

AUDITION PACKET

for

Neil Simon's

BRIGHTON BEACH

MEMOIRS

November 6-8 in the Performing Arts Center

Directed by Peter Diamond and Elena Rodriguez

General Interest Meeting:

Thursday, September 4 at 3:30 PM
in the Performing Arts Center

Auditions:

Monday, September 8 from 3:30-6:30 PM
Tuesday, September 9 from 3:00-6:30 PM
in Room 171

Callbacks:

Thursday, September 11 from 3:30-6:30 PM
in the Little Theatre

Questions? Email us at brightonbeachdirectors@gmail.com

INFORMATION

Please sign up for an audition slot on the *Brighton Beach Memoirs* callboard near room 171 and pick up a script. You are required to read *Brighton Beach Memoirs* prior to your audition.

Thank you for your interest in auditioning for *Brighton Beach Memoirs* by Neil Simon, the inaugural production of Theatre Ink's 2014-2015 season.

Please fill out/sign the appropriate pages at the end of this packet and bring them to your audition. You will hand them in to a stage manager before auditioning.

In addition to reading the play, prepare for your audition by both of the audition monologues assigned to your gender in this packet (i.e. men will memorize Eugene and Jack's monologues; women will memorize Nora and Kate's monologues).

What are we looking for?

- Actors with strong fundamentals (vocal energy, movement with purpose, etc.), honesty, and intention. Honesty means that you should be a believable character. We should see the truth in the things that you do. Intention means that you should commit to your choices.
- Choices that are driven by the text. Be thoughtful about your character's intentions, mannerisms, etc. based on your interpretation of the play from reading it.
- If you would like help on your audition, please email Mr. Brown at adam_brown@newton.k12.ma.us.

NOTE: We strongly encourage you to try a New York accent for your audition; however, the quality of your accent work prior to your audition will not determine whether or not you are cast, and all actors who are cast will work with an accent coach in rehearsals.

SYNOPSIS

Act I

When the play opens, our narrator and protagonist Eugene Morris Jerome, 15, is outside during a September evening in 1937, throwing a baseball against his working class home in Brighton Beach, New York. He explains that he would like to grow up to be either an author or a baseball player, but he questions whether his Jewish name will prevent him from reaching the level of prestige of baseball players with Italian names. The thump of the ball against the house gives his aunt Blanche Morton a headache, which leads his mother Kate to beckon him inside and send him upstairs.

From his bedroom, Eugene narrates his living arrangement as he writes in his journal. When his uncle died six years earlier, Blanche and her two daughters (Laurie, 13, and Nora, 16) moved in with Kate, her husband Jack, and their two sons, Eugene and his 18-year-old brother Stanley. They are supported by Jack, who works two jobs despite his heart disease. Suddenly, Kate calls down Eugene to set the table. Eugene complains to the audience that he has to do all the house chores, because his 13-year-old cousin Laurie has a “heart flutter.”

While Eugene sets the table, Nora arrives home and announces to the family that a director has offered her the chance to dance in a Broadway show, given her mother’s approval. Blanche does not want Nora to drop out of school, but Nora argues that this opportunity would make her immediate family financially independent again, rather than dependent on Jack. Blanche says that she will leave the decision to Jack.

When Eugene's mother sends him to buy butter, Nora and Laurie escape to their bedroom, where they mourn their father and decide that they will make no purchases until they save enough money to buy Blanche a house of her own.

Eugene returns from the store and finds Stanley (his 18-year-old brother) waiting for him. Stanley is agitated because he was fired for standing up to an unjust co-worker and must apologize to his boss in order to be rehired. He questions whether his pride or ability to support his family is more important and decides that he will ask his father Jack when he gets home.

Jack arrives home, exhausted and carrying boxes of party favors. The business that he worked for, selling party favors to hotels and clubs, has closed, causing him to worry about supporting everyone in his house.

Dinner that evening is awkward. Laurie annoys Nora by mentioning the audition opportunity. Jack, who does not yet know about Stanley's unemployment, tells Stanley to ask his boss for a raise. After dinner, Nora convinces Blanche to let her discuss the audition with Jack, who takes her on a walk to the beach.

While Nora is out, Eugene tells Stanley about an erotic dream he had and asks him for advice on adolescence and girls, notably his cousin Nora. Stanley ignores him, focusing more on his stress over his unemployment.

