



# BILOXI★BLUES

By Neil Simon  
Directed by Tim Ocel

September 2 - October 5, 2003

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Center

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Theatre  
Center

*Acting Artistic Directors\**  
**MARGE BETLEY**  
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*Managing Director*  
**JOHN QUINLIVAN**

*Executive Director*  
**NAN HILDEBRANDT**

present

# BILOXI BLUES

*Written by*  
**NEIL SIMON**

*Directed by*  
**TIM OCEL**

*Scenic Design*  
**GARY JACOBS**

*Costume Design*  
**B. MODERN**

*Lighting Design*  
**KENDALL SMITH**

*Sound Design*  
**ANDREW HOPSON, Ph.D.**

*Assistant Director*  
**EVAN CUMMINGS**

*Stage Manager*  
**KIRSTEN BRANNEN**

*Assistant Stage Manager*  
**JOEL MARKUS**

*Apprentice Stage Manager*  
**MARK CASEY**

*Production Manager*  
**MARY KAY STONE**

*Costing*  
**ELISSA MYERS**  
& **PAUL FOUQUET, CSA**

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*Co-Produced by*  
**Flaum Management Company, Inc.**  
**Jaekle, Fleishman & Mugel, LLP**

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\*Mark Cuddy is on sabbatical during the 2003-2004 Season.

## CAST

(in order of appearance)

Roy Selridge .....	Michael Hogan
Joseph Wykowski .....	Coleman Zeigen
Don Carney .....	Sam Misner
Eugene Morris Jerome .....	Dennis Staroselsky
Arnold Epstein .....	Fred Berman
Sgt. Merwin J. Toomey .....	Lou Sumrall
James Hennesey .....	Jim Butz
Rowena .....	Helen Mutch
Daisy Hannigan .....	Ivy Vahanian

## Setting

The action takes place in Biloxi and Gulfport, Mississippi in 1943.

*There will be one 20-minute intermission.*

Choreography by Meggins Kelly

Special thanks to Murella H. Powell, Local History & Genealogy Librarian of the Biloxi Public Library who supplied us with so much valuable information about Biloxi, Mississippi and Keesler Air Force Base.

All actors and stage managers are members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.



The Director is a member of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, Inc. an independent national labor union.



The Scenic, Costume, Lighting and Sound Designers in LORT Theatres are represented by United Scenic Artists Local USA-829, IATSE



Special thanks to Geva Theatre Center's official airline, American Airlines "Coach Has More Class"

Please note that the taking of photographs or use of recording devices during the performance is not permitted. Cell phones and all other electronic devices are strictly prohibited in the theatre.

State of the Arts



NYSCA

Geva Theatre Center is a not-for-profit cultural organization supported in part with public funds from the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council on the Arts, a state agency. Geva is also supported by public funds from Monroe County and the City of Rochester. Geva Theatre Center and this event are also made possible with private funds from The Shubert Foundation, Inc.



This theatre operates under agreements between the League of Resident Theatres (LORT), a consortium of regional theatres throughout the nation; Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States; and the Society of Stage Directors & Choreographers, Inc., an independent national labor union.

Geva Theatre Center is a constituent of Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national service organization for non-profit, professional theatres.

Funding for sign language interpreted events is provided, in part, by a grant from Theatre Development Fund's TAP Plus program in cooperation with the New York State Council on the Arts.

## BEHIND THE LINES OF *BILOXI BLUES*

*Biloxi Blues* is the second installment in playwright Neil Simon's semi-autobiographical trilogy which includes *Brighton Beach Memoirs* (directed on Geva's Mainstage last winter by Tim Ocel) and *Broadway Bound*. As in the other two plays, Simon mixes fact and fiction in this story, which takes place in Biloxi and Gulfport, Mississippi during World War II. Biloxi is the home of Keesler Air Force Base, where more than 336,000 recruits went through basic training between September 1941 and June 1946. (The photos on these pages are period postcards from Keesler A.F.B.) There were military bases of all types throughout the south and many young soldiers were trained there, in part to acclimate them to the hot and humid conditions they could expect to encounter if shipped out to the South Pacific. These military bases were essentially cities within cities – self-contained towns with their own resources and rules of conduct.



