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The Nebraska Arts Council, a state agency, has supported this program through its matching grants program funded by the Nebraska Legislature, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Nebraska Cultural Endowment. Visit www.nebraskaartscouncil.gov for information on how the Nebraska Arts Council can assist your organization, or how you can support the Nebraska Cultural Endowment.

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Cast & Scenes



THE ODD COUPLE

By Neil Simon **Directed by** Tyler J. Rinne

THE ODD COUPLE is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc.

www.concordtheatricals.com

Cast of Characters

Oscar Madison	Mason Gustafson
Felix Unger	Brandon Clark
Speed	Jeff Carrel
Murray	Matt McNiff
Roy	Callan Williams
Vinnie	Alex Venneman*
Gwendolyn	Ashley Hothan
Cecily	Marissa Saure

* indicates CP Mainstage debut

<u>Setting:</u>

Oscar Madison's NYC Apartment

<u>Time:</u>

Summer, 1969

Scenes:

ACT I - A hot summer night

ACT II. Scene 1 - Two weeks later. About 11 PM

There will be a 10 minute intermission

ACT II, Scene 2 - A few days later. About 8 PM

ACT III - The next evening. About 7:30 PM

No generative artificial intelligence (AI) was used during this or any Community Players production.





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From November 25, 2025, to March 26, 2026, see the 50th anniversary exhibit of Beatrice Community Players!



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Production Crews

Stage Manager

Natalie Gustafson

<u>Assistant Stage Manager</u>

Grace Frahm

Scenic & Sound Design

Tyler J. Rinne

<u>Lighting Design</u>

Mel Voorhis

Set Construction

Natalia Kraviec, Mason Gustafson, Natalie Gustafson, Nolan Marlatt, Bailey Schwab, & Joey Westerdale

Scene Painting

Natalia Kraviec & Tyler J. Rinne

Lights & Sound

Mel Voorhis, Brandon Clark, Natalie Gustafson, & Asher Wilkening

Props & Set Decoration

Jean Spilker & Jim Beran

Costumes & Design

Jenny Sutphin

<u> Hair & Makeup</u>

Ashley Hothan

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Show Logo

Tyler J. Rinne

Special Thanks to Beatrice Daily Sun, KWBE, KUTT, Nebraska Public Media, Scott Spilker, and the Estate of Dewane & Darlene Spilker

Any video and/or audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited.

Notice: So as not to disturb other patrons or the performers, patrons arriving late or that exit the auditorium during the performance will be asked to remain in the lobby until seated at an appropriate moment by the House Manager. A closed-circuit TV is set up in the lobby so you will not miss any of the performance.



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Director's Note



Are you a Felix or an Oscar?

On the surface, that seems like an easy Buzzfeed quiz question, something as simple to puzzle out as determining what Sex & The City character you are, to reference some other famous fictional NYC friends. But, for all of Felix's neat-freak eccentricities and Oscar's slovenly attitude and short temper, these pair of suddenly single pals carry more nuance than that. Why else would they consider themselves friends, close enough to see each other every Friday night for ritualistic games of poker? Or even to move in together?

Audiences may be tempted to puzzle out how these two met and even began hanging out. Given The Odd Couple's penchant for being adapted (into a Paramount film and into four different television series including an animated show about a dog and a cat called The Oddball Couple), maybe we'll someday see a whole trilogy beginning with something like The Odd Singles about their pre-Blanche and pre-Frances dating lives. But playwright Neil Simon, and indeed our show, aren't concerned with what came before. Instead, we join them at the crises of their lives: they've both been dumped. And they both handle it exactly the same, by neither one of them changing even one bit.

If you're an Oscar, you lean into your laziness, existing only for pleasure and comfort. You enjoy the company of others, but not so much that you'll put in any unnecessary effort for them. Your dirty apartment and your winning personality should be enough. If you're a Felix, you pay attention to not one of your own needs, instead doing every little thing to pamper your partners within an inch of their lives. If you're a Felix or an Oscar, you don't compromise. If you're a Felix, you don't accept your fate; if you're an Oscar, you do. But the end result is that you're still the same person that got dumped in the first place.

So it's down to these two New Yorkers to maybe rub off on each other a bit. When they eventually come to the end of their roommate status, maybe that cohabitation has left a grimy streak on Felix, and maybe it's left a bleached and sanitized blotch on Oscar. Either way, maybe they've changed, whether either of them choose to admit it or not. I'm not asking you to decide if you're a Felix or an Oscar, but I am hoping they leave a mark on you.

Enjoy the show, and definitely never move in with anyone like either of them.

