but the young boys can't wrap their minds around that. They just know that grandma is no bear-hugging, cake-making dame, and the sooner their dad comes to get them the better. Made-up far beyond her age, Kaye plays grandma to the hilt. Grandma's icy demeanor never wavers, yet just enough empathy for her seeps from Kaye's proficient performance.

Kaplan and Myers liven up the show's drama with laugh after laugh. Their exuberant innocence feeds every action

'Lost In Yonkers'

■ **Where:** The Globe's Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park

■ **Performances:** 7 p.m. Tuesdays-Wednesdays; 8 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays; 2 p.m. Saturdays-Sundays; and 7 p.m. Sundays through Feb. 28

■ **Tickets:** \$29-\$62, (619) 23-GLOBE, www.TheOldGlobe.org



Jay (Steven Kaplan) and Arty (Austyn Myers) are befuddled by their Aunt Bella (Jennifer Regan) in 'Lost in Yonkers.' CRAIG SCHWARTZ

and they play off each other like Felix and Oscar. When Jay is intent on raising money to get dad home faster, Arty says, "We could cut off grandma's braid and sell it to the army for barbwire."

When Uncle Louie shows up with his mysterious bag and a gun strapped inside his jacket, the boys are all ears as he feeds them Hollywood-themed answers to their questions. When he's out of the room, Jay exhaustingly exclaims, "This is like a James Cagney movie in our own house."

In this obviously dysfunc-

tional home, it's perky Bella who balances the seriousness of the situations with completely absurd solutions. Her emotional arc keeps all eyes upon her as she solidly connects with every character in the play. Aunt Gertie has few scenes, but garners plenty of laughs every time she speaks.

The new Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre worked well for "Lost in Yonkers." Whether seeing the play for the 10th time or the first, the Globe's production is perfect fun for the entire family and will be talked about long after leaving the theater.

Rob Stevens' Entertainment Blog

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[Stephen Sondheim's SWEENEY TODD is Bloody Good](#)

February 7, 2010

It has been over 30 years since SWEENEY TODD first swung his razor high to the music and lyrics of Stephen Sondheim. The original Broadway production won a bunch of Tony and other awards and the show is considered a masterpiece by the composer of other acknowledged stellar creations such as COMPANY, FOLLIES, A LITTLE NIGHT MUSIC, PACIFIC OVERTURES, PASSION etc. This writer saw the original Broadway production with Len Cariou, Angela Lansbury and Victor Garber and countless productions in the three decades since then everywhere from a tent on the lawn of a mansion in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to outdoor theaters in Solvang and Vista, California. Long Beach's Musical Theatre West is the latest to revive this modern opera and it just may be the finest production in the group's 57 year history.

Not a wrong note is sounded under the taut, immaculate and tension-filled direction of Calvin Remsberg. The 22-piece orchestra under the direction of John Glaudini and the large chorus of angelic voices make the music soar and induce goosebumps before Sweeney makes his first terrifying slice. Julie Ferrin's exemplary Sound Design is a key ingredient in making sure every nuance of lyric is clearly heard. Jean Yves-Tessier's lighting is bloody good work also.

Norman Large towers over the stage as the brooding, vengeful, blood-thirsty barber done wrong. He is never not frightening, but there is still some small piece of humanity beating away in his black heart. But Large leavens the darkness with a bit of sly, dry humor. The real revelation of this production is the multi-layered performance of Debbie Prutsman as his henchwoman Mrs. Lovett. Prutsman has always been a mistress of comic timing, eliciting laughs where no one got them before. But here her Nellie plumbs the depths of richness in this character. She's a mooning love-struck girl hopelessly in love with Todd, eager for any crumb of his attention. She's an intrepid entrepreneur, quick with an idea of how to economically dispose of the bodies Sweeney's razor has sliced through as well as make a tidy profit. And her heartbreak is palpable when she realizes she must have her adopted son killed because he has discovered the awful secret she's been hiding. Brava Diva!

When you add in the superb supporting cast featuring Dan Callaway and Sarah Bermudez as the star-crossed young lovers, Jim Holdridge as the slow but not dumb Toby, Michelle Duffy as the tragic Beggar Woman, as well as Richard Gould, Roland Rusinek and Alan M-L Wager as the real villains of the melodrama, you have a SWEENEY TODD for the ages.

(Carpenter Performing Arts Center, campus of California State University in Long Beach. \$30-80. www.musical.org. Ends Feb 14)

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 Posted by robstevensentertainment

[Neil Simon's LOST IN YONKERS](#)

February 7, 2010

Neil Simon is undoubtedly the most successful playwright in the history of the American theater. He has had over 30 plays or musicals produced on Broadway since his first COME BLOW YOUR HORN in 1961. Many of them were later turned into hit movies with Simon writing the screenplay. LOST IN YONKERS, currently at San Diego's Old Globe Theatre, was written in 1991 and earned Simon his third Tony Award and his first Pulitzer Prize. Unlike his semi-autobiographical trilogy (BRIGHTON BEACH MEMOIRS, BILOXI BLUES, BROADWAY BOUND), Simon made up the characters in YONKERS. Yet he is quoted as saying "It is probably the most honest play I've ever written." That honesty shines clearly in this revival due to Scott Schwartz's no frills but steadfast direction and a top notch cast.

The action is set above a sweet shop where a tyrannical German-Jewish matriarch terrorizes children and grandchildren alike. Teenage grandsons Jay (Steven Kaplan) and Arty (Austyn Myers) set the stage with horrific descriptions of Grandma Kurnitz's past deeds they either witnessed or were told about. The audience expects an ogre, or at least the Frankenstein Monster to make its appearance. But


it's just a steely old woman with a limp, a cane and barbed wire braids. Judy Kaye's iron-willed Grandma doesn't tolerate levity or laziness, crying or weakness. Her performance rightly dominates the proceedings, even though she is off stage more than on.

The time is 1942 and Jay and Arty recently lost their mother to a long and expensive illness. Their father Eddie (Spencer Rowe) is in debt to the mob for \$9,000 he borrowed to ease his wife's suffering. Thanks to America's entry into World War II, Eddie has found a money-making job, but it takes him on the road. He pleads with his mother to take in his grandchildren for a while, but she steadfastly refuses to be bothered. But Eddie's unmarried sister Bella, who lives with her grandmother, makes it a done deal. Bella, at 35, is still childlike due to Scarlet Fever as a child. As played by Jennifer Regan, she is the heart and soul of this production as well as providing a cornucopia of laughs. Amanda Naughton as older sister Gert, who escaped her mother only to retain a breathing/speech impediment that provides much laughter in her one scene. Jeffrey M. Bender as Louie, the black sheep of the family with his criminal activities, adds a touch of seriousness as well as some laughs.

Simon has created a play with a seriously dysfunctional family as its focal point, set against the background of the Depression and war, but he didn't economize on the laughs. But for the most part, here they aren't just one-liners. Although still uproariously funny, they are more character driven and therefore feel more real. Ralph Funicello's scenic design, Alejo Vietti's costumes and Matthew McCarthy's lighting design are all first rate.

(Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre at the Old Globe Theatre in Balboa Park, San Diego. Ends Feb 28. \$29-62. www.theoldglobe.org)

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 Posted by [robstevensentertainment](#)

[Ghosts sing but do they thrill in WHISPER HOUSE](#)

February 7, 2010

Tony Award-winning composer Duncan Sheik's eagerly anticipated follow-up to SPRING AWAKENING is being given its World Premiere at San Diego's Old Globe Theatre through February 21. Set in a haunted lighthouse on the coast of Maine in early 1942, Kyle Jarrow's book is an intriguing character study as well as a coming of age tale and a ghost story. The unlikely elements are well blended and a top-notch cast and director Peter Askin's clear and precise vision keep the audience enthralled for the 90-minute intermission-less show.

The action begins when self-professed local curmudgeon and lighthouse keeper Miss Lilly (a solid, believable and ultimately touching performance by Mare Winningham) greets her young nephew Christopher (A.J. Foggiano) who has come to stay with her against his will for at least a month. His Army pilot father was recently killed in action in the South Pacific and his mother is recovering from the resulting nervous breakdown. His inquisitiveness and her lack of maternal instincts give their relationship a cold and prickly edge. Lilly's helper at the lighthouse, Mr. Yasuhiro (Arthur Acuna, delivering a thoughtful, layered character), is a Japanese man who has been in her employ for three years. Because of his father's death at the hands of the Japanese, Christopher takes an immediate dislike to Yasuhiro. The local sheriff (Ted Koch) and a Coast Guard Lieutenant (Kevin Hoffmann providing comic relief) also want Yasuhiro gone from the now security risk area of the coastal lighthouse.

Adding to Christopher's distrust and confusion are the two resident ghosts (David Poe and Holly Brook) who only he can see although the others are often bothered by their poltergeist pranks. The ghosts are part of a yacht party that drowned off the coast because Lilly's drunken father forgot to light the beacon on a long ago Halloween night. The action comes to a thunderous conclusion when a German U-boat is sighted off the coast and the Navy arrives to bomb them. Christopher comes of age by banishing his fear of the ghosts and coming to recognize the budding relationship between Lilly and Yasuhiro.

The technical aspects of the production are top drawer. Michael Schweikardt's multi-level lighthouse set creates a marvelous backdrop for the action, aided immensely by Aaron Rhyne's projection design. Matthew Richards has provided ghostly lighting filtered through plenty of fog. Dan Moses Schreier's sound design is most effective. Musical director and keyboard player Jason Hart and his six-piece on-stage band are dressed in tuxes, top hats and wearing ghost white makeup to emulate the look of lead singer Poe. Sheik's music is appropriately haunting and downright eerie at times, providing the proper atmosphere for the piece. The lyrics by Sheik and Jarrow could use some fine tuning. The best number in the show is "The Tale of Solomon Snell" which doesn't really advance the plot and seems more Edgar Allan Poe or Edward Gorey, but the ghostly bells do deliver the shivers. Jarrow's book at times strains credulity—it's a given ghosts can walk through walls but can they also transport solid objects through those walls? And the dialogue between Lilly and Christopher as well as Lilly and the Sheriff borders on sitcom chatter. And why is the female ghost in and out of her dress so often? Is she trying to seduce the young Christopher as well as scare him.

But the show's main problem is that all the songs are sung by the two ghosts, who not only wear head mics but also sing into handheld mics. Poe has a beguiling early Bob Dylan quality to his voice and his vocals for the most part are pleasant. Brook on the other hand plants her lips firmly on her handheld mic, making the lyrics unintelligible. That's an even bigger problem when her songs are providing exposition. This production of WHISPER HOUSE is a good start and with some adjustments here and there, Sheik might have another winner on his hands.

CultureVulture

Lost in Yonkers

Old Globe Theater, San Diego
January 23 to February 28, 20010
<http://www.theoldglobe.org/>



Set in the early days of World War II, Neil Simon's Pulitzer and Tony-winning *Lost in Yonkers* begins with two adolescent boys, Jay and Arty, lamenting the heat, their clothes, and being stuck in Grandma's apartment. But mostly they talk about their eccentric relatives. There is Aunt Bella, a few cards short of a deck; Aunt Gert, who has trouble coordinating her talking with her breathing; Uncle Louie, the gangster; and of course Grandma, who is feared and loathed by all of the above.

Jay and Arty soon find that their stoic father, Eddie, is indebted to loan sharks and must take a job selling scrap metal in the South to pay them back. With dad on the road, they must spend the next few months living in that apartment with Grandma and Bella—in their eyes a fate worse than death.

The play begins as a typical Neil Simon comedy but gradually morphs into more serious drama, as each of the adults unwinds their relationship with Grandma and the boys do their best to navigate this treacherous terrain. Grandma, a German immigrant, is played with Prussian menace (think Colonel von Scherbach from *Stalag 17*) by Tony winner Judy Kaye. Even Uncle Louie,

who claims he is beyond her reach, sits down when Grandma commands.

Jay and Arty are amiably confused throughout, especially when Bella confides that she has a secret love. Played frenetically by Jennifer Regan, Bella is bewildered, well-meaning and the only one who really knows how to stand up to Grandma.

Lost in Yonkers is the Globe's inaugural production in Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre. There is not a bad a seat in the house. The direction is brisk and the sets evoke depression-era modesty. All in all, it's a fun show and a bit meatier than you would expect from Simon.

Joshua Baxt

Curtain Calls

Week ending February 4, 2010

By Charlene Baldridge



The theme this week is family—the family into which we're born (*Lost in Yonkers*, *The Piano Lesson*) and the family we create (*La bohème*). By no great stretch, that might include the family of Oona O'Neill and her husband, Charlie Chaplin, who gave birth to Victoria Chaplin Thierrée and her daughter, Aurélia, whose *Oratorio* was witnessed Wednesday night at La Jolla Playhouse.

It is a joy to parents when family traits and talents appear in the next generation, and, if we live long enough to observe the phenomenon, in the ones that follow. Old age has its rewards.

The way it was: Neil Simon's *Lost in Yonkers*

THE SHOW: Neil Simon's Pulitzer Prize-, Tony Award-winning 1993 comedy, ***Lost in Yonkers***, produced by the Old Globe and directed by Scott Schwartz at the Cheryl and Harvey White Theatre through February 28

THE STORY is set in Grandma Kurnitz's flat in Yonkers, New York. It's 1942 and her son Eddie, who seldom visited while his wife was alive, is in the bedroom having a talk with her. His two motherless boys, 15½-year-old Jay and 13½-year-old Arty, wait in the living room, wondering what could be taking so long. They don't know it, but their lives are about to change forever.



Because of his late wife's medical expenses, Eddie was forced to go to a loan shark and has been unable to repay the money. He's been given ten months to pay up or else. He's also been offered a job that would entail traveling, and so he is asking Grandma to take in Jay and Arty, whom she insists on calling Jacob and Arthur. Meanwhile, Eddie's mentally challenged adult sister arrives. Bella, who lives with Grandma and helps downstairs in the candy/ice cream shop, loves the two boys. In fact, she loves everybody, sometimes to excess. She may be smart in the usual sense but she proves to most pragmatic and practical of the family. She expresses herself honestly and lets the chips fall where they may, a trait we learn runs in the family. Although Grandma says no, she won't take in the boys, Bella settles the matter by unfolding the convertible sofa.

A couple of months later, Grandma's rather shady son, Louie, arrives. He's on the lam from two gangsters parked in a black Studebaker out front. The boys are terribly impressed with Louie's firearm and what appears to be his free and exciting lifestyle. Meanwhile, Grandma, who as a young woman escaped the Holocaust (not without physical and emotional wounds), rides everyone in the household, hoping to instill goodness in the boys, reform Louie and make Bella stop going to the movies. Grandma's other surviving child, a grown daughter named Gert, has a nervous disorder and lives apart from the family.

Much of the comedy derives from character, and we also find ourselves laughing at the Kurnitz family's disabilities. It's an odd feeling that we assuage by telling ourselves that's what the playwright wants; and besides, we love these people as much as if they were our own, first- and second-generation immigrant family.

THE PERFORMERS: A fine ensemble in which the youthful actors in particular—Steven Kaplan (Jay) from the

East Coast and Austyn Myers (Arty) from San Diego—seem to have the camaraderie that comes from longtime bonding. Neither is kid cute, both are cool and natural, adorable and funny without self-consciousness. What could be finer?

The rest of the company is equally fine. Judy Kaye (remembered for her Emma Goldman in *Ragtime*) is brilliant as the unbending yet wounded Grandma Kurnitz, who actually turns from the embrace of each family member and who wears her traumatic war experience and the loss of two children and a husband like a badge of courage, an overt *raison d'être* for everything she is and has tried to do for her family's own good.



Jennifer Regan's Bella is magnificent. She is simplicity and love personified, oddly self-possessed and strong in her own right, and totally endearing. Different as they are, Spencer Rowe (Eddie) and Jeffrey M. Bender (Louie) also seem like brothers. Rowe imbues Eddie with just the right amount of parental concern and stress. Bender's Louie is delightfully menacing, yet likable. Amanda Naughton is grand as Gertie, who has a nervous disorder that causes her to finish many sentences in a different voice.

This could be Simon's best, most well made play. It certainly is his deepest.