Meanwhile, Blanche and Kate talk downstairs. Kate tells Blanche to join her at a company party for Jack's work, but Blanche reveals that she has a date with their single neighbor, Frank Murphy.

When Jack and Nora return, Jack and Blanche both tell Nora that they believe she should finish high school rather than accept a gig on Broadway, and

Nora angrily walks upstairs.

Afterward, Kate tries to get Jack to sleep, but Stanley asks to speak with his father. He explains his conflict at work, and although Jack sympathizes, he encourages Stanley to write a letter of apology to his boss to regain his employment, and Stanley ultimately decides to do so. He goes upstairs and tells Eugene that he will describe a time he saw Nora in the shower if Eugene writes the letter for him.

Act II

We resume during an evening the following week, and it is soon revealed that Jack, who is resting, had a heart attack between acts. Blanche prepares for her date with Frank Murphy. Stanley enters furtively and confesses to Eugene that he has lost a week's salary playing poker and is unsure of how to fix his situation.

Jack decides to go downstairs and meet Frank Murphy, but Kate stops him, arguing that he is neglecting his health. Nora mysteriously sneaks out of the house. When Blanche enters, looking like a movie star, Jack sends Eugene and Laurie out of the house. Kate asks Stanley for his week's pay as emergency money, and when Stanley admits to his mother that he lost it playing poker, she remains calm and decides to keep it a secret, considering her husband's stress and condition.

When Kate returns to the kitchen, Blanche tells her that she is worried about Nora, who is missing, but Kate snaps at her, accusing Blanche of caring only about her own problems. Laurie returns home and tells her mother that she ran into Frank Murphy while she was out, who told her that he would have to

cancel his date with Blanche due to a car accident. Now both Kate and Blanche are agitated, and when Kate begins to fire accusations regarding their childhood, Blanche decides that she will move in with a friend, find a job, and buy a new house for herself, Laurie, and Nora to live in.

Stanley then tells Eugene that he plans to join the army to make some money for the family and that he will be missing dinner to take the physical examination. Eugene is shaken by this news but is sworn to secrecy, so he only tells Laurie.

When Nora finally returns home, Blanche tells her about her plan to move out and Nora responds negatively, arguing that she takes care of Laurie more than Blanche takes care of her daughters. Kate hears the argument, comes downstairs, and convinces Blanche to stay at their house, at least until she finds a job.

Stanley arrives home the next day and announces that he has passed the physical, but he is apprehensive about joining the army because he feels that his family needs his assistance at home. He gives his mother some money that he made at a bowling alley and promises to reimburse every dollar he lost playing poker.

He then goes upstairs and, to his brother's delight, gives Eugene a pornographic post card. Downstairs, Jack receives a letter from his cousins who are immigrating from Poland to New York (foreshadowing World War II), and he announces that he must make room for these cousins to move in.

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

Eugene Morris Jerome - Male, 15

“If only I was born Italian. My mother makes spaghetti with ketchup... what chance do I have?”

Eugene is the 15-year-old protagonist and narrator of *Brighton Beach Memoirs*. In many ways, his traits are typical of his age—he complains about his family, he is raging with hormones (particularly shown in his incestuous fixation on his cousin Nora), and he has big dreams of playing baseball professionally. That said, growing up during the Great Depression in a working class Jewish family gives him stresses, and wisdom, beyond that of a normal 15-year-old.

Blanche Morton - Female, late 30s

“I wrapped my life up in Dave so much, I never learned to be their mother.”

Blanche is in her late 30s and has two daughters, Nora and Laurie. Despite being the adult mother of two, she is extremely dependent on her sister Kate’s family, who she has lived with since her husband’s death. Although she loves her children, she fails to be a decisive and consistent parent.

Kate Jerome - Female, 40

“This is a family. The world doesn’t survive without families.”

Kate, who is about 40, is the wife of Jack and the mother of Eugene and Stanley. She is family-oriented and takes care of everybody around her, including her adult sister and her two nieces. She sometimes comes across as irrational and melodramatic, but underneath, she sacrifices much of her own integrity to be a caretaker and a consistent domestic figure.

Laurie Morton - Female, 13

“You don’t get too far talking to Laurie. Sometimes, I think the flutter in her heart is really in her brain.”