Tyler J. Rinne Managing Artistic Director



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Meet the Cast



Jeff Carrel



Brandon Clark



Mason Gustafson



Ashley Hothan



Matt McNiff



Marissa Saure



Alex Venneman



Callan Williams

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The Odd Couple Bios

Jeff Carrel (Speed) returns to the Community Players stage for his 15th show. Some notable performances include *The Nerd* in 1996, *It's A Wonderful Life* in 2007, and *Peter and the Starcatcher* in 2024. Jeff is a Sales Manager at Premier Chevrolet GMC Beatrice. He's ready for everyone to experience this "veteran cast doing what they love to do - entertain audiences." Jeff has 3 dogs, 3 kids, and just recently became a grandpa!

Brandon Clark (Felix Ungar) is back for his 28th onstage role including The Three Musketeers, Puffs, Ordinary Days, and last season's The Addams Family. He has also worked on numerous shows behind the scenes with lighting & sound design, directing, stage management, set construction, front of house, etc. He works at the Homestead National Historical Park as an IT Specialist. He's ready for audiences to bust a gut at the cast's performance!

Mason Gustafson (Oscar Madison) returns to the CP stage having been in many shows such as Farce of Habit, The Three Musketeers, and Clue: On Stage. Mason is active at Community Players, serving as the President of CP's Board of Directors, helping with set construction, and directing four shows at CP including last season's Veronica's Room. Mason has also participated in many shows in the Lincoln theatre scene including directing various shows for the First Flight Festival at Angels Theatre Company and acting in Predictor at Angels Theatre Company, Gross Indecency at Lincoln Community Playhouse, and the upcoming Rumors at Lofte Community Theatre. He is an Installation Administrator at Capitol Heating & Air Conditioning in Lincoln. "This has been a bucket list show for a long time, and it's a privilege to work with the people here to bring it to life."







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Ashley Hothan (Gwendolyn Pigeon) joins us again for her 13th show, having been seen in *Puffs, Clue: On Stage*, and *The Lion in Winter*. She has helped with various jobs behind the scenes including Hair & Makeup, Costuming, and Lights & Sound. Ashley also could be seen in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* at Nebraska Communities Playhouse. She works at U.S. Bank as a Client Relationship Consultant. "It's been my absolute pleasure to be a part of this production - hopefully us Pigeon Sisters won't make you 'coo-coo' with our antics!"

Matt McNiff (Murray) makes his return to the Community Players' stage after an eleven-years hiatus from performing here. He was in Completely Hollywood (Abridged), Every Christmas Story Ever Told (And Then Some!), The Brothers Grimm Spectaculathon, and Sylvia. He also directed Tuesdays With Morrie and currently serves on the CP Board of Directors. Matt works at Educational Service Unit #5 as a Behavior Consultant. "I want to thank my wife Brenda and sons, Jackson and Ben, for encouraging me to get back into theater after all of these years. This may have been a ploy to get me out of the house but I am okay with that. Anyone who knows me knows that, like Murray, all I need is a 30 cent key and some corned beef and cabbage to fill my heart. Thanks again, Brenda."



Marissa Saure (Cecily Pigeon) is back at CP having appeared most recently in last season's The Addams Family and Miss Bennet: Christmas as Pemberley at Community Players. She has helped behind the scenes for many shows here including choreographing Hadestown: Teen Edition and stage managing The Sound of Music. Marissa also performs around Lincoln including in Cabaret, Something Rotten, and Little Shop of Horrors at Lincoln Community Playhouse and Newsies at Pinewood Performing Arts. She is a Training and Events Manager at CIP Communities in Lincoln. "Thank you to Tyler, my dog Bella, and all of you for your support!"

Alex Venneman (Vinnie) is on the Community Players stage for his first Mainstage show after performing in eight Stage Door shows including The Island of Dr. Libris, The Last Ticket Out of Thistleberry Thicket, and The Hobbit. He has also done Lights & Sound for 10 shows at Community Players. He also was active in the Beatrice High School theatre department where he acted in 7 shows, helped with tech on 3 shows, and co-directed 1 show. Alex is currently a sophomore at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln studying Audio Engineering.

Callan Williams (Roy) is a regular at CP with this being his 46th onstage role, but he has worked behind the scenes on many more as well as serving on the Board of Directors. Callan works at Hybrid Turkeys as a Maintenance Manager. Technically it is a comedy so you will laugh. But there is a story of two very different people learning to accept each other despite their differences. "As always, thanks to my wife Cindy for her support. She misses me when I rehearse. Thanks to all of you who have attended tonight to be entertained, you are the most important theater participant."