### Soldiers' Tales

The following are taken from memoirs of a variety of soldiers from the 1940s and early 1950s, relaying their recollections of the joys and woes of basic training, leaving home and military life. Though popular culture – especially Hollywood movies – focuses on specific events of singular intensity and heroics of the soldier at war, many veterans' memoirs are filled with descriptions of physical and mental exhaustion, homesickness, fear and the tedium of unbroken routine.

*"I was 17 years old in May 1943 and WWII was in full swing. So soon after my birthday . . . I enlisted in the Navy. I started the physical but was underweight. They told me to get some bananas and eat as many as I could and drink all the water I could hold, and then come back. I did this and returned, weighing in at 115 1/2 pounds. I was 5'6". I passed, 1/2 pound over."*

*"The training day was 5 am to 10 pm, and could be longer if you got 'kitchen police' or furnace detail. Since the training was arduous, most of us were sleep-deprived for the entire eight weeks (of basic training)... Sadly, I finished basic training in worse condition than I began it, what with general exhaustion and respiratory ailments."*

*"They had a guard over the garbage can where you dumped your tray, and several times I had to go back and sit down and eat what I had anyway."*

*"The second purpose of basic training was of course to turn civilians into useful soldiers, which is to say: automatons. We did everything in squad and platoon formation, got shouted at a lot, were very respectful. . . and generally worked ourselves to exhaustion. The intent was to stop us from thinking as individuals and to encourage us to think as members of a combat unit."*

*"During my two week leave at home I was treated royally, as most guys were at the time who were going to an unknown destination and fate."*

*"At some stations and stops, women and girls would come out to the train and hand cakes up to us. Sugar, flour and most of the other ingredients were rationed at the time, but they were all trying to do something for the men who were going off to fight the enemy."*

*"In our barracks, I would hear guys who would cry at night. I sure felt like it, too. One who cried a lot was a kid from St. Louis. He was killed in a kamikaze attack on the Franklin at Okinawa. I felt homesick many times."*

*"I don't believe I've ever had such a lonely feeling as I did in that barracks. It was just the atmosphere, I guess, when Taps were played before lights out."*



SQUADRON MAIL CALL--KEESLER FIELD, MISS.  
PHOTO BY ARMY AIR FORCES (TECHNICAL TRAINING COMMAND) SERP 'EM FLYING

## The Music of World War II

The young soldier-in-training didn't have a lot of spare time on his hands, nor much in the way of money or transportation resources, so entertainment was found close at hand. A military guide provided to new arrivals at Keesler A.F.B. in Biloxi, Mississippi in 1942 listed a number of local spots where young men could take part in weekly dances, see a movie or go swimming. Most of the recruits' time, however, was spent on the base where more modest entertainments were the rule of order. Music was one of these, and provided an important link between the base and the outside world.



The following are excerpts from Robert Bamberger's liner notes for the Smithsonian recording *We'll Meet Again: Love Songs of World War II*.

*The most accessible time capsule of World War II is its popular culture. The music and motion pictures of the time were all but clothed in uniform and became a medium for the expression of public will, of patriotism and sentimentality, papering over the cracks and fissures that ran through society and the homefront.*



*The local military members were welcome to use the Community House in their off hours. It offered tennis courts and a recreation room, and was across the highway from the U.S.O. Building and from the Community Park & Pier.*



*Popular culture is partly understood to be a mirror of the time that produces it, but it may actually fog the view. . . . Because of their availability, the music and movies of the period have been vested with more verity than is really there. (The pop culture) was largely a distillation of some of the social values of the day, deemed the least threatening, or those to be encouraged during wartime. World War II may be more widely understood from Dooley Wilson singing "As Time Goes By" in Rick's Café, or the Andrews Sisters and "Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree" than it is known from Lend Lease, the Battle of Midway, or the Potsdam Conference.*

*In 1942 the Music Committee of the Office of War Information (OWI) sniped at the sentimental songs that were becoming the wartime stock-in-trade, and wistfully recalled that the songs of World War I had considerable more dash. What the OWI wanted were marches and patriotic songs. . . . That World War II brought forth so many love songs in contrast to World War I was not just a function of altered musical styles or the resonance these songs held for people. It also owed to the considerably longer duration and larger scale of the American mobilization in the second war. Additionally, the advent of radio had made it possible to introduce and help promote a song into a hit in a matter of days.*

