



## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 16, 2017**

### **OSCAR NOMINEE MARSHA MASON RETURNS TO ATC TO DIRECT 2017-18 SEASON-OPENING PERFORMANCE OF "CHAPTER TWO"**

Arizona Theatre Company (ATC; David Ivers, Artistic Director; Billy Russo, Managing Director) is pleased to welcome back four-time Academy Award-nominee Marsha Mason, who will direct Neil Simon's autobiographical romantic comedy **Chapter Two** to open ATC's 51<sup>st</sup> season, Sept. 9-30 at the Temple of Music & Art, 333 S. Scott Ave. in Tucson, Oct. 5-22 at the Herberger Theater Center, 222 E. Monroe in Phoenix.

The 2017-18 season in Tucson is sponsored by I. Michael and Beth Kasser.

Mason, who directed last season's ATC smash hit, **An Act of God**, was nominated for an Oscar for her role in the movie version of **Chapter Two**, which originally opened on Broadway in 1977 and ran for 857 performances.

Based on Pulitzer Prize and multiple Tony Award-winner Simon's own life story, **Chapter Two** is the story of successful writer George Schneider, who is mourning the recent death of his beloved first wife when he meets the bright, vivacious actress Jennie MacLaine, played on Broadway by Mason. George is eager to rush into another marriage following a whirlwind courtship. But, the memories of his first wife threaten to ruin his second chance for happiness.

"Dealing with love, grief and second chances, Simon's story is timeless and universal," wrote the *Del Mar Times*.

Simon, who lost his own wife of 20 years to cancer in 1973, met and married Mason later that year. Their collaborations on stage lasted longer than their marriage and resulted in ***The Goodbye Girl*** (1971), ***The Cheap Detective*** (1978) and ***Only When I Laugh*** (1981). Mason earned additional Best Actress nominations for ***Only When I Laugh***, ***The Goodbye Girl*** and ***Cinderella Liberty*** (1973).

“What an auspicious start to our 51<sup>st</sup> season as we embark on the next ‘chapter’ of ATC’s unwritten future,” said ATC Artistic Director David Ivers. “Neil Simon’s brilliantly funny and touching ***Chapter Two*** has it all and doubly so considering the central character was written in honor of his wife, Marsha Mason, who happens to be directing our production.”

***Chapter Two*** stars four actors making their ATC debuts: David Mason (no relation to Marsha) as George Schneider, Ben Huber as Leo Schneider, Blair Baker as Jennie Malone and Diana Pappas as Faye Medwick.

Single ticket prices range from \$25 to \$73 in Tucson and \$25-\$80 in Phoenix and can be purchased at the box offices at the Temple of Music & Art and the Herberger Theatre Center or online at [www.arizonatheatre.org](http://www.arizonatheatre.org).

***Chapter Two*** will be followed by ***The River Bride***, (directed by Kinan Valdez), in Tucson Oct. 21 to Nov. 11 and in Phoenix from Nov. 16 to Dec. 3; a new production of ***Man of La Mancha*** (directed by David Bennett, choreography by Kathryn Van Meter) in Tucson, Dec. 2-31 and Phoenix, Jan. 5-27, 2018; ***Outside Mullingar*** (directed by ATC Artistic Director David Ivers), from the author of ***Doubt*** and ***Moonstruck***, in Tucson, Jan. 20-Feb. 10 and Phoenix from Feb. 15 to March 4; ***Low Down Dirty Blues*** (directed by Randal Myler), in Tucson March 10-31 and in Phoenix, April 5-22; and ***The Diary of Anne Frank***, directed by ATC Artistic Director Emeritus David Ira Goldstein, in Tucson April 21 to May 12 and in Phoenix, May 17 to June 3.