Natalie Gustafson (Stage Manager) is stage managing for the third time in the past year, having worked on last season's Veronica's Room and Farce of Habit. She has also performed onstage in many CP productions, including Godspell, She Loves Me, Ordinary Days, as well as the upcoming Sweeney Todd. Natalie works as a School Counselor at Beatrice Elementary School. "Mason— What a joy it has been to watch you bring Oscar Madison to life! Thanks for spending all your nights with me at the theater."

Grace Frahm (Assistant Stage Manager) joins the Community Players stage management team for the first time, but has spent plenty of time on and off the CP stage. Patrons might recognize her from behind the front desk as she has served as the Patron Services Manager at Community Players for a little over a year. "Thank you to all of our front-of-house volunteers who have responded to my countless emails & posts and made my job much easier!"

Tyler J. Rinne (Director) is the Managing Artistic Director at Community Players, where he has directed over 50 shows, including The Sound of Music, Misery, Clue: On Stage, Shipwrecked! An Entertainment, and The Lion in Winter, as well as the youth productions The NeverEnding Story, Charlotte's Web, and Disney's Frozen JR. Tyler has written multiple shows for the stage, including the published plays Forest Paths (YouthPLAYS) and The Rest of the West (Pioneer Drama). An award-winning actor, favorite roles include appearances in Peter & The Starcatcher, Popcorn Falls, The 39 Steps, Moonlight & Magnolias, and Hunter Gatherers. He is the Nebraska State Representative for the American Association of Community Theatres.



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50 Years of CP History

Community Players was born in a basement in 1975. With the support of the City Parks and Recreation Department, people interested in forming a community theatre gathered in the basement of the Beatrice City Auditorium to share ideas. All in attendance, a mixture of performers and organizers, agreed that in order to become an independent and viable organization, funds must be raised. The comedy A Gown For His Mistress was staged as a dinner theatre production in the dining room of the Beatrice Inn, and proceeds were used to raise enough capital to begin Community Players.

From the original group of interested parties, officers and nine Board Members were elected and bylaws were drawn up to form what is now a nonprofit arts organization. Terry Terhune, a local performer and barber, was elected the first Board President.

Unlike most newly founded community theatres, CP felt it was important to have a full-time professional artistic director on staff from the very beginning. To afford this, the First Nighter concept was created. This began with five couples hosting dinners for 20-30 people and donating \$100. These initial five then solicited 20 hosts to provide dinner and donate \$100 and so on and so on before the premier performance of each season. All hosts and attendees also purchased Season Tickets.

Rehearsals and productions during the inaugural Community Players season were held in the Lodge Room of the old Elks building, since torn down, next to the current Beatrice Police Department. All sets had to be struck and removed to accommodate Lodge meetings, rehearsals were held around Lodge functions, and patrons had to climb a long flight of steep stairs to attend shows. Backstage space was so inadequate that performers had to sit on a wooden stool under a single light bulb to apply stage makeup. Despite these difficulties, a successful season was presented and Community Players was launched as a viable arts organization.

For the next three and a half years, CP was permitted use of a building at Southeast Community College. Through hours of volunteer labor, this building became the company's first permanent home. These three seasons not only included regular season shows, but three dinner theatre performances, a Children's Theatre summer production, and a visit from the Nebraska Theatre Caravan. Only a fire could drive CP from their new home. Following the closing performance of The Stingiest Man in Town, the first production of the fifth season, the theatre was attacked by firebomb. Despite this terrible loss, things could have been much worse; thousands of dollars' worth of rented costumes had been packaged and shipped out of the building only hours before the catastrophic attack. Remaining performances during the season were held at the Beatrice High School Little Theatre and the 4-H Building on the Gage County Fairgrounds.

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402-230-3035 719 Market St, Suite A Beatrice, NE 68310 During that year, the Board of Directors appointed a Building Search Committee. Instrumental in the search was Artistic Director Larry Olsen, who rented and created a renovation plan for a former autobody shop and motorcycle garage on Ella Street in downtown Beatrice. Thanks to the vision of Olsen and the work of countless volunteers, a black box theatre was designed. Insurance money began the renovation project, and fundraising efforts included a radio-thon, fashion show, variety "Broadway Showcase," and tickets to the local movie premiere of On Golden Pond, which CP had produced onstage to great acclaim prior to the film's release.

The building, built in 1948, was originally rented from American Charter. Due to internal changes within the rental company, the Board became fearful of losing the lease. Everette Jones, a past Board President and staunch CP supporter, purchased the building from American Charter and leased it to the theatre, eventually working out a purchase plan. To date, CP still owns and operates out of the building.