THE PRODUCTION: Schwartz's direction is impeccable, and Ralph Funicello's scenic design takes advantage the new White Theatre's bells and whistles, actually setting the apartment at stage level, with stairs leading down to the store and street. Alejo Vietti provides detailed period costumes right down to Bella's hose with crooked seams, topped by white socks. Grandma wears heavier, more practical hose, more available during the war, but then she's not out to snag a man. Matthew McCarthy's lighting and Paul Peterson's sound further establish this bygone world with ongoing, unhealed wounds that affected our childhood. Somehow we survived. I remember my grandmother's long, white hair, plaited for night; stories of my implacable, disciplinarian great-grandfather; and the experience of seeing my own mother don nylons, white sox and pumps before leaving her bedroom to fix breakfast.

After all this time, some still bear scars from what happened in Europe and from the old-world ways of rearing children. Yes, people were and are like Grandma Kurnitz, denying themselves familial love, wielding the rod because they thought that was the right thing to do. Simon's play allows us to understand and forgive.

THE LOCATION: **Through February 28** at 7 p.m. Tuesdays and Wednesdays; 8 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays; 2 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays; and 7 p.m. Sundays in the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, at the Old Globe's Conrad Prebys Theatre Center, 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park, \$29-\$62, www.theoldglobe.org or (619) 23-GLOBE.

BOTTOM LINE **Best Bet**

NOTE: In 1999, Neil Simon consented to an interview request. It was prior to the opening of *The Dinner Party*, which was set to open at the Ahmanson Theatre. The following quotes were included in my profile of Simon, which ran in the late *Performing Arts* magazine. I asked how a playwright, frequently maligned as shallow and glibly comedic, picks himself up and goes on when his most recent work is perceived as a failure.

"You just write another one. I've had success and respect from the very beginning. A critic doesn't like a play, so he doesn't give you a successful review. Maybe because the plays I write are comedic, they think that's more trivial than writing something serious. Even in the comedies, there are very serious elements. I no longer consider defending myself against this. There's so much else that comes my way.

"I was walking along in Paris, and a man in his 60s came by with his wife. He turned to me and said, 'I just want to

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BEHIND THE SCENES

by Jenni Prisk

Email Jenni

January 28, 2010

Welcome to the end of January...already! Love the way the ground has forgiven the drought and responded to the rain. Hope we get some more (and hope I'm not the only one who does!)

My 2 Cents

boom has extended its run at the Lyceum in Horton Plaza through February 6. Not surprising, the night we attended the house was completely full. Leave your inhibitions outside the door and become part of this futuristic, challenging play. Penned by Peter Sinn Nachtrieb, you will join the whacky lives of marine biologist Jules (played by a frenetic and focused Steven Lone) and Jo, the ferocious feminist, played by fabulous Rachael VanWormer who flies across the stage in athletic leaps and bounds as she changes her mind about her state of mind with rapid movement and slick dialogue. Oh, and they are waiting for the apocalypse, which is heralded by the meaningful Sylvia M'Lafi Thompson who acts as our tour guide. Man, can she beat those drums! Are we in the past, or the present? Doesn't matter, you'll leave with your head in a whirl and wonder what just hit you. Perhaps it was the comet? Go see for yourself.

Lost in Yonkers opens the beautiful new Sheryl and Harvey White theatre at The Old Globe. Scott Schwartz has directed a sensitive and finely tuned production of the Neil Simon Pulitzer Prize-winning play, set in New York in 1942. If you sometimes think *your* family is dysfunctional, you need to see this production to remove all those fears. You will, however, fear Grandma Kurnitz (finely measured performance by Judy Kaye) before she even arrives on stage, such is the demonic press she gets from her two grandsons, Jay (Steven Kaplan, very composed and true) and Arty (devilish and delightful Austyn Myers.) Jennifer Regan as Bella, the child-woman, delivers a tour de force performance of powerful emotions. Her "henchman" brother Louie is suitably edgy and ill at ease as played by Jeffrey Bender.

The real star is the new theatre. The seats are bigger and more steeply raked, giving the feel of more leg and knee room. And finding your seat is easier too. The vomitoria add excellent new dimensions and capabilities for the players. Only complaint: the exit (and of course entrance) doors from the theatre are very narrow, causing bottlenecks, which I hope won't be a problem if there's a fire! *Lost in Yonkers* runs through February 28.

Theatre News

The San Diego Critics' Circle presented their awards on Monday evening. Sadly, this time, Craig Noel could not be present. He is resting quietly at home, and being cared for around the clock.



Many deserving theatre artists walked to the stage to receive their accolades. The Ira Aldridge Repertory players not only received an award, but also entertained us with their fabulous voices. Not surprisingly, Cyrano de Bergerac won Lead Performance for Patrick Page and Direction for Darko Tresnjak. Darko (left) received a special award for Artistic Vision and Leadership for his body of work at The Old Globe. He is still sorely missed; thanks Critics' Circle judges.

Amanda Sitton made the funniest speech of the night, pulling from one she claims she wrote when she was just a little girl and saw herself married to Johnny Depp! (Tim, you're just as handsome!) Ian Brininstool who was awarded for his role in *Over the Tavern* at NCRT delivered a commanding speech that augurs well for his future.

Theatre artists of every genre love to mix and mingle. Everyone supports everyone else. No wonder theatre is thriving in San Diego!

So what still continues on the stage, and is about to open? *Expecting Isabel*, Moxie's production at their new Rolando Theatre runs through February 7. *The Piano Lesson* opens at Cygnet in Old Town on Saturday January 30th. We're going to see *La Mandragola* at the UCSD Theatre and Dance space tonight (January 29) so I'll tell you about it next week.

The Man Who opens at New Village Arts on February 4. From February 6 through 9 you can see Bryan Bevell in *The Fever* at Compass, the final production.

Unfortunately, I will have to miss a number of productions, however, I will be there in spirit. On February 9 I am flying to Uganda to do some "ground" work with an NGO for Voices of Women. I look forward to seeing you all after my return. Love, Jenni



FEATURES

A CHANGE OF PACE

Lost? Nah, musical theater star Judy Kaye finds herself right at home in 'Lost in Yonkers'

By James Hebert
THEATER CRITIC

Neil Simon has a Broadway theater named for him and a style of playwriting that, at least in the popular imagination, could be similarly branded. Which places his Pulitzer-winning "Lost in Yonkers," opening a run this week at the Old Globe Theatre, in startling contrast to the gently comic sentiment of works such as "Brighton Beach Memoirs."

"It's, 'Setup, setup, joke,'" says "Yonkers" star Judy Kaye of the familiar Simon-ian prototype.

"But not this one. This one does have a lot of humor in it, but it has a very serious story, and very fully realized characters. The comedy comes directly out of the situation. That's what I think makes it so special."

The Globe production offers a contrast to the typical Judy Kaye role, too — if there is such a thing for a performer who's portrayed everyone from an achingly bad opera singer (Florence Foster Jenkins in "Souvenir") to a ragingly funny rock diva (Rosie in "Mamma Mia!") to a perfectly snooty prima donna (Carlotta in "The Phantom of the Opera").

What those all had in common is they were singing roles — Kaye is a major musical-theater and opera talent who won a 1988 Tony Award as the original Carlotta on Broadway, and was Tony-nominated for the two other shows.

Kaye doesn't sing at all in "Yonkers," and she doesn't seem to mind a whole lot, either.

"It's luxurious to be able to do a speaking role — although it's not as if singing isn't speaking," she says. "It's all the same

DETAILS

"Lost in Yonkers"
Old Globe Theatre

When: Begins previews Saturday. Opens next Thursday, runs Tuesdays-Wednesdays, 7 p.m.; Thursdays-Fridays, 8 p.m.; Saturdays, 2 and 8 p.m.; Sundays, 2 and 7 p.m., through Feb. 28

Where: Old Globe's Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, 3363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park.

Tickets: \$29-\$62

Phone: (619) 234-5623

Online: TheOldGlobe.org

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Beyond that, the role of the steely Grandma Kurnitz offers a chance for the 61-year-old performer to have "a preview of the next phase of my life — playing grown-ups," she says with a smile.

"It's a kind of person I've never had the opportunity to play," Kaye says. "This very tightly wound, controlled and controlling human being."

In Simon's 1991 play, set in 1942, Grandma presides over a fractured household where she remains the chief guardian for her mentally disabled adult daughter Bella. Her three other surviving children have their own troubles — one's a gangster, another is in a desperate financial mess.

Two young grandsons, visiting for the summer, are witnesses to all this, observing the damage that Grandma's jaundiced view of life has wrought on their father, aunts and uncles.

"She believes she has toughened her



Judy Kaye says "Lost in Yonkers" has humor in it, but it also "has a very serious story, and very fully realized characters. The comedy comes directly out of the situation. That's what I think makes it so special."

children to survive in this terrible world," Kaye says of the character. "That's her worldview. (That) it's a terrible place. She watched her father being killed during a demonstration in Berlin, and she had her foot crushed by a horse — all of this stuff."

Despite all that, the show (which is directed for the Globe by Scott Schwartz, and includes the rising young San Diegan

Austyn Myers in its cast), retains touches of the comedy Simon is so known for, says Kaye.

"But we're not playing it for laughs," she says. "We don't have to. The comedy is just there. And that's kind of perfect."

James Hebert: (619) 293-2040; jim.hebert@uniontrib.com; blog, housesets.uniontrib.com; Twitter, jimhebert

Director Scott Schwartz coaches Steven Kaplan (foreground) and Austin Myers for the Old Globe's staging of Neil Simon's "Lost in Yonkers."

Peggy Peattie / Union-Tribune photos



A DUET OF FIRSTS

"Lost in Yonkers" is the first full production in the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, the Old Globe's new theater-in-the-round. (The space, part of the \$22 million Conrad Prebys Theatre Center, had a soft opening last month with a short run of the musical "I Do! I Do!")

But the play brings with it another breaking-in: Judy Kaye, star of "Yonkers," will present the first cabaret performance in the Prebys Center's multi-use Hattox Hall.

Kaye will sing songs by Harold Arlen ("Over the Rainbow") and other American popular composers during the show, directed by her husband, David Green (with music direction by Dennis Buck).

The performance takes place at 8 p.m. Feb. 8. The cabaret setup will feature table seating and beverage service. Tickets are \$30 and go on sale today at noon (they're already available to subscribers); go to theoldglobe.org, or call (619) 234-5623.

JAMES HEBERT

ON STAGE

A change of pace: Judy Kaye

Lost? Nah, musical theater star finds herself right at home in 'Lost in Yonkers'

By [James Hebert](#), UNION-TRIBUNE THEATER CRITIC

Thursday, January 21, 2010 at 12:04 a.m.



Peggy Peattie / Union-Tribune

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SDJJ | what's goin' on

by eileen sondak • nsondak@gmail.com

fresh entertainment for the new year

It's a brand new year, and that means the return of the San Diego Opera, the inaugural season for the Old Globe's new Harvey and Cheryl White Theatre (with a revival of Neil Simon's "Lost in Yonkers" to kick off the season), a new era of theatrical potpourri for the Welk Resort Theatre and a plethora of other music, theater and arts events around the county.

The San Diego Opera will launch its season Jan. 30 with Puccini's masterpiece "La Boheme," one of the most popular operas ever written. You have until Feb. 7 to see Karen Keltner conduct this production, starring Anja Harteros, Piotr Beczala, Priti Gandhi and Jeff Matsey. E. Loren Meeker will make his San Diego directorial debut in this bittersweet love story. As usual, the company will celebrate the opening with a pre-opera gala and a post-performance dinner at the US Grant.

You won't want to miss San Diego Opera's rendition of Verdi's "Nabucco," headed to the Civic Theatre Feb. 20-28. This story about the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem and the enslavement of the Hebrews is a powerful and emotionally charged work directed by Lotfi Mansouri. The strong cast is headed by Zeljko Lucic as Nabucco and Raymond Aceto as Zaccaria.

The romantic tragedy "Romeo and Juliet" will feature opera's new "golden couple," Stephen Costello and Ailyn Perez, March 13-21 (with Keltner in the pit), and to complete the stellar season, Verdi's "La Traviata" will return April 14-25 with its soaring music, opulent costumes and stunning sets. Singing sensation Elizabeth Futral will portray Violetta, Marius Brenciu will be Alfredo and Alan Opie is cast as Germont.

"Opera is about voices," Artistic Director Ian Campbell said, "and there are so many great singers to discover this season."

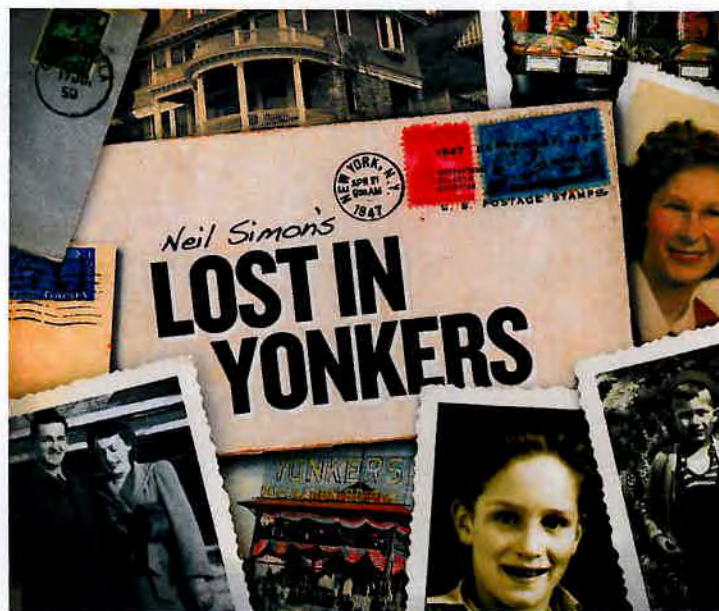
The Old Globe Theatre has a lot to celebrate this month, with the new Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre opening with Neil Simon's Pulitzer and Tony Award-winning "Lost in Yonkers." "Yonkers" has Simon's trademark mix of comic one-liners and drama. The show will open Jan. 23 for a month-long run.

Meanwhile, the Old Globe's main stage will unveil the world premiere of "Whisper House," with music and lyrics by Grammy Award-winning songwriter Duncan Sheik (of "Spring Awakening"). This new musical, set at the height of World War II, will make its debut Jan. 13 and stay ensconced in Balboa Park through Feb. 21.

The North Coast Rep will start the new year with "Glorious," a true story about the worst singer in the world. This hilarious and heartwarming new comedy chronicles the improbable tale of a phenomenally untalented eccentric who became famous for her lack of singing ability and became the toast of New York in the 1940s. "Glorious," directed by Rosina Reynolds, bows in Jan. 13 and will continue to entertain audiences through Feb. 7.

Broadway-San Diego has another pair of offerings at the Civic Theatre this month. The farewell performance tour for the international sensation "Riverdance" is set for Jan. 5-10, and the legendary Ted Neeley repeats his stellar role in the Andrew Lloyd Webber blockbuster "Jesus Christ Superstar" Jan. 15-17. Celebrate "An Evening of Classic Lily Tomlin" at the Balboa Theatre Jan. 28 when Tomlin brings some of her timeless characters to life. On Jan. 24, "Classics 4 Kids" will deliver a "Bringin' It Bach Family

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The Old Globe opens the brand new Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre this month with "Lost in Yonkers," which runs Jan. 23-Feb. 28.



SDJJ | what's goin' on



Courtesy of Broadway-San Diego, a rousing blend of Irish music, song and dance comes to the Civic Jan. 5-10 in the form of "Riverdance" for its farewell engagement.

Concert" at the Balboa.

The San Diego Symphony's January slate is exciting and varied, starting with a Winter Pops Special Jan. 1. This New Year's concert is a Salute to Vienna, with Imre Kollar conducting. The performance showcases the Strauss Symphony of America with dancers from Kiev National Ballet, soprano Ute Ziemer and tenor Joachim Moser on the roster. The Symphony Exposed series will feature a performance of Prokofiev's Symphony No. 5 and bring host Nuvi Mehra onstage to examine Prokofiev's music and individuality.

From Jan. 8-10, the Symphony will feature Maestro Jahja Ling conducting a concert starring Che-Yen Chen on viola and the San Diego Master Chorale. The performances will include works by Rathbun and Williams, as well as Handel's Viola Concerto, but the piece de resistance might just be Prokofiev's Symphony No. 5.