## BIOGRAPHIES

**Neil Simon (Playwright):** Born on July 4, 1927, in New York City, Neil Simon began writing comedy for some of radio and television's top talents in the 1940s. Turning to the stage, he enjoyed his first major hit with *Barefoot in the Park* in 1963, and later scored Tony Awards for *The Odd Couple* (1965), *Biloxi Blues* (1985) and *Lost in Yonkers* (1991). Simon also became a successful screenwriter, earning acclaim for both original and adapted works. In addition to his numerous Tony and Academy Award nominations, Simon in 1983 became the first living playwright to have a Broadway theater named in his honor. He grew up in the Washington Heights neighborhood of Manhattan, where he lived with his parents, Irving and Mamie, and his older brother, Danny. His parents had a tumultuous marriage, with Irving often leaving the family for months at a time. As a result, Simon took refuge in the movies as a child, finding particular solace and delight in comedies. In 1946, after returning from the army, Simon took a job in the Warner Brothers Manhattan office mailroom. A pivotal moment came when he and his brother Danny created a sketch for radio producer Ace Goodman, launching their careers as a comedy-writing team. The brothers soon began writing material for stars like Milton Berle and Jackie Gleason.

In the early 1950s, Neil and Danny Simon joined the all-star writing cast of the Sid Caesar television series, *Your Show of Shows*, which also included Mel Brooks, Woody Allen and Carl Reiner. By the middle of the decade the brothers had parted ways, but Neil continued his success via the small screen;

earning Emmy Award consideration for his work with *Caesar*, and also wrote for *The Phil Silvers Show* and *The Garry Moore Show*. He began writing for the stage while still employed as a TV writer, His first solo play, *Come Blow Your Horn*, began a solid run on Broadway in 1961, following years of rewrites. However, it was his follow-up effort, *Barefoot in the Park* (1963), that established the playwright as a star in his field, a reputation that was cemented with his instant classic about mismatched roommates, the Tony Award-winning *The Odd Couple* (1965). Simon's string of Broadway successes included four plays running simultaneously during the 1966-67 season. He scored major hits with *Promises, Promises* (1968), a musical based on the 1960 Billy Wilder film *The Apartment*, and with *The Sunshine Boys* (1972), a tribute to the bygone art of vaudeville. Simon has drawn extensively from his own life and upbringing in his theatrical writing. *Chapter Two* (1977), about a widowed writer embarking a new relationship, began its stage run four years after the death of Simon's first wife. The playwright also mined his personal history for the "Eugene Trilogy" — *Brighton Beach Memoirs* (1983), *Biloxi Blues* (1985) and *Broadway Bound* (1986) — with its New York City-born protagonist spending time in the military before teaming with his brother to write comedy. Despite his popularity and immense success, Simon at times endured less-than-stellar reviews from critics who considered his work sentimental and mainstream. However, he finally achieved a critical breakthrough when his 1991 play, *Lost in Yonkers*, was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for Drama, along with a Tony for Best Play. The prolific playwright continued churning out productions, earning strong reviews for his 1995 Off-Broadway creation, *London Suite*. After *Come Blow Your Horn* was turned into a Frank Sinatra movie in 1963, Simon tried his hand at writing feature films, starting with *After the Fox* (1966). Several of his original screenplays drew strong praise, with *The Goodbye Girl* (1977) earning an Academy Award nomination. Simon adapted many of his plays for the big screen. *The Odd Couple* famously became both an Oscar-nominated film in 1968 and an acclaimed TV series in the early 1970s, and Simon also delivered successful film adaptations of *Plaza Suite* (1971), *The Sunshine Boys* (1975) and *California Suite* (1978), among others. Simon has been nominated for more than a dozen Tony Awards over the course of his career, winning three times and garnering a special Tony in 1975 for his contributions to theater. Additionally, he has been nominated for four Academy Awards, been named a Kennedy Center Honoree and earned honorary degrees from such institutions as Williams College and Hofstra University. In 1983, the Shubert Organization changed the name of the 1920s-era Alvin Theatre to the Neil Simon Theatre, making him the first living playwright to have a Broadway venue named in his honor.