In 1997, Jamie Ulmer began his 25-year tenure as Managing Artistic Director, making him Community Players' longest-serving chief executive officer when he left the organization in early 2023. Between 1999-2003, CP accomplished a capital fundraising campaign for building improvements and renovations. These included purchasing a new lighting system and renovating the building's façade, among other projects.

Staffing has increased dramatically since that first paid Artistic Director. In 2004, CP upgraded to computerized box office software and expanded the staff to include a part-time Box Office Manager. This position has since become a full-time Patron Services Manager. The positions of Costume Librarian and Associate Artistic Director were added in 2007 and 2011, respectively. A Technical Director, created to ease the production burden on Board and staff, was added in 2024.

Community Players received the Governor's Arts Award for Organizational Achievement from the Nebraska Arts Council in 2006. Perhaps of equal importance, new auditorium seating was installed in 2008 to replace the padded folding chairs used by the organization for 20 years. Funds for this project were raised in a matter of months, and leftover funds were used to install new auditorium air conditioning units the following year.

Since 2008, the organization has participated in the Nebraska Association of Community Theatres' biannual one-act festivals, advancing to regional festivals almost every cycle.

A significant expansion in programming occurred in 2010-2011. Not only did the slate of regular season shows grow to six, but a series of youth, educational, and family programming launched under the banner of Stage Door. Most significantly, this included a merger with the Beatrice Children's Theatre and the creation of the Stars of Summer and Acting Up programs.

No one was left unaffected during a global pandemic that began in 2020. Community Players stayed active by staging virtual events, utilizing small-cast productions with livestreaming options, and maintaining strict safety and health standards across all sectors. Thanks to generous supporters, adaptable volunteers, and strong leadership, live theatre did not go away during this unprecedented time.

Community Players currently has a staff of five, led by Managing Artistic Director Tyler J. Rinne, who has been active with the theatre since 2007 and became the organization's first Associate Director in 2011 before taking over as chief executive officer following Ulmer's departure in 2023. Current programming highlights include the Young Adult Theatre program for high school and college students, a robust selection of popular musicals and boundary-pushing plays, and a focus on accessibility and sensory-friendly efforts to ensure that the arts belong to all.

The First Nighter program that helped launch the organization is still going strong as CP celebrates its 50th Anniversary Season in 2025-2026. Looking to the future, the organization must address the limitations in size and durability of the building they moved into in 1983. With the support of the community, the talent of artists and performers, and the dedication of the Board and staff, Community Players will continue to lead southeast Nebraska to stardom as a center for excellence in the performing arts.

Join us for the 2025 - 2026 Season

It's time to celebrate! Community Players' 50th Anniversary Season is upon us, and you won't want to miss a single exciting show. This season, we're celebrating our past by producing audience favorites like *The Odd Couple* and *Annie*, we're staying in the present with the brand-new shows *Quiz* and *The Cottage*, and we're looking to the future by commissioning a world premiere production, *Marian: Princess of Thieves*. Season Memberships are on sale now which comes

with many perks including special Thank Yous, discounted tickets, free popcorn, etc. You can purchase Season Tickets at the front desk, by scanning the QR code below, or by going to www.beatricecommunityplayers.com.

Don't wait! Memberships are only available until September 14th!



Coming Attractions

Sweeney Todd

Mainstage

Performances: October 24 - November 2, 2025

On the hunt for a corrupt judge that stole his wife, wrongfully banished barber Sweeney Todd will stop at nothing for vengeance, so he forms an unlikely partnership with Mrs. Lovett, who serves up the worst pies in 19th century London underneath his former shop. Together, they wreak havoc on Fleet

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The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe **Acting Up Fall Semester**

Performances: November 21 - 23, 2025

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land. Can Edmund resist the Witch's temptation? Can Peter slay the evil wolf? And who will be crowned the new ruler of Narnia? This story of love, faith, and the triumph of good over evil is a celebration of the wonders of childhood and life.

50th Season Schedule

SWEENEY TODD

Mainstage | October 24-26 & 31-November 2, 2025

THE LION, THE WITCH, AND THE WARDROBE

Acting Up | November 21-23, 2025

Community Players Exhibit @ the Gage County Museum

Special Event | November 25, 2025 - March 26, 2026

Dick Terhune's A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Special Event | December 11-14, 2025

50th Anniversary Gala @ Black Rock Grille

Special Event | January 24, 2026

QUIZ

Mainstage | February 13-15 & 20-22, 2026

THE COTTAGE

Mainstage | April 10-12 & 17-19, 2026

MARIAN: PRINCESS OF THIEVES

Acting Up | May 1-3, 2026

ANNIE

Mainstage | June 4-7 & 11-14, 2026



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