Jan. 15 is Silent Film Night at Winter Pops. Come to see the 1927 film "The General" with organ accompaniment by Russ Peck. The Winter Pops Series will salute the Oscars with "A Night at the Academy Awards" Jan. 22-23. Bill Conti will conduct. The great Itzhak Perlman will give a one-night-only recital Jan. 24. A VIP package will admit aficionados to a pre-recital reception, an intermission dessert event and post-performance champagne backstage with the violin virtuoso. That's an evening not to be missed.

The popular Family Festival returns Jan. 31 with "The Funny Side of Music" conducted by Philip Mann. Youngsters will enjoy this fun-filled event, which includes a musical petting zoo prior to the performance.

The Welk Resort Theatre is winding down its musical version of Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" Jan. 3. Cathy Riggs is headed to the Escondido-based

dinner theater Jan. 7-24 to star in "Steel Magnolias" with Michael Learned. This poignant comedy is part of the Welk's new Celebrity Series and will be followed Jan. 27-30 with Vicki Lawrence and Mama (a "two-woman" show). Lunch and dinner buffets are served prior to performances at the Welk's nearby Canyon Grille.

The San Diego Rep will start the new year with a boom — the hilarious new comedy "Boom." The high-voltage show (described as an "apocalypse WOW") follows a young marine biologist as he prepares for the imminent end of the world. "Boom," which opens Jan. 9 and remains ensconced at the Lyceum Space through Jan. 31, will be directed by Sam Woodhouse, and it's sure to amuse audiences as it flips from madcap humor to sci-fi. This show promises to be a cataclysmic adventure in social satire.

La Jolla Music Society's January roster includes music and dance. The Society's popular piano series will feature Garrick Ohlsson Jan. 15 to open San Diego's Chopin Bicentennial Celebration at Sherwood Auditorium. Dance buffs can look forward to the zany antics of MOMIX Jan. 16 to launch the Society's Dance Series. MOMIX uses magical lighting and visuals to create a fantasy world that will delight audiences of all ages. The performance is slated for the Birch North Park Theatre. Featured in the Discovery Series in January is violist David Aaron Carpenter, who finishes off the month Jan. 31 at the Neurosciences Institute.

The Lamb's Players in Coronado is normally dark this month, but the success of "A Joyful Noise" has prompted the troupe to re-stage the show for a two-week run Jan. 13-27. The play is about the birth of Handel's "Messiah," and the Lamb's recent production was glorious. If you didn't see it last fall, now is your chance!

Mainly Mozart's Spotlight Series is from Jan. 22-24 with performances at three different venues (The Neurosciences Institute, St. Elizabeth Seton and The Inn at Rancho Santa Fe). The concerts feature works by Mozart and other composers. Violinist Frank Huang, cellist Thomas Kraines and pianist Reiko Uchida are guest artists.

Cygnnet Theatre will bring the Pulitzer Prize-winning "The Piano Lesson" to the Old Town Theatre Jan. 21-Feb. 28. Delicia Turner Sonnenberg will direct this poignant play by August Wilson.

Junior Theatre will present the delightful "You're a Good Man Charlie Brown" at the Casa del Prado in Balboa Park Jan. 8-24.

The San Diego Natural History Museum recently unveiled the most comprehensive exhibition on the life and work of Charles Darwin, and this is its only West Coast venue. You can take an in-depth look at Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection any time until the end of February.

The museum's 3D theater will unwrap "Mummies: Secrets of the Pharaohs" through the end of January. The museum also offers "Fossil Mysteries" (from dinosaurs to mammoths) and "Water: A California Story," along with the giant-screen film, "Ocean Oasis."

Birch Aquarium at Scripps brings us a close encounter with seahorses, with more than a dozen species on display. You can even see a special seahorse nursery as part of this unique exhibit. Happily, "There's Something About Seahorses" will be entrenched at the Birch until 2011. A Winter Evening Lecture is set for Jan. 11, when the talk will be "Ocean Observing Oceanography in the 21st Century." ☆

THEATER

Musical veteran Judy Kaye leads Globe's 'Yonkers' cast

BY PAM KRAGEN
pkragen@nctimes.com

Mention the name Judy Kaye to theater-lovers and they'll talk about her Tony-winning role in "Phantom of the Opera," her two-year run in "Ragtime," her na-

tional tour with "Sweeney Todd," her roles in "Souvenir," "Mamma Mia!" and "On the Twentieth Century," or maybe her vast operatic repertoire.

So why is the musical veteran playing a mean granny in a straight play — Neil Simon's "Lost in

Yonkers" — at the Old Globe this winter? She's fulfilling a longtime dream.

Before Kaye exploded onto the musical scene in the late 1960s, she was a theater student at UC Los Angeles, and each summer she and her classmates would drive down to see Shakespeare plays at the Old Globe.

"I never had the opportunity to work here earlier in my career, but I'd come down here with my fellow students, spend the day and shoot back up to L.A. with stars in our eyes," she said. "For a very long time

I've wanted to work here, and then I got the call to come. I'm very excited to be here."

Kaye plays Grandma Kurnitz, the steely family matriarch in "Yonkers," a Tony- and Pulitzer Prize-winning 1991 comedy/drama that Simon wrote about his adolescent years. Less sentimental than some of Simon's earlier autobiographical plays, "Yonkers" is the coming-of-age tale of two pre-teen boys left in the care of their tyrannical grandmother by their widowed father, a traveling salesman. The boys are terrified by Grandma Kurnitz, and they're witness to her many conflicts with other members of the dysfunctional family.

Kaye said she's enjoying the role of Grandma Kur-

nitz, one of the meatiest characters she's had the good fortune to play. Grandma Kurnitz had a difficult childhood in Germany, immigrated with her husband and six children to New York, lost her husband and two children, and has developed a cold and cruel attitude.

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See Kaye, 22

"Lost in Yonkers"

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WHERE Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, Old Globe complex, Balboa Park, San Diego

TICKETS \$29-\$62

INFO 619-234-5623
www.theoldglobe.org



Steven Kaplan, Austyn Myers and Judy Kaye in the Old Globe production of "Lost in Yonkers." Photo courtesy of Craig Schwartz

Kaye

Continued from Page 18

hardships have taken their toll. She's as strong and steely as possible. It's a part like none I've ever played before. I'm a musical comedy lady. It's not that I haven't played dramatic roles in opera and musicals, but there's a cheerless quality to this lady that I've never had. It's a little scary to dig into yourself and find that sort of anger and use

it for two-plus hours a night. But oddly, I'm enjoying the process."

"Lost in Yonkers" will be the first full-length production in the Globe's new Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, a state-of-the-art space that replaced the old Cassius Carter Centre Stage. Kaye described the new theater as both beautiful and intimidating.

"It's pretty doggone gorgeous and it's extremely intimate, which is marvelous and which will probably be a little scary when we have people sitting in the first row.

They're almost a part of the action," she said.

Midway through the "Yonkers" run, Kaye will christen yet another new room at the Globe — Hattox Hall, a second-floor performance space directly above the White Theatre — with a cabaret show at 8 p.m. Feb. 8. Kaye said she put the cabaret show together last October for another new theater space in Baltimore and was happy to be invited to reprise it at the Globe.

Performing with musical director/pianist Dennis Buck, Kay said she'll do songs

by Harold Arlen, some Sondheim, some Tin Pan Alley numbers and a bit from "Ragtime" (her favorite in the show is Arlen's "That Old Black Magic"). Cabaret tables will be set up around the room with full beverage service. Tickets are \$30.

Kaye said she's enjoying doing a non-musical play right now because it's a little easier physically than a musical ("I don't have to vocalize before each performance or worry about waking up with post-nasal drip"). But she's excited to return to singing with the cabaret show.

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Musical veteran Kaye leads Globe's 'Yonkers' cast

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- [Discussion](#)

By PAM KRAGEN - pkragen@nctimes.com | Posted: January 27, 2010 11:35 am | [No Comments Posted](#) | [Print](#)

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Craig Schwartz Steven Kaplan, left, as Jay, Austyn Myers as Arty and Judy Kaye as Grandma Kurnitz in Neil Simon's "Lost in Yonkers" at The Old Globe, Jan. 23 - Feb. 28, 2010. Photo by Craig Schwartz.

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"I was put on this planet singing," she said. "Musicals use every talent I have."

"Lost in Yonkers"

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Posted in Theatre on *Wednesday, January 27, 2010 11:35 am* | Tags: Entertainment Preview, Nct, Theater

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Solana Beach SUN

Neil Simon's 'Lost in Yonkers' unfolds in Globe theater
4:29 PM

By Diana Saenger

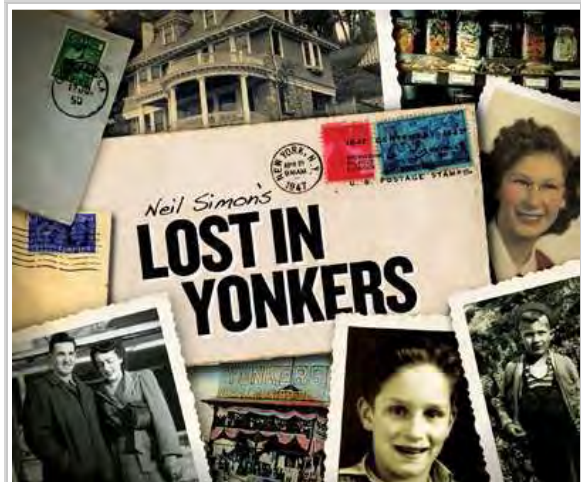
Families looking for solid entertainment will get double their money's worth when seeing Neil Simon's Pulitzer prize-, Tony award-winning drama "Lost in Yonkers," Jan. 23-Feb. 28. It's the inaugural production in The Old Globe's new theatre-in-the-round, the Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, in Balboa Park.

"Lost in Yonkers" is set in the summer of 1942 as the country, barely rising from The Great Depression, finds itself in World War II. Brothers Arty and Jay are sent to their grandmother's while dad tries to recoup some finances. Their dominating Grandma Kurnitz (Judy Kaye) runs the family-owned candy store.

The boys will also grow up under the thumb of their mentally challenged Aunt Bella who has a secret romance, and their Uncle Louie, a small-time hood.

Director Scott Schwartz ("Golda's Balcony," "The Foreigner" and co-director "Jane Eyre") saw the play on Broadway and is excited that it's the first Simon play he's helming.

"I think it's Simon's best, and I've always wanted to do it," Schwartz said. "It's a wonderful, moving story about family, parents and children - and that's something everyone can relate to."



The Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winning 'Lost in Yonkers' is about the ups and downs of family life, set in 1942. Photos courtesy of The Old Globe



Scott Schwartz

As it turns out, 1942 is, and is not, so different from today, as Schwartz and Jack DePalma, the Globe's New Play Development Director, discovered during their research for the show.

" 'Lost in Yonkers' is set in an era where the country was much more unified in its thinking and goals," Schwartz said. "And also in the way people carried themselves ... yet the fact that the country was at war and facing economic hardships is not that different than today. Still, there was a sense of national purpose and unity that is currently lacking, so it's nice to spend a little time in that (older) world."

The creative team behind the production includes Ralph Funicello (Scenic Design), Alejo Vietti (Costume Design), Matthew McCarthy (Lighting Design), Paul Peterson (Sound Design) and Diana Moser (Stage Manager).

Schwartz also called out his "amazing" cast.

"These actors are terrific," he said. "They're very funny and have been working so hard to be honest and tell the truth about their characters, yet find their own distinctive voices within these characters."

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Patrons attending the performance should also be impressed by the new theater.

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- Tickets: \$29-\$62, (619) 23-GLOBE, www.TheOldGlobe.org

Neil Simon's 'Lost In Yonkers' unfolds in Globe's new theatre

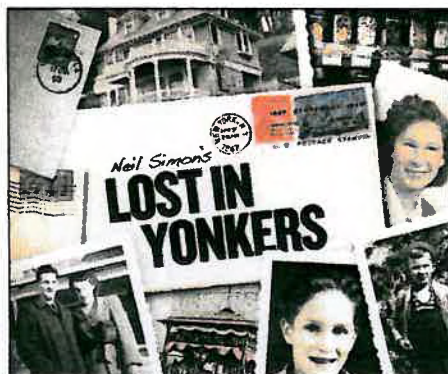
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The haunted and the vaunted

A look back at the year in theater

BY JAMES HEBERT

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2010 AT 4:35 P.M.

For [theater](#) in San Diego, 2010 began with a whisper. It ended with something more akin to a shiver.

Duncan Sheik's spare, lyrical ghost story "Whisper House," a world-premiere work (and Sheik's first stage piece since the huge Broadway success of "Spring Awakening"), proved to be a beacon of haunting things to come when it hit the Old Globe Theatre last January.

Cygnnet Theatre followed with a ravishingly nasty revival of [Stephen Sondheim](#)'s blood-soaked "Sweeney Todd." Ion Theatre, freshly settled



SEAN M. HAFHEY

into its revamped Hillcrest digs, rolled out Jeffrey Hatcher's inventive adaptation of the chiller "[Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde](#)." (Clearly, based on these two shows, Victorian London was not a place to go sticking your neck out.)

David Poe and Holly Brook played singing ghosts in the Old Globe's world-premiere production of Duncan Sheik's "Whisper House."

Moxie Theatre pulled off the myth-based afterlife meditation "Eurydice" with an affecting minimalism, and then (in partnership with Intrepid Shakespeare Co.) staged the witch-centric classic "The Crucible" with a maximum sense of relevance.

And North Coast Repertory Theatre joined the supernatural scrum (in name, anyway) with a devastating take on "Ghosts," Henrik Ibsen's story of family breakdown.

Toward year's end, La Jolla Playhouse played for keeps with two shows steeped in their own particular kinds of horror: Director Robert Woodruff's adaptation of the Dostoevsky tale of alienation "Notes From Underground"; and an unforgettable production of Lynn Nottage's "Ruined," the 2009 Pulitzer Prize-winner about tragedy and redemption in war-torn Central Africa.

Looking back, it's easy to think of 2010 as a theater year that reveled in the unsettling and the upsetting. But as always, there was light, too, whether it came via the bright satirical blasts of Diversionary Theatre's "[title of show]" or the more muted radiance of Moonlight Stage Co.'s elegant "Ring Round the Moon."

Given those contrasts and the massive variety of theater that happens regularly on local stages, picking 10 top plays out of the 100-plus I saw this year feels harshly arbitrary, like comparing apples with oranges and then matching those both against figs. Or aardvarks.

And yet I've managed to come up with a list that is so unimpeachable it is guaranteed to stand the test of time. That time being approximately 37 minutes, when doubt and regret and second-guessing will begin to set in.

So -- and please, stop me before I dither again! -- on to the list. But first, the disclaimers and honorable mentions:

I missed Ion's "Hurlyburly," which many of my critic colleagues raved about; as well as "Notes From Underground" (reviewed by freelance writer Jennifer Chung Klam while I was out of town), a show that seemed to divide audiences (and critics) like few others.

Besides shows mentioned earlier, I also admired Intrepid's "King John," North Coast Rep's "[25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee](#)" (a plum of a local premiere), Cygnet's hugely ambitious "The Norman Conquests" as well its "Private Lives," the Playhouse's sumptuous "A Midsummer Night's Dream," and the Globe's bracing take on Neil Simon's "Lost in Yonkers" (along with the theater's very strong Shakespeare Festival).

And one out-of-town pick: The band [Green Day](#)'s Broadway opus "American Idiot," a gritty tone poem scribbled in power chords and raw poignancy. Now there's a show that took 2010 from a whisper to a scream.