**Marsha Mason (Director)** directed last season's production of *An Act of God*. She has received four Academy Award nominations for her roles in the films *The Goodbye Girl*, *Cinderella Liberty*, *Only When I Laugh* and *Chapter Two*. She has received two Golden Globe Awards for her film roles and received an Emmy Award nomination for her role on *Frasier*. Her television credits include her recurring role on ABC TV's *The Middle*, *The Good Wife*, *Madam Secretary*, and *Grace & Frankie*. While most know her from her roles on film and television, her Broadway credits include *Impressionism* with Jeremy Irons, *Steel Magnolias*, *The Night of the Iguana*, *The Good Doctor*, *King Richard III*, and *Cactus Flower*. Regionally she has starred in *All's Well That Ends Well* at Shakespeare Theatre in Washington, D.C., *A Doll's House* at ACT in San Francisco, *Arms and the Man* at Old Globe Theatre in San Diego, and *Watch on the Rhine* at Arena Stage in Washington, D.C. this past February. She has directed *Chapter Two* and *Steel Magnolias* at the Bucks County Playhouse. Ms. Mason has also taught acting at the HB Studio in New York City and has served as a member of the Tony Awards Nominating Committee.

**David Mason (George Schneider)** makes his ATC debut. Other regional credits include the recent world premiere of Theresa Rebeck's *The Nest* at Denver Center Theatre Company, *String Around My Finger* (Portland Stage), *Trick Or Treat* (Northern Stage), *The Last of the Red Hot Lovers* (Northern Stage), *Norman Conquests* (Northern Stage, Dorset Theatre Festival, Weston Playhouse), *The Velocity of Autumn*, *The Odd Couple* (Cape Playhouse), *Last Gas*, *Almost, Maine*, *The Resurrection of Son House* (Geva Theatre Center), *Love/Sick*, *Trouble is My Business*, *Last Gas* (all world premieres at Portland Stage), the American premiere of a new adaptation of Tennessee Williams' *Period of Adjustment* at TheatreSquared in Arkansas, and numerous productions at Syracuse Stage, New Century Theatre, the Public Theater, Majestic eater, Shadowland Theatre, Foothills Theatre, Opera House Arts, Judson Theatre Company. NYC credits include: Ensemble Studio Theatre, Civilian Studios, Primary Stages, The Japan Society, Present Company Theatorium, NativeAliens, Impact Theatre Festival, Red Fern Theatre,

Circle East, Chip Deffaa Festival. TV: *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* (Amazon), *The Leftovers* (HBO), *House of Cards* (Netflix), *Law & Order SVU* and *All My Children*.

**Ben Huber (Leo Schneider)** is making his ATC debut. Off Broadway: *Midsummer Night's Dream* (New York Shakespeare Festival/Public Theater), *Perfect Harmony* (Clurman Theater), *Sextet* (New York Theater Workshop). Regional: *The Legend of Georgia McBride* (Denver Center eater), Zoe Kazan's *Absalom* (Actor's eater of Louisville/Humana Festival), *Between Us Chickens* (Southcoast Rep), *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Baltimore Centerstage), *Eurydice* (The Wilma, Philadelphia), *Or*, (The Magic eater, SF), *Glass Menagerie* (Seattle Rep), *Peer Gynt* (San Francisco Symphony, w/Michael Tilson Thomas). Film/TV: *Honeymoon* (w/ Rose Leslie), *Lipstick Jungle* (NBC). Training: NYU/ Tisch Graduate Acting Program (MFA).

**Blair Baker (Jennie Malone)** makes her ATC debut! Favorite credits include: *The Humans* (Broadway, Roundabout Theatre Company), *Oleanna* (Broadway, Mark Taper Forum), title role in *Hamlet* (SheNYC 2017), *The Erlkings* (Off-Broadway, Beckett Theater), *The Footage* (The Flea eater), *The Hour of All Things* (Philadelphia Women's Theater Festival), and *Bus Stop* (Kansas City Rep). Blair is the Co-Artistic Director of Missing Bolts Productions ([www.missingbolts.com](http://www.missingbolts.com)). Training includes: Atlantic Theater Acting Conservatory and The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art.

**Diana Pappas (Faye Medwick)** was last on stage in Arizona when she did the Broadway National Tour of *The Full Monty*, directed by Jack O'Brien and Jerry Mitchell. Other credits include Sister Robert Anne in *Nunsense 2*, Marian in *Swingtime Canteen*, Woman #2 in *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change*, Liz Imbrie in *High Society*, and in one of her favorite roles, Patsy Cline in *Always, Patsy Cline*. She also did her own one-woman show called *Dance Like No One Is Watching*. TV Credits include *Ugly Betty* and *Ghost Stories*. Diana has also done improv, sketch and stand-up comedy in NYC. She has a BS in Criminal Justice; her latest endeavor is owner and CEO of a pie company out of New York, appropriately called is Pie Is Nuts!