*There may be nostalgia in the love songs of World War II, even for those who carry some reservoir of the war's tragedy. These songs motivated some in the killing and others in the waiting, and were a buffer for all against a world that had become badly disordered.*

- Robert Bamberger

## **SONGS FROM THE WORLD WAR II HIT PARADE**

**Ac-cent-tchu-ate The Positive** by Johnny Mercer and Harold Arlen

**Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy** by Don Raye and Hughie Prince

**Don't Sit Under The Apple Tree (With Anyone Else But Me)**

by Lew Brown, Sam. H. Stept and Charlie Tobias

**White Christmas** by Irving Berlin

**Lili Marlene** by Norbert Schultze and Tormmie Connor

**Ma, I Miss Your Apple Pie** by Carmen Lombardo and John Jacob Loeb

**(There'll Be Bluebirds Over) The White Cliffs Of Dover**

by Walter Kent and Nat Burton

**I Don't Want to Walk Without You** by Jule Styne and Frank Loesser

**The Last Time I Saw Paris** by Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein

**A Boy in Khaki - A Girl in Lace** by Allie Wrubel and Charles Newman

**Don't Get Around Much Anymore** by Duke Ellington and Bob Russell



# The Artistic Company

**FRED BERMAN** (*Arnold Epstein*) is pleased to be making his Geva debut and even



more pleased to be going back to Biloxi after playing the role of Eugene several years back at The Harbor Theatre in Massachusetts. NYC favorites include *The Vocal Lords* (World Premiere, Theatre at

St. Clements), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night* (NY Classical Theatre) and *Hollywood Nurses* (Chashama Theatre). Other faves: *The Tin Pan Alley Rag* (Cleveland Playhouse); *The Buddy Holly Story* (National Tour and Ordway Music Theatre); and *The Mystery of Irma Vep* (New Repertory Theatre). Film and television include: *Directing Eddie*; *Four Letter Words*; *Him!*; *Goin' Down*; "Law & Order: C.I." and "VH-1 Scavengers." Mr. Berman is also a sweaty rock 'n' roll drummer named "Boom Boom" Sanchez with the band Lisa Jackson & Girl Friday... and he likes anyone who likes Elvis Costello.

**JIM BUTZ** (*James Hennessey*) is thrilled to be returning to Geva Theatre Center for a



third time, after appearing in the 2000 and 2001 productions of *A Christmas Carol*. Favorite credits include the Georgia Shakespeare Festival's production of *Amadeus* (Mozart); and *The Cherry Orchard* (Trofimov), *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (Azdak) and *Richard II* (Aumerle), all directed by Tim Ocel. He would like to

extend his sincere thanks to all Geva patrons for supporting the theatre and giving him this opportunity to perform; it is an honor and a privilege.

**MICHAEL HOGAN** (*Roy Selridge*), who is making his Geva Theatre Center debut,



can be seen regularly at *The Shark Show* at the P.I.T. Theatre in New York City. Other New York credits include *Last Day* (Audux Theatre Co.), *Welcome Home Rock Rogers* and *Shane Dorsett is a Marmutt*

(Fringe Festival), *Henry V* (Mazer Theatre) and *We Rule The Planet* (Slovin and Allen). Regional theatre credits include *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Shakespeare Festival, St. Louis), *The Mousetrap* (Shawnee, PA) and the American premiere of *The Black Spider* (Opera Theatre of St. Louis). Film and television credits include *Coffee & Cigarettes* (Dir. J. Jarmusch), *Gasline* (Dir. David Silver, Sundance Award, Short Subject), "The Sopranos" ("He Is Risen") and "Law & Order: C.I." ("Undaunted Mettle") which airs this fall. He is a graduate of NYU's Tisch School of Arts. Mr. Hogan dedicates this performance to 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Jason Brauer, USMC and Dr. Patrick Hogan, two men who served their country proudly.

**SAM MISNER** (*Don Carney*) was last seen at Geva Theatre Center in *And Then They*



*Came For Me* (Young Ed, Pappy) in the 2002 season. Also at Geva he has performed in productions of *House and Garden* (Jake Mace), *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Outlaw) and *A Christmas Carol*

(Ensemble). Other regional theatre credits include *You Can't Take It With You* (Tony Kirby) and *The Glass Menagerie* (Tom) at the Foothill Theatre Company in Nevada City,



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