1. **"Ruined," La Jolla Playhouse:** I thought I was prepared for the blistering impact of Nottage's play, having seen the 2009 off-Broadway staging (and having read the script while serving as a Pulitzer juror). Yet Liesl Tommy's direction drew fresh sparks from the friction of hope and despair in Nottage's story of women who've found dubious refuge from war in a makeshift bar and brothel.
2. **"Sweeney Todd," Cygnet Theatre:** Deborah Gilmour Smyth, a performer of amazing range, helped make this show as the gleefully savage Mrs. Lovett, but she had plenty of help from fellow cast members and Cygnet's chill-filled staging.
3. **"Whisper House," Old Globe:** Duncan Sheik's atmospheric score, by turns playful and disquieting, carried this simply scripted musical about a young boy struggling to vanquish ghosts (real or imagined) while holed up in a remote Maine lighthouse.
4. **"Yellow Face," Mo'olelo Performing Arts Co.:** Seema Sueko's company, known more for its commitment to social causes than to comedy, stretched beautifully with David Henry Hwang's smart, coyly self-referential satire.
5. **"boom," San Diego Repertory Theatre:** Peter Sinn Nachtrieb's deceptively silly play wound up on the Pulitzer shortlist in 2009 for its utterly original take on such big topics as evolution, creation myths and global apocalypse. (Not to mention Craigslist dating.) Rep artistic chief Sam Woodhouse's ear seemed perfectly tuned to the play's very weird wavelength. (What's the frequency, Peter?)
6. **"[title of show]," Diversionary Theatre:** Speaking of creation myths: Tracking the evolution of "[title of show]" could give anyone headaches. It's a musical about the birth of a musical: Itself. Somehow, director James Vasquez and his cast figured it out exquisitely.
7. **"The Taming of the Shrew," Old Globe:** Director Ron Daniels brought all kinds of fun to Shakespeare's story of a reluctant bride and her too-eager suitor, with an especially sharp eye for the plights of secondary characters.
8. **"Ghosts," North Coast Rep:** It was amazing to come to a performance of this notoriously difficult Ibsen work late in the run, and find the Solana Beach theater packing every last seat in the house. A testament to artistic chief David Ellenstein's directorial mastery of the story's tensions and textures.
9. **"Hairspray," San Diego Rep:** Woodhouse and Co. teamed with student actors and musicians from the San Diego School of Creative and Performing Arts to stage the hit musical's local premiere with eye-catching pizzazz.
10. **"miXtape," Lamb's Players Theatre:** Yes, it's a musical revue, and yes, it pays homage to some of the dippiest pop-culture moments in history. Somehow, though, creators Colleen Kollar Smith and Jon Lorenz make this '80s tribute something more than just a guilty pleasure. I'll say it again (even if it wasn't very funny the first time): They whip it good.



Curtain Calls

Week Ending December 25, 2010

By Charlene Baldrige and Brenda

The team of Brenda and Charlene, representing the intuitive and the critical, attended in the neighborhood of 218 events this year: 120 plays and musicals for review; 39 student productions or play readings; 9 dance concerts; and 50 musical events, including chamber music, symphony and opera. These dates do not include face-to-face interviews, editorial meetings or Critics' Circle meetings. When one considers reading, copy-editing for hire, listening to recordings, and the actual writing, there is little time for the poetry that pursues me, insists I write it down, and tend to its burgeoning cottage industry.

Though we loudly express ourselves when voting on awards, and though we are allowed passion votes, much work that Brenda and I consider astonishing is seen by few or not admired by the majority. Therefore we reserve the right to make our own list of the laudable, which more than likely will not appear on others' lists or award ceremonies.

Commendations off the beaten path:

Bonnie Wright for the amazing Fresh Sound series she curates at Sushi Visual and Performance Gallery

John Stubbs for the Luscious Noise series he curates and conducts at Anthology

Kate Hatmaker and **Demarre McGill** for Art of Elan, the sellout, eclectic classical music series they conceived and present in the Hibben Gallery at San Diego Museum of Art

Glenn Paris and **Claudio Raygoza** of ion theatre for the inaugural HUMAN ACTION FESTIVAL, presented recently at the Hillcrest BLKBOX Theatre

Francis Thumm for his play with music, TIJUANA BURLESQUE, heard on the closing weekend of Paris and Raygoza's festival

To the young actors and singers of San Diego whose talent, purpose and singular dedication have so inspired us this year

To the indefatigable UCSD professor/La Jolla Symphony & Chorus artistic director **Stephen Schick**, whose love of music, people and artists so enriches our lives

To **Kyle Donnelly**, who auditions upwards of 600 UCSD MFA candidates each year, selecting young actors for the program, which consistently knocks our socks off, most recently with a production of [JOE TURNER'S COME AND GONE](#) that equals any seen anywhere

To all the teachers, who pass on love and respect for the art form in their dealings with youth: These would include **Ed Hollingsworth**, **DeAnna Driscoll**, **Linda Libby**, **Leigh Scarritt**, **Kim Strassburger**, **Jim Winker**, and **Ruff Yeager**, and these are just a few of legions. See my interview with Hollingsworth, an enormously big-hearted outtake from numerous interviews Charlene conducted for her December article in PERFORMANCES MAGAZINE.

[Most Memorable of 2010](#)

BOOM! at San Diego Repertory Theatre; [Whisper House](#), Old Globe; [Lost in Yonkers](#), Old Globe; **Susan Denaker** as Florence Foster Jenkins in [GLORIOUS!](#) at North Coast Repertory; [Aurelia's Oratorio](#), La Jolla Playhouse; **Kandis Chappell** as Mrs. Armfeldt in [A LITTLE NIGHT MUSIC](#), Lyric at the Birch; Howard Bickle as the twins and Fran Gercke as the gigolo in [RING ROUND THE MOON](#), directed by **Jason Heil**; **Steven Lone** and **John Padilla** in Elliott, A Soldier's Story at ion theatre; the ensemble of [BACK OF THROAT](#), ion theatre; **Sean Murray** in the title role, **Tom Zohar**, **Deborah Smyth**, **Kurt Norby**, respectively, as Toby, Mrs. Lovett and Pirelli - plus the ensemble of [SWEENEY TODD](#), Cygnet Theatre; **Richard Baird** and **Rosina Reynolds** in GHOSTS at North Coast Repertory, where artistic director **David Ellenstein** outdid himself all year long; **Ronald McCants** for Oyster during UCSD's [Baldwin New Play Festival](#); **Jeffrey Jones** and **DeAnna Driscoll** in [FRANKIE AND JOHNNY IN THE CLAIR DE LUNE](#), directed by **Claudio Raygoza** at ion theatre; Intrepid Theatre for their outstanding [KING JOHN](#); Moxie for their astonishing EURYDICE; **Steve Gunderson** and **Peter Van Norden** in [HAIRSPRAY](#), San Diego Repertory Theatre; **Sean Murray** and **Frances Gercke** for their co-direction of THE NORMAN CONQUESTS, which also takes the cake for ensemble and the engaging, bang-on performance of **Albert Dayan** as the pathetic lothario named Norman; **Matthew Alexander** and **Robin Christ** in SONG OF EXTINCTION at ion theatre; the ensemble of JACK GOES BOATING, ion theatre; Welcome

to Arroyo's, Old Globe; [Jekyll and Hyde](#), ion theatre; the ensemble of Dennis Haskell's [The Glory Man](#), directed by **Robert Smyth** at Lamb's Player's Theatre.

Absent from the above selections--made by a committee comprising Brenda and Charlene alone--are most the obvious award-winners that are bound to appear on anyone's year's best lists. These would include RUINED, CHAPLIN and NOTES FROM UNDERGROUND at the Playhouse.

Most memorable out of town:

Dallas, April 2010: Jake Heggie's opera MOBY-DICK, just picked one of the best operas of the 21st century by OPERA NEWS

Los Angeles: Rajiv Joseph's BENGAL TIGER AT THE BAGHDAD ZOO, Center Theatre Group

Remembering those who made an exit this year:



Actor Sandra Ellis-Troy

Playwright/translator/literary manager and friend Raul Moncada

Iconic and dearly beloved theatre leader/director Craig Noel, former artistic director of the Old Globe Theatre

Esteemed actor Robert Ellenstein, father of David Ellenstein

Photographer Randy Rovang (left)

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COMMENTARY: Oh what a year it was in theater!

JEAN LOWERISON - SDGLN THEATER CRITIC
December 31st, 2010

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This was a great theater year for women, teens and one-person shows.

Plays like "Eurydice," "Private Lives," "Ghosts" and "Ruined" gave women a chance to shine, as did three terrific one-person shows featuring women: the Old Globe's "Golda's Balcony," Broadway Vista's "Shirley Valentine" and Broadway San Diego's "An Evening of Classic Lily Tomlin."

Meanwhile, teenage favorite Austyn Myers flexed his dramatic and comedic muscles in "Lost In Yonkers" at the Old Globe, while 14-year-old newcomer Dylan Hoffinger proved an actor wise beyond his years in Diversionary's "Anita Bryant Died For Your Sins."

Hannah Rose Kornfeld was terrific as Little Red Riding Hood and seemed to easily conquer Stephen Sondheim's tricky score for "Into The Woods." And pint-sized Victoria Matthews from the School for Creative and Performing Arts demonstrated her huge voice and fine acting chops as Little Inez in "Hairspray" at San Diego Repertory Theatre.

Here's the best of what I saw in 2010. I include shows seen in Los Angeles and even toss in two shows I saw in Chicago during the summer. The winners are listed in random order.

Drama: Particularly fine were "Summer And Smoke" at New Village Arts; Moxie's stunning "Eurydice" and the thought-provoking classic "The Crucible;" Mo'olelo's "Yellow Face;" ion's "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" (which broke all attendance records there); Lamb's Players' enigmatic "An Inspector Calls;" North Coast Rep's "Ghosts;" Geffen Playhouse's "Ruined" and the Mark Taper Forum's rerun of my pick for best play of the last decade, "Bengal Tiger At The Baghdad Zoo."

Comedy: San Diego Rep's quirky, futurist "boom;" ion's "Frankie And Johnny In The Clair De Lune;" Christopher Ashley's novel take on "A Midsummer Night's Dream" at La Jolla Playhouse; Cygnet's pitch-perfect "Private Lives" and three-part "The Norman Conquests;" the always-reliable (and goofy) Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo at Broadway San Diego; "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee" at North Coast Rep; Scripps Ranch Theatre's wonderfully oddball "Deathtrap;" and two from New Village Arts: "Seven Year Itch" at their downtown theater and "As You Like It" at the Moonlight Amphitheatre.

Musical: North County gets the gold star here. All three of Moonlight Stage Productions' summer shows ("Crazy For You," "Oklahoma!" and "Miss Saigon") were exceptional; New Village Arts did a fine job on its first musical, "Into The Woods" and Welk Resorts Theatre did a delightful "Footloose." Here in town, Calvin Manson's Ira Aldridge Repertory Players did an excellent "Nina" (a tribute to Nina Simone); Cygnet gave us a smashing "Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber Of Fleet Street;" and Old Globe offered the pleasure of Sammy Cahn's songs in "Robin And The Seven Hoods."

One-Person Shows: The men got into the one-person show sweepstakes with Culture Clash's Herbert Siguenza was fascinating in "A Weekend With Pablo Picasso," and Ed Harris riveting in Neil LaBute's "Wrecks" at the Geffen Playhouse in Los Angeles; James Knight's harrowing interpretation of Yuri Kladiev's meditation on war, "I Am The Machine Gunner" at New Village Arts and Brian Bielawski's hilarious portrayal of a compulsive computer gamer in "Gam3rs."

Most Unusual Show: Victoria Thierree Chaplin's delightful "Aurelia's Oratorio," a wacky and whimsical combination of vaudeville, burlesque, circus and dance, at La Jolla Playhouse.

Director: Glenn Paris did a fine job on the Hollywood satire "Hurlyburly;" Delicia Turner Sonnenberg conquered the nearly impossible demands of "Eurydice;" Tom Dugdale, a third-year directing student at UCSD, did lovely work on Chekhov's "The Seagull;" Christopher Ashley gave us a stunning "A Midsummer Night's Dream;" Jessica John showed a fine comedic touch

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Justin Lang and Jennifer Eve Thorn star in Moxie's "Eurydice."



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with "Deathtrap;" Kim Strassburger gave us a brilliant "Dr. Jekyll And Mr. Hyde" at ion, and Seema Sueko did fine work on the complex "Yellow Face."

Actor: Fran Gercke, for ion's "Hurlyburly;" Jason Maddy, for both North Coast Rep's "The Voice Of The Prairie" and Stone Soup's "Miss Julie;" Paul Michael, for the Globe's "The Last Romance;" Diep Huynh, for ion's "Song of Extinction;" Richard Baird, for North Coast Rep's "Ghosts;" and David Cochran Heath, for Lamb's Players' "Harvey."

Actress: Jennifer Eve Thorn, in Moxie's "Eurydice;" DeAnna Driscoll, for ion's "Frankie And Johnny In The Clair De Lune;" Jo Anne Glover, in New Village Arts' "Summer And Smoke;" Rosina Reynolds and Aimee Burdette, for North Coast Rep's "Ghosts;" Rachael VanWormer, for three shows: San Diego Repertory's "boom," ion's "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" and Diversionary's "Speech and Debate," and Tovah Feldshuh for her stunning portrayal in "Golda's Balcony" at the Old Globe.

Ensemble Cast: Ion's "Dr. Jekyll And Mr. Hyde;" Cygnet's "Sweeney Todd" and "Private Lives;" UCSD's fine student production of "Joe Turner's Come And Gone;" the Mark Taper Forum's revival of "The Subject Was Roses."

Best New Find: The 14-year-old Dylan Hoffinger, absolutely stunning in his professional debut at Diversionary in "Anita Bryant Died For Your Sins."

Best Singer: Baritone Joshua Jeremiah, providing gorgeous incidental operatic music in the Old Globe's "The Last Romance."

Set design: Jennifer Brawn Gittings for Moxie's breathtaking "Eurydice;" Sean Fanning's dark, foreboding set for Cygnet's "Sweeney Todd;" Giulio Cesare Perrone, for his wonderfully detailed set for "The Road To Mecca" at San Diego Rep; Rob Howell for the handsome set of "Boeing-Boeing," and Andrew Hull's elegant set for Cygnet's "Private Lives."


Costumes: Shirley Pierson, for her elegant costumes for Cygnet's "Private Lives" and grungier ones for "Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber Of Fleet Street."

College Productions: MiraCosta, for their lovely "The Caucasian Chalk Circle" and their co-production with the Old Globe of "The Tempest;" the USD/Old Globe production of "The Winter's Tale," and UCSD's fine "The Seagull" and "Joe Turner's Come And Gone."

Way Out of Town: In Chicago, Steppenwolf impressed with its production of Bruce Norris' enigmatic "A Parallelogram" and Lookingglass mounted a terrific Cirque du Soleil-type treatment of my favorite Lewis Carroll book in its "Lookingglass Alice."

On The Big Screen: National Theatre (of London) has jumped on the Met Live bandwagon to present plays from England at downtown's Reading Gaslamp Cinemas. So far this year they've offered a replay of last year's "Phèdre" with Helen Mirren (who can do no wrong), Alan Bennett's "The Habit Of Art" and a stunning production from Complicite in Plymouth called "A Disappearing Number."

To read more reviews by SDGLN Theater Critic Jean Lowerison, click [HERE](#).



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Judy Kaye to Star in Old Globe's *Lost in Yonkers*

By: **Dan Bacalzo** · Dec 18, 2009 · San Diego

Tony Award winner Judy Kaye will star as Grandma Kurnitz in the Old Globe Theatre's production of Neil Simon's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, *Lost in Yonkers*. Scott Schwartz will direct the production, which will run January 23-February 28, with an opening on January 28.

Set in the summer of 1942, two young brothers, Arty and Jay, are left to live with their grandmother by their financially strapped father. The cast will also feature Jeffrey Bender (Louie), Steven Kaplan (Jay), Austyn Myers (Arty), Amanda Naughton (Gert), Jennifer Regan (Bella), and Spencer Rowe (Eddie).

The creative team will include Ralph Funicello (scenic design), Alejo Vietti (costume design), Matthew McCarthy (lighting design), and Paul Peterson (sound design).

For more information, visit www.TheOldGlobe.org.



Judy Kaye



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-Robert Osborne, *The Hollywood Reporter*

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18 Dec 2009

Tony Award winner Judy Kaye will play Grandma Kurnitz in Neil Simon's Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Lost in Yonkers*, directed by Scott Schwartz, Jan. 23-Feb. 28, 2010, at the Old Globe Theatre.

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Performances will play the 250-seat arena-style Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre in San Diego. Opening night is Jan. 28.

Kaye won a Tony Award for playing Carlotta in *The Phantom of the Opera*, and was Tony-nominated for her work in *Mamma Mia!* and *Souvenir*.

