

# Pacifica Tribune



photo by Cat Imperato

Mr. Baker (Louis Schilling) lets go of an opinion in the company of, l to r: someone his son knows named Connie (Dianna Collett), his son Alan (William Rhea), his youngest son Buddy (Jeremy Judge) and his wife Mrs. Baker (Jackie Blue).

## Sixties family comedy romp plays the Spindrift

By Jean Bartlett

Tribune Writer

"Come Blow Your Horn" is currently playing the mainstage of the Pacifica Spindrift Players. It's got love, angst, a mother who could rip your heart out with guilt with just the way she says hello, situation comedy patter, darn good kissing, a fabulously neurotic family, and the mention of a never-met character named Felix Unger who lives in the same East Side apartment building where all the play's shenanigans take place on a different floor. Of course it was written by Neil Simon who made the writing of Broadway hits and 1960s/1970s television sitcoms, such as "The Odd Couple," starring the famous neat-freak character Felix Unger, seem as easy as ordering a pastrami on rye. But just like the classic deli sandwich, few can dish it out with perfection and Simon was a master wordsmith who could serve up five-star prime-time domestic comedy each and every time.

Semi-autobiographical, "Come Blow Your Horn" is Simon's first Broadway play. It premiered in 1961 and ran 677 performances. In it we meet Simon's alter ego Buddy Baker. Buddy turns 21 the day before play start and he just has no interest in pursuing his father's surprisingly lucrative career in the wax-fruit business. (These were different times when people liked to highlight their home décor with forever-lasting fruit.) Buddy wants something more real, a career as a writer, and he is young enough not to wonder if wax-fruit might really be ripe with more potential. Geeky, shy and used-to-being obedient, the virginal Buddy has just worked up the nerve to steal silently away from his hovering, verklempt parents. He leaves his parents a note explaining his position on fake fruit and the address of where he'll be staying.

Buddy's big brother, Alan Baker, is in his early 30s. He is Buddy's mentor. He lives the life of a swinging bachelor when he is not showing up to work at his family's artificial fruit factory. His parents, married at an early age with work ethics that date back to before time began, are horrified their eldest is not a husband. Alan welcomes his unexpected little brother into his apartment and into his wild and crazy life, where his version of suave definitely walks a polyester tightrope. Almost immediately after Buddy's arrival, Alan introduces his kid brother to a young woman who knows her way around his apartment. You can almost hear the fireworks – though not from Buddy, who certainly is happy to meet giddy head-on. No. Those bursting, bottle-rocket kabooms are coming from the Ma and Pa side of the Baker family, and you can bet they won't keep them to themselves.

Bay Area acclaimed theater educator and director Barbara Williams directs this brightly-paced, expletive-free production – with its not so hidden deep homage to communication, forgiveness and the importance of love – across the stage of the Spindrift with the precision of 10-pin magic.



photo by Cat Imperato

**Out-in-the-world newbie Buddy Baker (Jeremy Judge) lives the definition of "gobsmacked" following his introduction to Peggy Evans (Cheril Ellingson).**

William Rhea plays big brother Alan Baker with leading man finesse and makes his throwback 1950s/1960s playboy character never so farcical that his audience doesn't see there's a good man underneath the cheeseball showmanship. Dianna Collett plays Connie Dayton, the more than just girl-next-door who gets who Alan Baker really is. Collett is smart, perfectly cast and absolutely key in reminding that underneath the playwright's talent for funny, there is plenty of good sense. In addition, believable sparks fly between Collet's Connie and Rhea's Alan.

Cheril Ellingson, as the guileless, bird-brained sexpot Peggy Evans, is brava ditzzy with superb comic timing. Jeremy Judge, as the coming-of-age Buddy Baker, is sweet, understated and extremely likable. Jackie Blue, as the emotional, ever-so-manipulative Mrs. Baker, is a walking, talking, gifted dynamo. As Mr. Baker, Louis Schilling is a sensational, short-tempered windbag.



photo by Cat Imperato

**Is it the path to love or the search for the exit? Connie (Dianna Collett) and Alan (William Rhea) ponder the big picture in Neil Simon's "Come Blow Your Horn."**

The play runs long; it's three acts. But what's not to like about laughing a little longer?

"Come Blow Your Horn" plays weekends at PSP Theater, 1050 Crespi Drive, Pacifica, through June 9. Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m. Sunday at 2 p.m. Box Office: 650-359-8002 or online at [www.pacificaspindriftplayers.org](http://www.pacificaspindriftplayers.org). Tickets: \$25/adults, \$20 seniors and students.

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