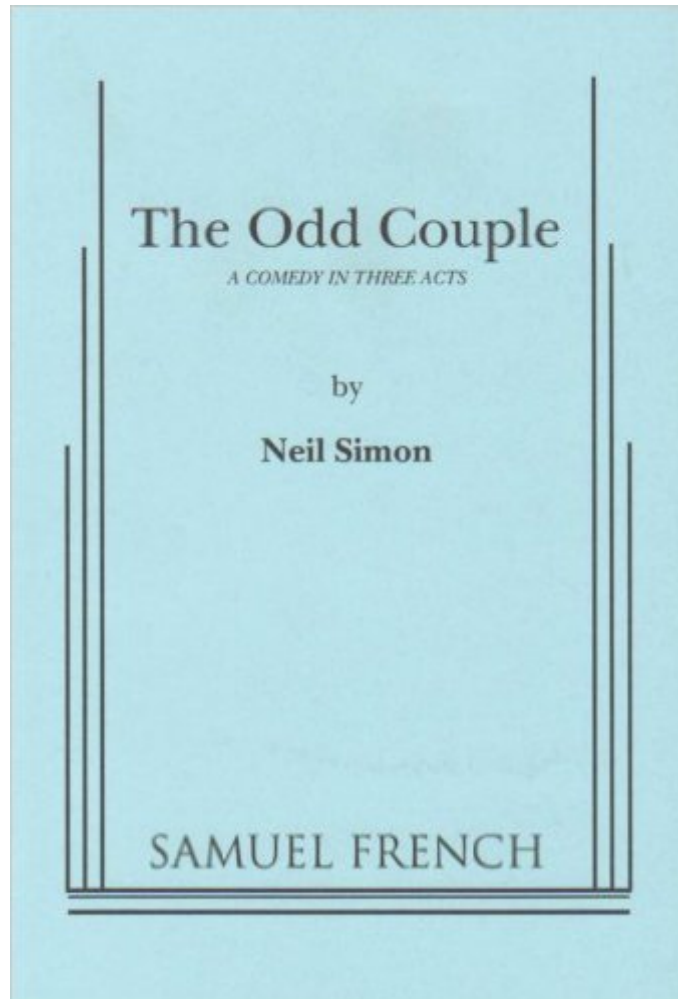


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# The Odd Couple: A Comedy In Three Acts



## Synopsis

Comedy / 6m, 2f / Int. This classic comedy opens as a group of the guys assembled for cards in the apartment of divorced Oscar Madison. And if the mess is any indication, it's no wonder that his wife left him. Late to arrive is Felix Unger who has just been separated from his wife. Fastidious, depressed and none too tense, Felix seems suicidal, but as the action unfolds Oscar becomes the one with murder on his mind when the clean-freak and the slob ultimately decide to room together with hilarious results as *The Odd Couple* is born. "His skill is not only great but constantly growing...There is scarcely a moment that is not hilarious." - *The New York Times* "Fresh, richly hilarious and remarkably original. Wildly, irresistibly, incredibly and continuously funny." - *New York Daily News*

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## Customer Reviews

Being a huge fan of "The Odd Couple" television series, I finally decided to read the play on which the TV show is based. *THE ODD COUPLE*, which premiered in 1965, was Neil Simon's first big success. His writing is consistently amusing and often flat-out hilarious; I laughed especially hard during the first scene, in which Oscar Madison and his poker-playing friends are trying to prevent Felix Unger, just thrown out of his home by his wife, from committing suicide! This "episode" was, of course, the starting point for the TV series, but unlike the show, the play has a single plot: Felix and Oscar get together, quarrel, date the Pigeon sisters, quarrel again, and ultimately "break up." Though the play is a comedy, there are interesting parallels to *A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE* in

Oscar's poker games, particularly the one in the last scene during which Felix leaves. THE ODD COUPLE is an excellent example of Simon's wit. Next, I would love to see it onstage!

Simon released his 20 year later version of the 1965 play and 1968 movie in book form only (to my knowledge) - and after the first spray of Lysol we get excited about where to see this "live", is there a DVD?Upside, the Funniest Trivial Pursuit game imaginable (the female "poker game"); early scenes really gut-bustin' as "Unger" (Florence) arrives at Olive's New York pad (we assume not far from the Central Park location of the guy's version) - and establishes material order while destroying everything non-material - namely, the psychological state of her best friends, especially the "female version" of "Murray the Cop", who, with whistle in hand, loses it before everyone else!Frankly, it's tough to separate Art Carney, Walter Matthau, Jack Klugman, Tony Randall, etc., from the proceedings, but the play does stand alone, ultimately.Downsides: I think Olive ("Oscar") needs some more "believability"..I don't get that she's all that current-events or sports-minded. And unlike her male counterpart from 1965, she is \*aware\* that she is a slob (of sorts).Downside, continued: a long, draggy scene with the "Male" version of "The Pidgeon Sisters" - two Brothers from Spain, upstairs neighbors from the "old world", contrasting with the "new world" of independent American women. Stereotypical drivel, which would have been rejected by Burns and Allen in 1939, from page 60 to page 70. Neil...why?And there's more: "Japanese" and "African" references to make \*Archie Bunker\* wince.Overall, for deep or casual fans of Neil Simon, this is good, well-intentioned fun. May even wanna try it on for size at a theatre group.

When you pair David Paymer and Nathan Lane as Felix and Oscar in the Odd Couple, you are in for a comic tour de force that over stretches its material. With a supporting cast which includes Dan Castellaneta and Yeardley Smith (both from The Simpsons) and Linda Purl, the cast is almost perfect. This production is a little too visual in a few of its jokes. However, on the whole, it unscrupulously grabs the audio listener by his ears and shakes him with laughter.

The classic male version of the Odd Couple transferred to the female gender does work but does require an adaptation of both mechanics and mental processes. The basic plot from the male version of two well-meaning friends, each with marriage breakups, agreeing to share an apartment with the subsequent discovery of incompatible living routines remains intact as does the theme of taking honest responsibility for one's calculated offensive actions without a blame being shifted for self-justification purposes. Notable changes are the opening scene the poker game with beer

being changed to trivial pursuit and more allusions to the subject of sex. However, there is the same amicable resolution of the progressively intolerable living situation at the end. In comparison of the two versions, an interesting difference in the male vs. female thought process can be detected, i.e. the male propensity to solve a problem a problem quickly vs. the female propensity to first decide how they feel about a problem before taking any steps toward its solution. On stage, this may make the female version more interesting. I elected for the four-star rating as I thought dialogue a little more pointed at the gender thought process difference would be a good enhance of the script. However, a good director should be able to make up the difference with creative non-verbal communication. This play is a wonderful comedy for small theaters both amateur and professional.

Before the movie, before the television series, before all the spin offs, there was just the play. The story is a classic spin on the buddy plot. Oscar Madison is a successful sports writer who happens to be best friends with Felix Unger, a newswriter for CBS. Each week Oscar has five of his buddies over for a Friday night game of poker. However, on one fateful night Felix fails to appear in time for the game. It turns out Felix has just been thrown out by his wife and has no place to go. Feeling sorry for his old friend, Oscar invites Felix to stay with him and be his roommate. What ensues is a classic Neil Simon look at friendship that will endure for ages.

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