Recognized as Simon's most critically acclaimed work, *Lost in Yonkers* received both the Pulitzer Prize and the Tony Award for Best Play. According to the Old Globe, "Set in the summer of 1942, two young brothers, Arty and Jay, are left to live with their grandmother by their financially strapped father. The boys must contend with the dominating Grandma Kurnitz who runs the family-owned candy store, their mentally-challenged Aunt Bella and her secret romance, and Uncle Louie, a small-time hood."

In addition to Kaye, the cast also features Jeffrey Bender (Louie), Steven Kaplan (Jay), Austyn Myers (Arty), Amanda Naughton (Gert), Jennifer Regan (Bella) and Spencer Rowe (Eddie).

The *Lost in Yonkers* creative team includes Ralph Funicello (scenic design), Alejo Vietti (costume design), Matthew McCarthy (lighting design), Paul Peterson (sound design) and Diana Moser (stage manager).

Schwartz has directed several shows on Broadway including *Golda's Balcony* and *Jane Eyre* (co-directed with John Caird). He also co-directed *Jane Eyre* at La Jolla Playhouse in 1999. Off-Broadway credits include *Bat Boy: The Musical* (Lucille Lortel and Outer Critics Circle Awards, Outstanding Off Broadway Musical; Drama Desk nomination, Outstanding Director of a Musical), *tick, tick...Boom!* (Outer Critics Circle Award, Outstanding Off Broadway Musical; Drama Desk nomination, Outstanding Director of a Musical), *Rooms: A Rock Romance*, *The Foreigner* starring Matthew Broderick for Roundabout Theatre Company, *The Castle* (Outer Critics Circle nomination, Outstanding Director of a Play), *Miss Julie* and *No Way to Treat a Lady*.

Single tickets go on sale Jan. 5 at noon. and can be purchased online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the box office.

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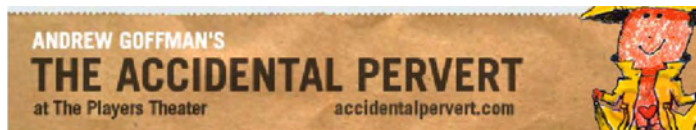
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Judy Kaye To Star In LOST IN YONKERS At The Old Globe

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Spencer Rowe (Eddie).

Old Globe Executive Producer [Lou Spisto](#) today announced the complete cast and creative team for [Neil Simon's](#) *Lost in Yonkers*, the inaugural production of the Globe's Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre. Tony Award winner [Judy Kaye](#) will play Grandma Kurnitz in Simon's Pulitzer Prize-winning play. Directed by [Scott Schwartz](#), *Lost in Yonkers* will run Jan. 23 - Feb. 28. Previews run from Jan. 23 - Jan. 27. Opening night is Jan. 28 at 8:00 p.m. Tickets to *Lost in Yonkers* are currently available by subscription only. Single tickets go on sale January 5 at noon, and can be purchased online at [www.TheOldGlobe.org](#), by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the Box Office.

[Neil Simon's](#) most critically acclaimed work, *Lost in Yonkers* received both the Pulitzer Prize and the Tony Award for Best Play. Set in the summer of 1942, two [Young Brothers](#), Arty and Jay, are left to live with their grandmother by their financially strapped father. The boys must contend with the dominating Grandma Kurnitz who runs the family-owned candy store, their mentally-challenged Aunt Bella and her secret romance, and Uncle Louie, a small-time hood. A mix of both comedy and drama, *Lost in Yonkers* was hailed by the New York Post as "The best play Simon ever wrote."

In addition to Kaye, the cast also features [Jeffrey Bender](#) (Louie), Steven Kaplan (Jay), [Austyn Myers](#) (Arty), [Amanda Naughton](#) (Gert), [Jennifer Regan](#) (Bella) and

The *Lost in Yonkers* creative team includes [Ralph Funicello](#) (Scenic Design), [Alejo Vietti](#) (Costume Design), Matthew McCarthy (Lighting Design), [Paul Peterson](#) (Sound Design) and Diana Moser (Stage Manager).

The intimate 250-seat arena-style Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre is part of the Globe's new Conrad Prebys Theatre Center which features an education center, multipurpose hall and a restaurant with heated outdoor seating. The White Theatre features a fully-trapped stage, state-of-the-art acoustics, two stage level entrances, plush seating and complete access for patrons with disabilities. The facility also includes multiple dressing rooms and a green room serving both the White Theatre, the 600-seat [Old Globe Theatre](#) and the 612-seat outdoor Lowell Davies [Festival Theatre](#).

[Judy Kaye](#) starred on Broadway in *Souvenir: A Fantasia on the Life of Florence Foster Jenkins*, for which she was nominated for a Tony Award. She has also performed in the show at the York Theatre (Drama Desk and [Lucille Lortel](#) Awards), the Berkshire Theatre Festival and venues in Los Angeles, Westport, Tucson, Phoenix, San Francisco, Baltimore, Sarasota and Rochester. Kaye also appeared in *Zorba* for the Reprise Series in Los Angeles (Ovation Award nomination), and in *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber on Fleet Street* on Broadway as Mrs. Lovett, which she then repeated on the National Tour (Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle, Garland and Carbonell Awards). Her career highlights include the Broadway productions of *Phantom of the Opera* (Tony Award, Drama Desk nomination), *Mamma Mia!* (Tony and Drama Desk nominations), *On the Twentieth Century* ([Theatre World](#) Award, Drama Desk nomination) and *Ragtime* (Ovation Award). She has appeared with symphony orchestras around the country and the world, and has sung at the White House twice.

[Scott Schwartz](#) has directed several shows on Broadway including *Golda's Balcony* and *Jane Eyre* (co-directed with [John Caird](#)). He also co-directed *Jane Eyre* at [La Jolla Playhouse](#) in 1999. Off Broadway credits include *Bat Boy: The Musical* ([Lucille Lortel](#) and Outer Critics Circle Awards, Outstanding Off Broadway Musical; Drama Desk nomination, Outstanding Director of a Musical), *Tick Tick...Boom!* (Outer Critics Circle Award, Outstanding Off Broadway Musical; Drama Desk nomination, Outstanding Director of a Musical), *Rooms: A Rock Romance*, *The Foreigner* starring [Matthew Broderick](#) for [Roundabout Theatre Company](#), *The Castle* (Outer Critics Circle nomination, Outstanding Director of a Play), *Miss Julie* and *No Way to Treat a Lady*. He also directed *Golda's Balcony* in London, in Los Angeles at the Wadsworth Theater and in San Francisco at the American Conservatory Theater. Most recently, he directed the world premiere of *Séance on a Wet Sunday Afternoon*, a new opera starring [Lauren Flanigan](#) at Opera Santa Barbara. Other recent credits include *Othello* and *Much Ado About Nothing* at the Alley Theater, and a new reinvisioning of *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* at [Paper Mill Playhouse](#), *Theatre Under the Stars*, *Theatre on the Square* and North Shore Music Theater (2008 IRNE Award, Outstanding Director of a Musical).

[Neil Simon](#) has been represented on Broadway by *Come Blow Your Horn*, *Little Me*, *Barefoot in the Park*, *The Odd Couple*, *Sweet Charity*, *The Star-Spangled Girl*, *Plaza Suite*, *Promises, Promises*, *Last of the Red Hot Lovers*, *The Gingerbread Lady*, *The Prisoner of Second Avenue*, *The Sunshine Boys*, *The Good Doctor*, *God's Favorite*, *California Suite*, *Chapter Two*, *They're Playing Our Song*, *I Ought to Be in Pictures*, *Fools*, *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, *Biloxi Blues* (1985 Tony Award), the female version of *The Odd Couple*, *Broadway Bound*, *Rumors*, *Lost in Yonkers* (1991 Pulitzer Prize, Tony Award), *Jake's Women*, *The Goodbye Girl*, *Laughter on the 23rd Floor*, *Proposals*, *The Dinner Party* and *45 Seconds from Broadway*. Off Broadway: *London Suite*. Films include *Barefoot in the Park*, *The Odd Couple*, *The Out-of-Towners*, *Plaza Suite*, *The Heartbreak Kid*, *The Prisoner of Second Avenue*, *Murder by Death*, *The Sunshine Boys*, *The Goodbye Girl*, *The Cheap Detective*, *California Suite*, *Chapter Two*, *Seems Like Old Times*, *Only When I Laugh*, *I Ought to Be in Pictures*, *Max Dungan Returns*, *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, *Biloxi Blues* and *Lost in Yonkers*.

TICKETS to *Lost in Yonkers* are currently available by subscription only. Single tickets go on sale January 5 at noon and can be purchased online at [www.TheOldGlobe.org](#), by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the box office at

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1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park. Performances begin on Jan. 23 and continue through Feb. 28. Ticket prices range from \$29-\$62. Performance times: Previews: Saturday, Jan. 23 at 8:00 p.m., Sunday Jan. 24 at 7:00 p.m., Tuesday, Jan. 26, at 7:00 p.m., Wednesday, Jan. 27 at 7:00 p.m. Regular Performances: Tuesday and Wednesday evenings at 7:00 p.m., Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings at 8:00 p.m., Saturday and Sunday matinees at 2:00 p.m., and Sunday evenings at 7:00 p.m. Discounts are available for full-time students, patrons 29 years of age and under, seniors and groups of 10 or more.

The Globe's year-long 75th Anniversary celebration will begin with the recently announced 2010 Summer Season. Acclaimed director [Adrian Noble](#) is the Artistic Director of the 2010 Shakespeare Festival and will direct Shakespeare's King Lear (June 12 - Sept. 23) and [Alan Bennett](#)'s The Madness of George III (June 19 - Sept. 24). Presented in repertory, the Shakespeare Festival will also include The Taming of the Shrew (June 16 - Sept. 26). The season also features the World Premiere of the Broadway-bound musical, Robin and the 7 Hoods (July 14 - Aug. 22) directed by [Casey Nicholaw](#) with lyrics by [Sammy Cahn](#) and music by [Jimmy Van Heusen](#), and the West Coast Premiere of The Last Romance (July 30 - Sept. 5), a romantic comedy by [Joe DiPietro](#) starring television icon, [Marion Ross](#). Tickets to the Globe's 2010 Summer Season are currently available by subscription only.

SEASON SUBSCRIPTIONS offer substantial savings with special subscriber benefits. Subscriptions can be purchased online at [www.TheOldGlobe.org](#), by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE [234-5623] or by visiting the box office at 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park. Subscriptions to the Globe's Summer Season range from \$75 to \$365. Five-play packages range from \$146 to \$365. Four-play packages (Festival plus musical) range from \$117 to \$309. Shakespeare Festival packages (3 plays) range from \$75 to \$225. Discounts are available for full-time students, patrons 29 years of age and younger, seniors and groups of 10 or more.

LOCATION: [The Old Globe](#) is located in San Diego's Balboa Park at 1363 Old Globe Way. There are numerous free parking lots available throughout the park. Valet parking is also available (\$10). For additional parking information visit [www.BalboaPark.org](#).

CALENDAR: [Duncan Sheik](#) in Concert (1/11), Whisper House (1/13-2/21), Lost in Yonkers (1/23-2/28), Street Lights (2/20-2/28), Boeing-Boeing (3/13-4/18), Alive and Well (3/20-4/25), What You Will (5/1-6/6), The Whipping Man (5/8-6/13).

The Tony Award-winning Old Globe is one of the country's leading professional regional theaters and has stood as San Diego's flagship arts institution for 74 years. Under the direction of Executive Producer [Louis G. Spisto](#), [The Old Globe](#) produces a year-round season of 15 productions of classic, contemporary and new works on its three Balboa Park stages: the 580-seat [Old Globe Theatre](#), the 250-seat Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre and the 612-seat outdoor Lowell Davies [Festival Theatre](#), home of its internationally renowned Shakespeare Festival. More than 300,000 people attend Globe productions annually and participate in the theater's education and community programs. Numerous world premieres such as The Full Monty, Dirty Rotten Scoundrels, A Catered Affair, and the annual holiday musical, [Dr. Seuss](#)' How the Grinch Stole Christmas!, have been developed at [The Old Globe](#) and have gone on to enjoy highly successful runs on Broadway and at regional theaters across the country.

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Production photos have been released for [The Old Globe's](#) production of [Neil Simon's](#) 'Lost in Yonkers', the inaugural production of the Globe's Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre. Tony Award winner [Judy Kaye](#) will play Grandma Kurnitz in Simon's Pulitzer Prize-winning play. Directed by [Scott Schwartz](#), Lost in Yonkers will run Jan. 23 - Feb. 28. Previews run from Jan. 23 - Jan. 27. Opening night is Jan. 28 at 8:00 p.m.

[Neil Simon's](#) most critically acclaimed work, 'Lost in Yonkers' received both the Pulitzer Prize and the Tony Award for Best Play. Set in the summer of 1942, two [Young Brothers](#), Arty and Jay, are left to live with their grandmother by their financially strapped father. The boys must contend with the dominating Grandma Kurnitz who runs the family-owned candy store, their mentally-challenged Aunt Bella and her secret romance, and Uncle Louie, a small-time hood. A mix of both comedy and drama, Lost in Yonkers was hailed by the New York Post as "The best play Simon ever wrote."

In addition to Kaye, the cast also features [Jeffrey Bender](#) (Louie), Steven Kaplan (Jay), [Austyn Myers](#) (Arty), [Amanda Naughton](#) (Gert), [Jennifer Regan](#) (Bella) and Spencer Rowe (Eddie).

The 'Lost in Yonkers' creative team includes [Ralph Funicello](#) (Scenic Design), [Alejo Vietti](#) (Costume Design), Matthew McCarthy (Lighting Design), [Paul Peterson](#) (Sound Design) and Diana Moser (Stage Manager).

Performances begin on Jan. 23 and continue through Feb. 28. Ticket prices range from \$29-\$62. Performance times: Previews: Saturday, Jan. 23 at 8:00 p.m., Sunday Jan. 24 at 7:00 p.m., Tuesday, Jan. 26, at 7:00 p.m., Wednesday, Jan. 27 at 7:00 p.m. Regular Performances: Tuesday and Wednesday evenings at 7:00 p.m., Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings at 8:00 p.m., Saturday and Sunday matinees at 2:00 p.m., and Sunday evenings at 7:00 p.m. Discounts are available for full-time students, patrons 29 years of age and under, seniors and groups of 10 or more.

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Photos by [Craig Schwartz](#)



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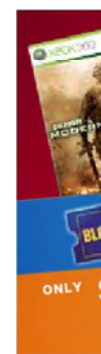
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Judy Kaye Stars in Old Globe's *Lost in Yonkers*, Starting Jan. 23

By [Kenneth Jones](#)
23 Jan 2010



Judy Kaye in *Lost in Yonkers*
photo by Craig Schwartz

live with their grandmother by their financially strapped father. The boys must contend with the dominating Grandma Kurnitz who runs the family-owned candy store, their mentally-challenged Aunt Bella and her secret romance, and Uncle Louie, a small-time hood."

Tony Award winner Judy Kaye plays Grandma Kurnitz in Neil Simon's Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Lost in Yonkers*, directed by Scott Schwartz, beginning Jan. 23 for a run to Feb. 28 at the Old Globe Theatre.

Performances will play the 250-seat arena-style Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre in San Diego. Opening night is Jan. 28.

Kaye won a Tony Award for playing Carlotta in *The Phantom of the Opera*, and was Tony-nominated for her work in *Mamma Mia!* and *Souvenir*.

Recognized as Simon's most critically acclaimed work, *Lost in Yonkers* received both the Pulitzer Prize and the Tony Award for Best Play. According to the Old Globe, "Set in the summer of 1942, two young brothers, Arty and Jay, are left to

In addition to Kaye, the cast also features Jeffrey Bender (Louie), Steven Kaplan (Jay), Austyn Myers (Arty), Amanda Naughton (Gert), Jennifer Regan (Bella) and Spencer Rowe (Eddie).

The *Lost in Yonkers* creative team includes Ralph Funicello (scenic design), Alejo Vietti (costume design), Matthew McCarthy (lighting design), Paul Peterson (sound design) and Diana Moser (stage manager).