## CREATIVE TEAM

**Scenic Design:** Lauren Halpern

**Costume Design:** Kish Finnegan

**Lighting Design:** Don Darnutzer

**Sound Design:** David Lee Cuthbert

**Casting:** Geoff Josselson, CSA

**Stage Manager:** Glenn Bruner

## Ticket Info:

Tickets for *Chapter Two* start at \$25 and are subject to change depending on time, date and section, and are available at [www.arizonatheatre.org](http://www.arizonatheatre.org) or by calling the box office at (520) 622-2823 in Tucson or (602) 256-6995 in Phoenix. Discounts are available for seniors and active military. A \$10 student ticket pricing is now available for all performances. Half-price rush tickets are available for balcony seating for all performances one hour prior to curtain at the ATC box office (subject to availability). **Pay What You Can** performance tickets are available for a suggested \$10 donation in Tucson on Tuesday, Sept. 12 at 7:30 p.m. and in Phoenix on Sunday, Oct. 8 at 7 p.m. (Tickets must be purchased at the Herberger Theater Center starting one hour prior to curtain. Tickets are first-come, first served. *Cash only*. Two tickets maximum per person.) For discounts for groups of 10 or more, call (602) 256-6995.

**Arizona Theatre Company offers accessibility services for patrons with disabilities for select performances. American Sign Language Interpretation** is presented by professional, theatrically trained ASL-interpreters for people who have deafness or hearing impairment. An ASL-interpreted performance is offered on Thursday, Sept. 28 at 7:30 p.m. in Tucson and Saturday, Oct. 21 at 4 p.m. in Phoenix on an LED screen as the play progresses. An open captioned performance is offered on Thursday, Sept. 28 at 2 p.m. in Tucson and Sunday, Oct.

15 at 7 p.m. in Phoenix. For open-captioned or ASL-interpreted performances, patrons should request seats best suited to ASL interpretation or captioning when purchasing tickets. Large print and Braille playbills and infrared listening amplification devices are also available at every ATC performance with reservation. TTY access for the box office is available in Phoenix at (602) 256-6995 or via Arizona Relay at (800) 367-8939 (TTY/ASCII).

Ticket prices currently start at \$28 and are available in-person at the Herberger Theater Center at (602) 256-6995 or online at [www.arizonatheatre.org](http://www.arizonatheatre.org).

## **FACT SHEET**

### ***Chapter Two***

- Written by Neil Simon
- Directed by Marsha Mason

## **VENUES**

- Temple of Music & Art, 333 S. Scott Ave., Tucson
- Herberger Theater Center, 222 E. Monroe, Phoenix

**Previews Begin:** Saturday, Sept. 9 at 8 p.m. in Tucson; Thursday, Oct. 5 at 7:30 p.m. in Phoenix.

**Opening Nights:** Friday, Sept. 15 at 7:30 p.m. in Tucson; Saturday, Oct. 7 at 8 p.m. in Phoenix

**Closing Performances:** Saturday, Sept. 30 at 8 p.m. in Tucson; Sunday, Oct. 22 at 1 p.m. in Phoenix.

## **Contact:**

Steve Carr, The Kur Carr Group, Inc., (602) 317-3040

## **About Arizona Theatre Company:**

Arizona Theatre Company (ATC) is the preeminent fully professional theatre in the state of Arizona committed to inspiring, engaging, and entertaining - one moment, one production, and one audience at a time. Boasting the largest seasonal subscriber base in the performing arts in Arizona, ATC is the only resident company in the U.S. that is fully based in two cities providing its wide array of programming and community outreach across the region. Now in its 51<sup>st</sup> season, more than 130,000 people a year attend our performances at the historic Temple of Music and Art in Tucson, and the elegant Herberger Theater Center in downtown Phoenix. Each season of home-grown productions reflects the rich variety of world drama—from classics to contemporary plays, from musicals to new works—along with a wide array of community outreach programs, educational opportunities, access initiatives and new play programs. Designated The State Theatre of Arizona, ATC is led by Artistic Director David Ivers, Managing Director Billy Russo and a dedicated Board of Trustees.