Schwartz has directed several shows on Broadway including *Golda's Balcony* and *Jane Eyre* (co-directed with John Caird). He also co-directed *Jane Eyre* at La Jolla Playhouse in 1999. Off-Broadway credits include *Bat Boy: The Musical* (Lucille Lortel and Outer Critics Circle Awards, Outstanding Off Broadway Musical; Drama Desk nomination, Outstanding Director of a Musical), *tick, tick...Boom!* (Outer Critics Circle Award, Outstanding Off Broadway Musical; Drama

Desk nomination, Outstanding Director of a Musical), *Rooms: A Rock Romance*, *The Foreigner* starring Matthew Broderick for Roundabout Theatre Company, *The Castle* (Outer Critics Circle nomination, Outstanding Director of a Play), *Miss Julie* and *No Way to Treat a Lady*.

For more information, visit www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the box office.

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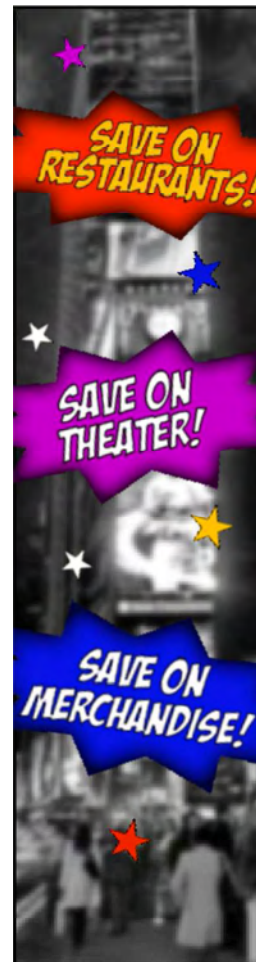
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Lost in Yonkers' Judy Kaye
Credit: Craig Schwartz

Judy Kaye Stars in Old Globe's *Lost in Yonkers*, Starting Jan. 23

Tony Award winner Judy Kaye plays Grandma Kurnitz in Neil Simon's Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Lost in Yonkers*, directed by Scott Schwartz, beginning Jan. 23 for a run to Feb. 28 at the Old Globe Theatre.

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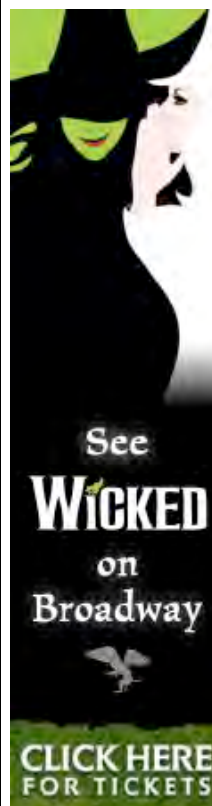
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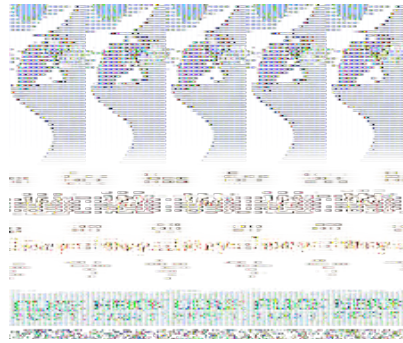
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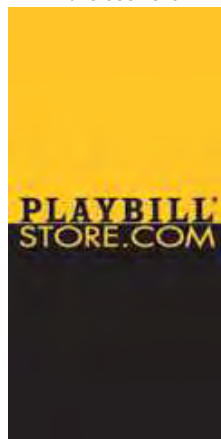
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PHOTO CALL: *Lost In Yonkers* at The Old Globe

By Krissie Fullerton
25 Jan 2010

The Neil Simon classic *Lost in Yonkers*, starring Judy Kaye, opened at San Diego's Old Globe Theatre on Jan. 23.

Advertisement



Lost in Yonkers is about "finding one's way through the tangled web of family relationships without losing the sense of self or sense of humor," according to press materials.

The piece is set in Yonkers in 1942 and focuses on two young brothers who have been left in the care of their feuding relatives.

Scott Schwartz (*Jane Eyre*, *Bat Boy: The Musical*) directs a cast that includes Tony Award-winning actress Judy Kaye (*The Phantom of the Opera*), Jeffrey M. Bender, Steven Kaplan, Austyn Myers, Amanda Naughton, Jennifer Regan and Spencer Rowe.

Here's a peek at the production:

[View the Entire Photo Gallery](#)



Judy Kaye and Jennifer Regan
Photo by Craig Schwartz

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Judy Kaye Is Iron-Fisted Grandma in Old Globe's *Lost in Yonkers*, Opening Jan. 28

By [Kenneth Jones](#)
 28 Jan 2010



Judy Kaye and Jennifer Regan in *Lost in Yonkers*
 photo by Craig Schwartz

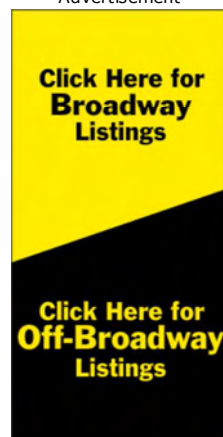
Tony Award winner Judy Kaye plays Grandma Kurnitz in Neil Simon's Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Lost in Yonkers*, directed by Scott Schwartz, opening Jan. 28 after previews from Jan. 23. The Old Globe Theatre production continues to Feb. 28.

The revival of the family-centered comedy-drama plays in the 250-seat arena-style Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre in San Diego.

Kaye won a Tony Award for playing Carlotta in *The Phantom of the Opera*, and was Tony-nominated for her work in *Mamma Mia!* and *Souvenir*. She also played Emma Goldman in the original Broadway production of *Ragtime*.

*

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Recognized as Simon's most critically acclaimed work, *Lost in Yonkers* received both the Pulitzer Prize and the Tony Award for Best Play. According to the Old Globe, "Set in the summer of 1942, two young brothers, Arty and Jay, are left to live with their grandmother by their financially strapped father. The boys must contend with the

dominating Grandma Kurnitz, who runs the family-owned candy store, their mentally-challenged Aunt Bella and her secret romance — and Uncle Louie, a small-time hood."

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In addition to Kaye, the cast also features Jeffrey Bender (Louie), Steven Kaplan (Jay), Austyn Myers (Arty), Amanda Naughton (Gert), Jennifer Regan (Bella) and Spencer Rowe (Eddie).

The *Lost in Yonkers* creative team includes Ralph Funicello (scenic design), Alejo Vietti (costume design), Matthew McCarthy (lighting design), Paul Peterson (sound design) and Diana Moser (stage manager).

Schwartz has directed several shows on Broadway including *Golda's Balcony* and *Jane Eyre* (co-directed with John Caird). He also co-directed *Jane Eyre* at La Jolla Playhouse in 1999. Off-Broadway credits include *Bat Boy: The Musical* (Lucille Lortel and Outer Critics Circle Awards, Outstanding Off Broadway Musical; Drama Desk nomination, Outstanding Director of a Musical), *tick, tick...Boom!* (Outer Critics Circle Award, Outstanding Off Broadway Musical; Drama Desk nomination, Outstanding Director of a Musical), *Rooms: A Rock Romance*, *The Foreigner* starring Matthew Broderick for Roundabout Theatre Company, *The Castle* (Outer Critics Circle nomination, Outstanding Director of a Play), *Miss Julie* and *No Way to Treat a Lady*.

For more information, visit www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the box office.



Lost in Yonkers cast: Jeffrey M. Bender, Amanda Naughton, Steven Kaplan, Austyn Myers, Jennifer Regan and Judy Kaye
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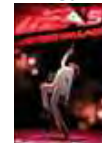
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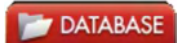


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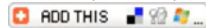


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both comedy and drama, *Lost in Yonkers* was hailed by the New York Post as "The best play Simon ever wrote."

[Neil Simon's](#) *Lost in Yonkers*, the critically acclaimed inaugural production of the Globe's Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, has been extended for one week due to popular demand. Originally set to close on Feb. 28, the production will now run through Sunday, March 7. *Lost in Yonkers* stars Tony Award winner [Judy Kaye](#) and is directed by [Scott Schwartz](#).

[Neil Simon's](#) most critically acclaimed work, *Lost in Yonkers* received both the Pulitzer Prize and the Tony Award for Best Play. Set in the summer of 1942, two [Young Brothers](#), Arty and Jay, are left to live with their grandmother by their financially strapped father. The boys must contend with the dominating Grandma Kurnitz who runs the family-owned candy store, their mentally-challenged Aunt Bella and her secret romance, and Uncle Louie, a small-time hood. A mix of

In addition to Kaye, the cast also features [Jeffrey Bender](#) (Louie), [Steven Kaplan](#) (Jay), [Austyn Myers](#) (Arty), [Amanda Naughton](#) (Gert), [Jennifer Regan](#) (Bella) and Spencer Rowe (Eddie). The *Lost in Yonkers* creative team includes [Ralph Funicello](#) (Scenic Design), [Alejo Vietti](#) (Costume Design), Matthew McCarthy (Lighting Design), [Paul Peterson](#) (Sound Design) and Diana Moser (Stage Manager).

TICKETS to *Lost in Yonkers* can be purchased online at [www.TheOldGlobe.org](#), by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the box office at 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park. Performances began on Jan. 23 and continue through March 7. Ticket prices range from \$29-\$62. Performance times: Tuesday and Wednesday evenings at 7:00 p.m., Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings at 8:00 p.m., Saturday and Sunday matinees at 2:00 p.m., and Sunday evenings at 7:00 p.m. Discounts are available for full-time students, patrons 29 years of age and under, seniors and groups of 10 or more.

LOCATION: [The Old Globe](#) is located in San Diego's Balboa Park at 1363 Old Globe Way. There are numerous free parking lots available throughout the park. Valet parking is also available (\$10). For additional parking information visit [www.BalboaPark.org](#).

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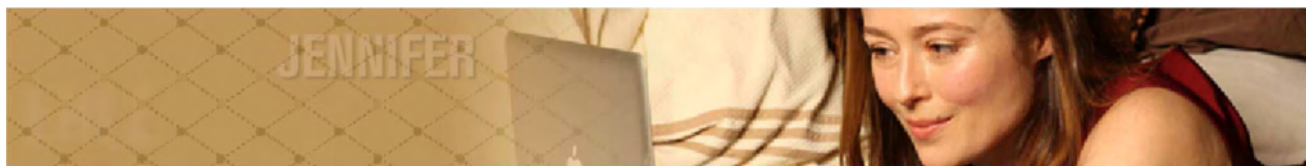
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Old Globe's *Lost in Yonkers*, Starring Judy Kaye, Extends Through March 7

By: **Dan Bacalzo** · Feb 10, 2010 · San Diego

The **Old Globe Theatre**'s production of Neil Simon's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, *Lost in Yonkers*, starring Tony Award winner Judy Kaye as Grandma Kurnitz, has announced a one-week extension, and will now close on March 7. Scott Schwartz has directed the production.

Set in the summer of 1942, two young brothers, Arty and Jay, are left to live with their grandmother by their financially strapped father. The cast also features Jeffrey Bender (Louie), Steven Kaplan (Jay), Austyn Myers (Arty), Amanda Naughton (Gert), Jennifer Regan (Bella), and Spencer Rowe (Eddie).

The creative team includes Ralph Funicello (scenic design), Alejo Vietti (costume design), Matthew McCarthy (lighting design), and Paul Peterson (sound design).

For more information, visit www.TheOldGlobe.org.



Judy Kaye and Jennifer Regan
in *Lost in Yonkers*
(© Craig Schwartz)



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**Lost in Yonkers Extends to March 7 in San Diego**

By [Kenneth Jones](#)
11 Feb 2010

The Old Globe's new production of Neil Simon's *Lost in Yonkers*, starring Judy Kaye as Grandma Kurnitz, will get an extra week at the Globe's Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre in San Diego.

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Originally set to close on Feb. 28, the production will now run through March 7. *Lost in Yonkers* is directed by Scott Schwartz. This is the inaugural production at the White Theatre.

In addition to Kaye, the cast also features Jeffrey Bender (Louie), Steven Kaplan (Jay), Austyn Myers (Arty), Amanda Naughton (Gert), Jennifer Regan (Bella) and Spencer Rowe (Eddie).

For information, visit www.TheOldGlobe.org or call (619) 23-GLOBE.

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[Neil Simon's](#) *Lost in Yonkers*, the critically acclaimed inaugural production of the Globe's Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre runs through Sunday, March 7. *Lost in Yonkers* stars Tony Award winner [Judy Kaye](#) and is directed by [Scott Schwartz](#).

[Neil Simon's](#) most critically acclaimed work, *Lost in Yonkers* received both the Pulitzer Prize and the Tony Award for Best Play. Set in the summer of 1942, two [Young Brothers](#), Arty and Jay, are left to live with their grandmother by their financially strapped father. The boys must contend with the dominating Grandma Kurnitz who runs the family-owned candy store, their mentally-challenged Aunt Bella and her secret romance, and Uncle Louie, a small-time hood. A mix of both comedy and drama, *Lost in Yonkers* was hailed by the New York Post as "The best play Simon ever

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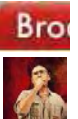
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TICKETS to *Lost in Yonkers* can be purchased online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the box office at 1363 Old Globe Way in Balboa Park.

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Q & A with star of "Bart Got a Room"

no reactions yet...

 by Norah Heintz
 Published January 31, 2010

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Most Tisch students dream of one day acting alongside Hollywood's brightest stars, but few get the experience while still at NYU.

Images



Steven Kaplan, (right) a Tisch student who starred in the movie "Bart Got A Room" and won the "Best of Fest" award at the Tribeca Film Festival.

Steven Kaplan, a CAP 21 student in the Tisch School of the Arts, recently starred with William H. Macy and Cheryl Hines in the film "Bart Got a Room," which debuted at the 2008 Tribeca Film Festival. The film won the "Best of Fest" award at the Fort Lauderdale International Film Festival and the Chicago Gen Art Film Festival.

WSN sat down with the rising star and discussed everything from his take on reality hit "Jersey Shore" to balancing chairs on his chin.

WSN: What have you been working on since "Bart Got a Room?"

SK: I did a couple of commercials — one for T-Mobile and the other one for the McDonald's "Go for 3" promotion with Ben Wallace [formerly] of the Cleveland Cavaliers. I had a supporting role in a film last summer called "Beware the Gonzo," which starred Jesse McCartney. As of late December, I've been in San Diego performing as the elder of two brothers in Neil Simon's play, "Lost in Yonkers."

WSN: Having performed in some major roles, do you get recognized on the street much?

SK: People don't recognize me regularly at all. After "Bart Got a Room" premiered at Tribeca, there were a few. Some joggers in Central Park stopped me once; another time someone approached me while I was with my dad in the West Village.

WSN: Any weird encounters?

SK: Not really. Though once, while I was at a restaurant with a girl, a guy stared at me all through dinner. I thought he was eyeing my date, but he eventually approached us and it turned out he recognized me from the movie.

WSN: No prom invites?

SK: No, but hopefully I'll be getting some scripts and/or roles sent my way.

WSN: In the Steven Kaplan biopic, who plays you?

SK: [David Henrie] from "Wizards of Waverly Place." I get stopped by more people thinking I'm him than for anything I've done.

WSN: You've been compared to Patrick Dempsey circa 1987. How do you feel about that?

SK: Could be worse. I'm not really up on pop culture, but if I could do half as well as he's done — especially in terms of the ladies — I'd be happy.

WSN: TRUE or FALSE: There's no such thing as bad publicity.

SK: False. There is absolutely such a thing as bad publicity. It all depends on how you want to



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market yourself. If you're trying to put yourself in the public's eye no matter what, then I guess you could say there's no such thing as bad publicity. If you're trying to establish a focused, well-directed career, getting arrested for drunk driving is bad publicity no matter what anyone says.

WSN: What do you do before a live show to help calm your nerves?

SK: For my pre-show routine, I like to get to the theater a little early. I'll walk the stage and get re-accustomed to the space before I go to hair and wardrobe. Then I'll do a 10-minute full-body awareness warm-up followed by a 10-minute vocal warm-up. I always tell myself, "Don't be lazy." I try to maintain pure energy and focus while on stage.

WSN: What are you missing about New York?

SK: Not the cold weather, I'll tell you that much. I miss my friends and my life, the fast pace, the general drive of the people. Coming to a largely suburban area really highlights that. You know what I really miss? Sal's Pizzeria in Mamaroneck, N.Y.

WSN: Do you watch "Jersey Shore?" What do think of it?

SK: I watched the first episode. I hate it, but I can absolutely see how it's become so contagious. It's complete absurdity — talk about "no such thing as bad publicity." I watched the show once and I found myself talking about it backstage with some of the cast members of "Lost in Yonkers." Mission accomplished. We're talking about it.

WSN: Blackberry or iPhone?

SK: Neither. I have a \$19.99 phone from Verizon that does everything I need it to. I'm considering getting a Droid.

WSN: Do you have any secret talents?

SK: I can balance things on my chin, like chairs.

WSN: Are you serious?

SK: Yeah. The same way you would balance anything, like a baseball bat.

WSN: So you're saying you can balance an actual wooden chair on your chin?

SK: Well, yeah, as long as the chair isn't too heavy.

WSN: What's your drink?

SK: Scotch on the rocks, or a dirty martini.

WSN: Who (or what) is your enemy?

SK: I'll plead the fifth. If he reads this, he'll know who he is.

WSN: What was your last purchase?

SK: A roll of quarters for laundry — that's a purchase, isn't it?

Kaplan is currently performing in "Lost in Yonkers" alongside Judy Kaye and Austyn Meyers at The Old Globe in San Diego through Feb. 28. He will return to NYU in March and plans to graduate this summer.

Norah Heintz is a contributing writer.

leave a comment

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Name

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Comment



poll

What did you think of Obama's State of the Union address?

It was great! It restored my confidence in him.

It was good, but there were issues I wish he had discussed.

It was awful! I was waiting for someone to yell, "You lie!"

I don't know, I was too busy drinking every time he said "economy."

I don't know, I was too distracted by Nancy Pelosi's facial expressions.

sdjewishworld

There is a Jewish story everywhere

02.10.10

Old Globe extends 'Lost in Yonkers' one week

Posted in [Uncategorized](#) tagged "[Spencer Rowe](#), [Alejo Vietti](#), [Amanda Naughton](#), [Austyn Myers](#), [Diana Moser](#), [Jeffrey Bender](#), [Jennifer Regan](#), [Judy Kaye](#), [Lost in YHonkers](#), [Mattherw McCarthy](#), [Neil Simon](#), [Paul Peterson](#), [Ralph Funicello](#), [Scott Schwartz](#), [steven Kaplan](#)" at 7:39 pm by dharrison

SAN DIEGO —Neil Simon's *Lost in Yonkers*, the critically acclaimed inaugural production of the Globe's Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, has been extended for one week due to popular demand. Originally set to close on Feb. 28, the production will now run through Sunday, March 7. *Lost in Yonkers* stars Tony Award winner Judy Kaye and is directed by Scott Schwartz.

Neil Simon's most critically acclaimed work, *Lost in Yonkers* received both the Pulitzer Prize and the Tony Award for Best Play. Set in the summer of 1942, two young brothers, Arty and Jay, are left to live with their grandmother by their financially strapped father. The boys must contend with the dominating Grandma Kurnitz who runs the family-owned candy store, their mentally-challenged Aunt Bella and her secret romance, and Uncle Louie, a small-time hood. A mix of both comedy and drama, *Lost in Yonkers* was hailed by the New York Post as "The best play Simon ever wrote."

In addition to Kaye, the cast also features Jeffrey Bender (Louie), Steven Kaplan (Jay), Austyn Myers (Arty), Amanda Naughton (Gert), Jennifer Regan (Bella) and Spencer Rowe (Eddie). The *Lost in Yonkers* creative team includes Ralph Funicello (Scenic Design), Alejo Vietti (Costume Design), Matthew McCarthy (Lighting Design), Paul Peterson (Sound Design) and Diana Moser (Stage Manager).

*

Preceding provided by the Old Globe Theatre

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URI

SAN DIEGO INTERNATIONAL TIMES

January 1, 2010

YU YU

"Lost In Yonkers"

「ヨンカーズ物語」

崩壊寸前の家族関係をユーモラスに描写／ニール・サイモンの喜劇

㊦ 第二次世界大戦中の1942年夏、母親を亡くしたジェイとアーティの兄弟は、ニューヨークのヨンカーズに暮らす祖母の家へ預けられる。兄弟の父エディは妻の死に関わる借金を返済するため、セールスマンとして各地を転々としなければならなかった。故国からアメリカへ移住してきた祖母は厳格な性格の持ち主で、幼い子供たちを怖くさせ、成長した今でも少なからぬ影響を与えている。家には知的障害者の叔母ベラも暮らしている。抑圧的な家庭から逃れたい一心で、ベラは地元映画館の案内係との結婚を夢見ていた。

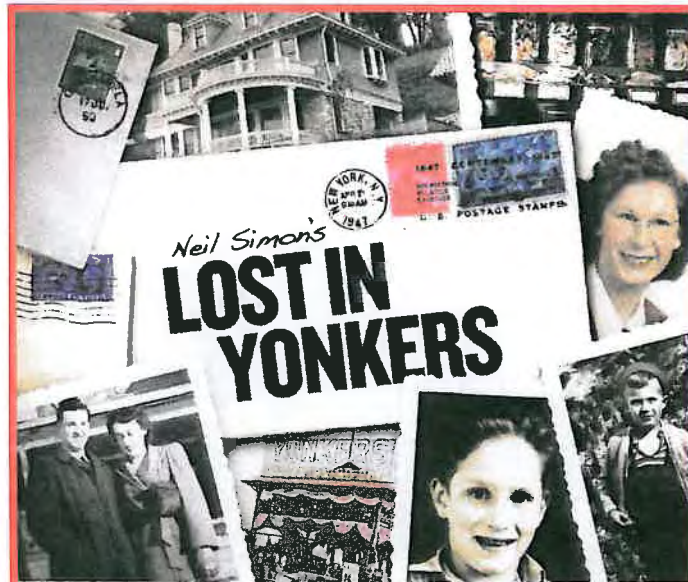
㊦ アメリカ人劇作家・脚本家ニール・サイモンによる喜劇。1991年に初演を迎えた本作は、ピューリッツァー賞とトニー賞を受賞したほか、1993年にはマーサ・クーリッジ監督の手で映画化された。1961年のブロードウェイデビュー以降、「The Sunshine Boys」('72) など数多くのヒット作を生み出しているニール・サイモンは「The Odd Couple」、「Biloxi Blues」でもトニー賞の栄誉に輝いている。

㊦ THE GLOBE THEATRES (Sheryl & Harvey White Theatre), 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park / 619-239-2255 (T)。期間—1/23(土)～2/28(日)。上演—火・水曜：7pm、木・金曜：8pm、土曜：2pm & 8pm、日曜：2pm & 7pm。チケット—TBA。 <http://www.oldglobe.org>



THE RAGE

January 2010



Lost in Yonkers




























The year is 1942. The setting is a two-bedroom apartment over Kurnitz's candy store in Yonkers, New York. Two brothers, Arty and Jay, are left in the care of feuding relatives while their dad attempts to find work to pay off the debt incurred when caring for their dying mother. Together the brothers must make their way through a tangled web of family relationships without losing their sense of self or sense of humor. In classic Neil Simon style, character development is the focus and the dialogue is a delicate balance of humor and drama. Some critics have dubbed *Lost In Yonkers* Simon's best work. It won the 1991 Drama Desk Award for Best New Play, the Pulitzer Prize for Drama and a Tony Award for Best Play.

The Old Globe's production will star Judy Kaye in the role of Grandma Kurnitz, best known for work on Broadway in *Souvenir: A Fantasia on the Life of Florence Foster Jenkins*, for which she was nominated for a Tony Award. The Old Globe is proudly establishing *Lost In Yonkers* as their first official show in the new 250-seat arena-style Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre. This new, intimate theatre is part of the Globe's new Conrad Prebys Theatre Center which features an education center, multipurpose hall and a restaurant with heated outdoor seating.

***Lost in Yonkers* plays January 23 – February 28 at the Old Globe Theatre.**

For tickets and more information call 619.234.5623.

January / Enero 2010

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					<div>1<p>Salute to Vienna San Diego Symphony www.sandiegosymphony.com</p></div>	<div>2<p>Lewis Black Copley Symphony Hall www.livenation.com</p></div>
<div>3<p>San Diego Chargers Qualcomm Stadium www.chargers.com</p></div>	<div>4</div>	<div>5-10<p>Riverdance San Diego Civic Theatre www.broadwaysd.com</p></div>		<div>8<p>You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown San Diego Junior Theater www.juniortheater.com</p></div>		<div>9<p>Los Lobos Belly Up Tavern www.bellyup.com</p></div>
<div>10<p>La Jolla Motor Car Classic La Jolla Cove www.lajollamotorcarclassic.com</p></div>	<div></div>	<div>12</div>	<div>13<p>Whisper House The Old Globe www.oldglobe.org</p></div>	<div>14</div>	<div>15-17<p>Jesus Christ Superstar San Diego Civic Theatre www.broadwaysd.com</p></div>	
<div>17</div>	<div></div>	<div>19</div>	<div> </div>	<div>22-24<p>Del Mar Antique Show Del Mar Fairgrounds www.sdmair.com</p></div>		<div>23<p>Lost in Yonkers The Old Globe www.oldglobe.org</p></div>
<div>24<p>Bringin' it Bach Balboa Theater www.sandiegoteatres.org</p></div>	<div>25 </div>	<div>27-31<p>Disney on Ice World of Fantasy San Diego Sports Arena www.sandiegoarena.com</p></div>		<div>28<p>Lily Tomlin Balboa Theater www.sandiegoteatres.org</p></div>	<div></div>	<div>30<p>La Boheme San Diego Civic Theatre www.sdogopera.com</p></div>

SAN DIEGO INTERNATIONAL TIMES

January 16, 2010 YU YU

"Lost In Yonkers" 『ヨンカーズ物語』

崩壊寸前の家族をユーモラスに描写／N・サイモンの喜劇

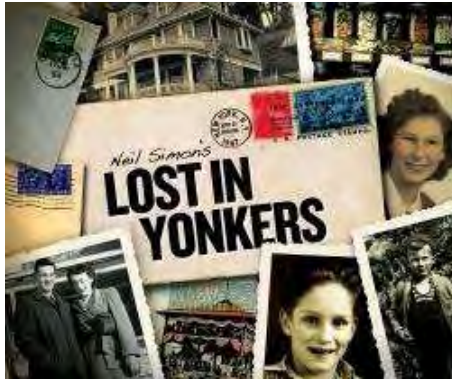


📅 & 📍 1942年夏。母親を亡くしたジェイとアーティの兄弟はNYのヨンカーズに暮らす祖母の家へ預けられる。兄弟の父エディは妻の死に関わる借金を返済するため、セールスマンとして各地を転々としなければならなかった。故国から米国移住した祖母は厳格な性格の持ち主で、今でも子供たちに少なからぬ影響を与えている。家には知的障害者の叔母ベラも暮らしていた。米人劇作家・脚本家ニール・サイモンによる喜劇。

📍 THE GLOBE THEATRES (Sheryl & Harvey White Theatre), 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park / 619-239-2255 (T)。期間—1/23 (土) ~ 2/28 (日)。上演—火・水曜: 7pm、木・金曜: 8pm、土曜: 2pm & 8pm、日曜: 2pm & 7pm。チケット—\$29 ~ \$62。http://www.oldglobe.org

[CHANGE CITY](#)[home](#) | [dining](#) [photos](#) [events](#)

Lost in Yonkers



What: The Tony Award-winning play makes its way to San Diego. Filled with laughs, the story explores the lives of two brothers taking care of their quarrelling relatives.

Performance times vary.

For further information please call 619.234.5623
or visit theoldglobe.org (<http://theoldglobe.org/index.aspx>).

Where: The Old Globe

1363 Old Globe Way

San Diego, CA 92101

([Map \(http://maps.google.com/maps?q=1363 Old Globe Way +San Diego+CA+92101&ie=UTF8&z=17\)](http://maps.google.com/maps?q=1363+Old+Globe+Way+San+Diego+CA+92101&ie=UTF8&z=17))

When: Sat, January 23, 2010 - Sun, February 28, 2010

Tickets: \$29-\$62.

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(http://www.addtoany.com/share_save?linkurl=http%3A%2F

[%2Fsandiego.modernluxury.com%2Fevents%2Flost-yonkers&linkname=Lost%20in%20Yonkers](http://sandiego.modernluxury.com%2Fevents%2Flost-yonkers&linkname=Lost%20in%20Yonkers))

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[Change of Art \(http://miami.modernluxury.com/style/change-art\)](http://miami.modernluxury.com/style/change-art)

Tags:

SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE

January 29, 2010

Weekend currents

THEATER: SIMON SAYS

Neil Simon's "Lost in Yonkers" had a great start with a Pulitzer, a Tony and a film adaptation. The Old Globe is bringing it back to the stage. Previews start tomorrow at Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre. theoldglobe.org



NORTH COUNTY TIMES

January 31, 2010

Fast Forward

A glance at local
events scheduled for
the next two weeks

FEB. 8

**Cabaret with
Judy Kaye**

Tony-winning
Broadway star
of at Old Globe's
Hattox Hall;
619-234-5623.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR FEBRUARY

FOR ADDITIONAL EVENTS, VISIT LIFEAFTER50.COM

"LOST IN YONKERS"



Set in the summer of 1942, two young brothers, Arty and Jay, are left to live with their grandmother by their financially strapped father. The boys must contend with the dominating Grandma Kurnitz who runs the family-owned candy store, their mentally challenged Aunt Bella and her secret romance, and Uncle Louie, a small-time hood. Winner of the

Pulitzer Prize and the Tony Award for Best Play, *Lost in Yonkers* is about finding one's way through the tangled web of family relationships without losing the sense of self or sense of humor. Tony Award winner Judy Kaye plays Grandma Kurnitz. The Old Globe Theatre, Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park, San Diego. Feb 5 Through Feb. 28. \$29-\$62. (619) 234-5623. theoldglobe.org.

ENTERTAINMENT

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5 THE GREATEST GENERATION

Music Director Carl St.Clair and the orchestra explore the motivations, moods and feelings of those Tom Brokaw described as "the greatest generation any society has produced." **Orange County Performing Arts Center, Renée & Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall, 600 Town Center Dr., Costa Mesa. \$25-\$185 Also. Feb. 6. (714) 556-2787. ocpac.org.**

MOSCOW FESTIVAL BALLET: SWAN LAKE

Enjoy the beauty of the ballet *Swan Lake*, which has been created to bring together the highest elements of the great Bolshoi and Kirov Ballet companies and celebrate Russian classic ballet. **Balboa Theatre, Gaslamp Quarter, 868 Fourth Ave., San Diego. \$39-\$69. (619/858/760) 570-1100. sdbalboa.org.**

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6 THE GREATEST PLACES



This 40-minute film takes audiences on a geographical odyssey to seven amazing locations, including

Greenland's giant icebergs, Tibet's Chang Tang Plateau, and Iguazu's immense waterfall, showcasing nature's enduring power with the majesty of IMAX. **Reuben H. Fleet Science Center, 1875 El Prado, Balboa Park, San Diego. Through April 2010. \$12-\$15. (619) 238-1233. rhfleet.org.**

GEORGE GERSHWIN ALONE

Hershey Felder renders an intimate portrait of legendary composer George Gershwin. Enjoy Gershwin's most famous pieces, including "I Got Rhythm," "Someone to Watch Over Me" and "Rhapsody in Blue." **The Laguna Playhouse, Moulton Theatre, 606 Laguna Canyon Road, Laguna Beach. Tues.-Sun. through Feb. 21. \$35-\$70. (949) 497-2787. lagunaplayhouse.com.**

WHISPER HOUSE

2007 Tony-Award winner Duncan Sheik's musical tale of a young boy during World War II who thinks his lighthouse home is haunted. **The Old Globe Theatre, 1363 Old Globe Way, Balboa Park, San Diego. Tues.-Sun. through Feb. 21. \$36-\$89. (619) 234-5623. theoldglobe.org.**

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7 DUO CANTILENA

Classics at the Merc. **The Mercantile, 42051 Main St., Temecula. \$11. (866) 653-8696. temeculatheater.org.**

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11 SWINGTIME CANTEEN

Five American singers prove their mettle in Britain singing some 30 vintage classics as they try to reach a radio audience in Europe. **Moonlight at the Avo Playhouse, 303 Main St., Vista. Thurs.-Sun. through Feb. 21. \$21-\$29. (760) 724-2110. moonlightstage.com.**

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12 JOHN FOGERTY



The Show, Agua Caliente Casino-Resort-Spa, 32-250 Bob Hope Road, Rancho Mirage. \$60-\$100. (888) 999-1995. hotwatercasino.com

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 14 GERSHWIN SINGS GERSHWIN

Alexis Gershwin pays tribute to her uncles with personal stories and fresh arrangements of the celebrated duo's timeless classics, including "They Can't Take That Away From Me," "Embraceable You," and "Our Love Is Here to Stay." **Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts, 12700 Center Court Drive, Cerritos. \$31-\$55. (562) 467-8818. cerritoscenter.com.**

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16 TAO: THE MARTIAL ART OF DRUMMING

The 13 drummers offer a youthfully modern take on an ancient art form, pounding their drums with jaw-dropping precision and power. The performers bring nontraditional flair to the group by drawing on diverse backgrounds: one as a hard-rock musician, another as a gymnast, yet another as a composer. **Copley Symphony Hall, 1245 Seventh Ave., San Diego. \$20-\$85. (619) 235-0804. sandiegosymphony.com.**

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20 DAVID SANBORN

A naturally gifted performer, Sanborn has helped defined the saxophone's modern sound. He has created a body of work that spans the genres of rock 'n' roll,

R&B, pop and jazz. **Fitz's Jazz Café at the McCallum, McCallum Theatre, 73000 Fred Waring Dr., Palm Desert. \$35-\$85. (760) 340-2787. mccallumtheatre.com.**

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21 TASTE OF SPAIN

In this wine workshop, taste your way through Spain's major regions, including Rioja, Ribera del Duero, Priorat, Rias Baixas and Penedes. Sample 8-10 wines and enjoy Spanish cheeses, as you learn to decipher Spanish wine labels. **Bacchus Wine Market, 647 G St. San Diego. \$45. 619-236-0005. bacchuswinemarket.com.**

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24 BOLSHOI BALLET

For more than 230 years, the legendary Bolshoi Ballet has captured the hearts and imaginations of audiences around the world. The virtuosity and vitality of the Bolshoi dancers are showcased in this performance. **Orange County Performing Arts Center, Segerstrom Hall, 600 Town Center Dr., Costa Mesa. \$21-\$103. Also Feb. 25-28. (714) 556-2787. ocpac.org.**

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25 MONSIEUR CHOPIN

In Frédéric Chopin's salon at 9 Square d'Orléans in Paris, Monsieur Chopin teaches a piano lesson that took place just days after the February 1848 French revolution. As the piano lesson unfolds, Chopin reveals secrets about the art of the piano and composition, as well as secrets about himself. **The Laguna Playhouse, Moulton Theatre, 606 Laguna Canyon Road, Laguna Beach. Tues.-Sun. through March 7. \$40-\$70. (949) 497-2787. lagunaplayhouse.com.**

ALBERTA BALLET: JONI MITCHELL'S THE FIDDLE AND THE DRUM

This semi-abstract narrative ballet is danced in neo-classical style and performed to Mitchell's compelling

music and her latest artwork, which is projected on large canvas

PRESIDIO SENTINEL

February 2010

THEATRE IN SAN DIEGO

Old Globe's Sheryl & Harvey White Theatre

Tony Award winner Judy Kaye ("The Phantom of the Opera" stars in Neil Simon's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, "Lost in Yonkers," the

inaugural production of The Old Globe's Sheryl and Harvey White Theater. Directed by Scott Schwartz, the play runs through Feb. 28.

The creative team includes Ralph Funicello (scenic design), Alejo Vietti (costume design), Matthew McCarthy (lighting design), Paul Peterson (sound design), Diana Moser (stage manager).

The cast includes Jeffrey Bender (Louie), Steven Kaplan (Jay), Judy Kaye (Grandma Kurnitz), Austyn Myers (Arty), Amanda Naughton (Gert), Jennifer Regan (Bella), Spencer Rowe (Eddie).

The Old Globe is located in San Diego's Balboa Park at 1363 Old Globe Way. Tickets can be purchased online at www.TheOldGlobe.org, by phone at (619) 23-GLOBE or by visiting the Box Office.



(L to r.) Steven Kaplan as Jay, Jennifer Regan as Bella and Austyn Myers as Arty in Neil Simon's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, *Lost in Yonkers*, at The Old Globe, through - Feb. 28, 2010. Photo by Craig Schwartz.

SAN DIEGO READER

March 4, 2010

CALENDAR

Calendar THEATER

THEATER LISTINGS

Lost in Yonkers

In Neil Simon's Pulitzer Prize-winning drama, young Jay and Arty Kurnitz move in with their grandmother, a Germanic glacier who runs her walk-up apartment with Hitlerian control. But what promises to be a battle between wise-cracking kids and a cane-wielding battle-ax instead focuses on a sad, in some ways tragic couple: Grandma K and her 35-year-old, mentally challenged daughter Bella, whose mind, a boy quips, "is closed for repairs." In the Old Globe production, Lady Kaye doesn't need the persistently melodramatic effects — lights suddenly dimming, her cane thumping the ground — to accompany the grandmother's entrances, since Kaye makes her an iron-gray cold-front set to storm on all opposition, including Jennifer Regan's Bella, a grown woman trapped in a child's mind. Stephen Kaplan and Austyn Myers play the young brothers with impressive, minimalist choices. Jeffrey M. Bender's Louie, a mob "henchman," has been a survivor, up to now. Amanda Naughton and Spencer Rowe contribute in minor roles. And Alejo Vietti's costumes evoke the period — 1942 — and the family's strapped economic status. [Note: due to popular demand, the Old Globe Theatre has extended the run of this show]

Worth a try

SHERYL AND HARVEY WHITE THEATRE,
1363 OLD GLOBE WAY, BALBOA PARK.
629-234-5623. 8PM THURSDAY, 8PM
FRIDAY, 2PM AND 8PM SATURDAY, 2PM
AND 7PM SUNDAY, THROUGH MARCH 7.



Neil Simon's Pulitzer Prize winner (*Lost in Yonkers*)

SDJJ | featurestory

by pat launer

FILLING GRANDMA'S SHOES

Actress Judy Kaye stars in Neil Simon's "Lost in Yonkers"
to inaugurate the Old Globe's new theater





Judy Kaye starred as Mrs. Lovett in the acclaimed revival of "Sweeney Todd" in 2006, then joined the musical's national tour.



PHOTOS COURTESY THE OLD GLOBE

Judy Kaye

Ever have a relative you couldn't stand? Someone who seemed downright cruel, not to mention intimidating, terrifying and uncompromising? And on top of all that, you had to kiss her clammy cheek?

That's how Jay and Arty see their Grandma Kurnitz. It's bad enough when they have to come to visit her. But now, with their mother dead and their father heavily in debt from the medical bills, they're forced to live with the dreaded matriarch for 10 months while their father takes to the road as a salesman to earn back the money he owes.

The year is 1942, and the setup is Neil Simon's 1991 Pulitzer Prize-winning play, "Lost in Yonkers," showing at the Old Globe Jan. 23-Feb. 28.

Each of Simon's characters is an actor's dream, a perfect gem: the wisecracking young boys; their loving but childlike Aunt Bella; their wheezing Aunt Gert; and their gangster Uncle Louie. But the juiciest role by far is stern, Germanic Grandma Kurnitz, who is cold and icy to the boys, hateful in her way. There are life events that have shaped her behavior; we have to come to see her in something of a sympathetic light. No mean trick, given her relentless nastiness.

The venerable actress Irene Worth originated the role on Broadway and won a Tony Award for her efforts (Mercedes Ruehl and Kevin Spacey also snagged Tonys, and the production won for Best Play). Now Judy Kaye steps into those sturdy, clomping shoes.

"This will be a stretch for me," says the 61-year-old actress, best known for applying her prodigious talents to comic and musical performances. "Never since high school have I played a lady of this age! And never a part without a humorous chord."

Kaye is a seasoned Broadway veteran, appearing in many of the Great American Musicals. She made her Broadway debut as a replacement for Rizzo in "Grease;" created the coloratura role of prima donna Carlotta in

"The Phantom of the Opera" (for which she won a Tony Award for Best Featured Actress); had a two-year run in the musical "Ragtime" as activist/anarchist Emma Goldman; and played Rosie in the original cast of "Mamma Mia!"

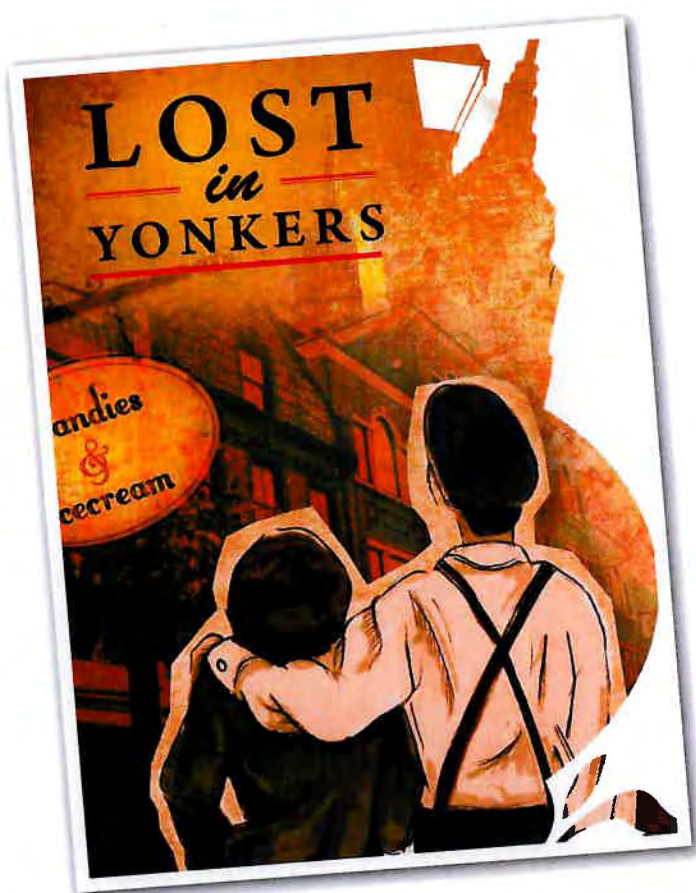
In 2005, she starred (first Off Broadway, then On, then on tour) as the central character in Stephen Temperley's "Souvenir," the story of Florence Foster Jenkins, an American soprano who became famous for her total lack of rhythm, pitch, tone and overall singing ability. And in 2006, she took over for Patti Lupone (even learning the tuba!) as Mrs. Lovett in the acclaimed revival of "Sweeney Todd," then went on to the national tour.

But this role as Grandma Kurnitz is something completely different. It's her first Neil Simon ("He pronounced me not his type"), but not her first straight play. She did see the original production of "Lost in Yonkers," but that was long ago. She thinks it's Simon's best work, but she didn't seek out the role; she was recruited by the Old Globe and the play's director, Scott Schwartz (son of "Wicked" composer Stephen Schwartz), perhaps most highly acclaimed for his direction of Tovah Feldshuh in "Golda's Balcony," a drama about Golda Meir).

"After my agent called me to offer me the role," Kaye says, "I had a stiff drink, realizing that I'm now playing a grandmother!" And a pretty tough one at that.

"I try to understand her," Kaye says. "She's a survivor. She's been through all that life can throw, and she's tried to instill that in her children with varying degrees of success. She's wounded and angry, and these personal wounds are passed along. I'm not sure I've ever met anybody like her." (Kaye's grandparents were born in this country. None of the Holocaust mentality is in her family.)

"She's painted as pretty mean," Kaye continues, contemplating the crusty septuagenarian. "But *why* is she that way? You can't play the negativity. You



have to play what she's trying to accomplish. I think by the end of the play, you come to understand why she does what she does, even if you may not agree with her tactics. Her road must've been so difficult. She's like Mother Courage [the Bertolt Brecht character], losing two children — and everything else. I have to think, 'How would that affect me? How would I be?' I start with the text and think about who the character is. Then I dream on it; a lot happens in my sleep. It really is conjuring."

Kaye has conjured up some pretty memorable characters. It all started when she played Queen Esther in a Purim production ("Waiter! Bring the wine!") at Temple Beth Israel in Phoenix, Ariz. She was 5.

"I did a lot of performing at the JCC: musicals, melodramas, something called 'Bessie the Bandit's Beautiful Baby.' Later, I did Streisand imitations, stuff from 'Funny Girl.' I did a lot of theater in high school, worming my way in from backstage, painting scenery. I wanted desperately to be a cheerleader, but once again, not the type.

"I always sang, though. I couldn't be stopped," Kaye admits. "I'm kind of my father's alter ego. Though he was a pediatrician, he got his start as a singing waiter in the Catskills!"

With her powerhouse soprano, she's performed in many operas and operettas, has done commercials, concerts and cabaret. In her youth, she was in five different productions of "Fiddler on the Roof." Much later, in the 1990s, she performed with Theodore Bikel and Bruce Adler in "Sholom Aleichem Lives!," another show based on the stories of the great Yiddish writer.

In her offstage time, she records books on tape for Random House, voicing all of Sue Grafton's alphabetic novels (she recently finished the abridged and unabridged versions of "U is for Undertow"). The writer and actress have met ("We've closed a couple of establishments together," Kaye quips) and Grafton has come to see her perform onstage.

While she's in production at the Old Globe, she'll be performing a one-night cabaret show (Feb. 8).

"It'll be a wonderful mix of the Great American Songbook and musical theater songs," Kaye says. "The emphasis will be on the work of Harold Arlen. Songs like 'Somewhere over the Rainbow,' 'That Old Black Magic' and 'The Man That Got Away.'"

She brings her own accompanist, Dennis Buck, with whom she's been working since the 1980s. They met on the show, "Oh, Brother," years ago. Another fortuitous encounter during the run of a show was David Green. They met in 1986 on an 18-week, 63-city tour of "On the 20th Century" ("We were two Jews, stuck in the middle of nowhere!"). It was the show that catapulted Kaye to star status. A year after they met, she and Green were married. They've acted together many times (they're currently working on a new musical theater piece at the Arizona Theatre Company), and he directs her cabaret show.

This is her first Old Globe appearance ("Many moons ago, I auditioned for the Shakespeare company at the Globe, which was a fond dream of mine"), and her performance marks a double inaugural.

"Lost in Yonkers" will be the first fully staged production in the new Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre, the 250-seat arena space that replaces the Cassius Carter Centre Stage. The play was specifically chosen because it can showcase all the bells and whistles of the state-of-the-art facility.

Kaye's cabaret performance will launch Hartox Hall, showpiece of the brand new 6,200 square-foot Karen and Donald Cohn Education Center. The sumptuous multi-purpose Hall, which has a stunning terrace view of Balboa Park, will be used by the joint Old Globe/University of San Diego Master of Fine Arts actor training program — for theater classes, guest lectures and student rehearsals — as well as Globe play development readings, special events and cabaret performances such as Kaye's.

Over the years, Kaye has worked with some of the greats of stage and screen. Her role models, both musical and dramatic, were Mary Martin and Helen Hayes. Her favorite co-stars were Imogene Coca and Rock Hudson. Now, she's on the road a good deal of the time, but when she returns to her upstate New York retreat, 5.5 acres on the banks of the Hudson River, she and her husband love to cook, play golf, attend theater, visit museums and entertain friends.

"I am the most fortunate of actors," she concedes. Ever since she was cast in "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown" at UCLA (she played Lucy, another not-so-likable character), she's been "pretty constantly employed. I never had to do another thing." Lucky indeed.

But it'll take a lot more than luck to bring steely, embittered Grandma Kurnitz to life.

"I love the humor of the piece," Kaye says of "Lost in Yonkers." "It comes truly out of the situation. And those two boys: that was Neil Simon's relationship with his brother. It's very autobiographical. As for Grandma Kurnitz? Well, I'm humbled by the challenge, but I'm embracing her, and I know she'll be a real learning experience." ✨

• "Lost in Yonkers" begins previews Jan. 23 in the Old Globe's new Sheryl and Harvey White Theatre. The play runs through Feb. 28. Judy Kaye performs an evening of cabaret on Monday, Feb. 8. Learn more or buy tickets at www.theoldglobe.org.