Laurie Morton is Blanche’s 13-year-old daughter and Nora’s younger sister. Although her sisterly bond with Nora consists of pushing her buttons and

commiserating over their shared experience of growing up without a father, she is aged, in a way, by a heart condition that her mother and aunt overdramatize that prevents her from handling stress or major physical activity.

Nora Morton - Female, 16

“School? Momma, this is a Broadway show. This is what I want to do with my life. Algebra and English isn’t going to help me on the stage.”

Nora Morton is Blanche’s 16-year-old daughter and Laurie’s older sister. She dreams of dancing on the Broadway stage, despite her mother and uncle’s desire for her to succeed in school. She is the subject of Eugene’s affection, despite being his first cousin. She lives by the philosophy that, at the age of 16, she will do whatever she wants to, regardless of her elders’ wishes.

Stanley Jerome - Male, 18

“Well, I never had an older brother to teach me those things. I had to do it all on my own. You don’t know how lucky you are to be the younger one. You don’t have the responsibilities I do.”

Stanley is the 18-year-old son of Kate and Jack, and the older brother of Eugene. He feels burdened by the responsibility of helping his father to support the family, which often causes him to make irrational financial decisions, like gambling. He looks out for Eugene, but feels misguided, inadequate, and underprivileged.

Jacob “Jack” Jerome - Male, 42

“I never got past the eighth grade, and that’s why I spend half my life on the subway and the other half trying to make a few extra dollars to keep this family from being out on the street.”

Jack is the 42-year-old husband of Kate and the father of Eugene and Stanley. He is stressed and concerned about his health, but he works two jobs to support his family, as he will always support as much extended family as he feels he needs to. Although he is uneducated and working-class, he has a steady skull and a strong moral code.

MALE MONOLOGUES

All men must prepare both Jack and Eugene’s monologues for their auditions.

EUGENE:

You see, her husband, Uncle Dave, died six years ago from . . . *(He looks around.)*... this thing. . . They never say the word. They always whisper it. It was — *(He whispers.)* — cancer! . . . I think they’re afraid if they said it out loud, God would say, "I HEARD THAT! YOU SAID THE DREAD DISEASE! JUST FOR THAT, I SMITE YOU DOWN WITH IT!!" ... There are some things that grown-ups just won’t discuss. For example, my grandfather. He died from — *(He whispers.)* — diphtheria! Anyway, after Uncle Dave died, he left Aunt Blanche with no money. Not even insurance. And she couldn’t support herself because she has—*(He whispers.)* — asthma! So my big-hearted mother insisted we take her and her kids in to live with us. So they broke up our room into two small rooms and me and my brother Stan live on this side, and Laurie and her sister Nora live on the other side. My father thought it would just be temporary but it’s been three and a half years so far and I think because of Aunt Blanche’s situation, my father is developing — *(He whispers.)* — high blood pressure!

JACK:

Listen... I know what it’s like, Nora. Not to be heard. I grew up in a family of four children. My father, before he died, never could remember our names. My oldest brother was “the big one,” I was “the little one,” my brother Sol was “the rotten one,” Eddie was “the skinny one.” But you’re the pretty one... so what’s the problem? I’ve never seen you cry over something that wasn’t important. I know I’m not your father. It’s not my place to make decisions for you. But I can offer advice. Advice is free. And if it doesn’t fit, you can always return it. We can take a walk to the ocean. My father always used to say, “Throw your problems out to sea and the answers will wash back up on the shore.” But they don’t. Not in Brighton Beach. Orange peels and watermelon pits washed up. That’s why it’s good to take someone who knows how to give advice.

FEMALE MONOLOGUES

All women must prepare both Nora and Kate's monologues for their auditions.

NORA:

Oh God, he was so handsome. Always dressed so dapper, his shoes always shined. I always thought he should have been a movie star... like Gary Cooper... only very short. Mostly I remember his pockets. When I was 6 or 7, he always brought home a little surprise, like a Hershey or a top. He told me to go get it in his coat pocket. So I'd run to the closet and put my hand in it and it felt as big as a tent. I wanted to crawl in there and go to sleep. And there were all these terrific things in there, like Juicy Fruit Gum or Spearmint Life Savers and bits of cellophane, and crumpled pieces of tobacco, and movie stubs and nickels and rubber bands and paper clips and his gray suede gloves that he wore in the winter time. Then I found his coat in Mom's closet and I put my hand in the pocket. And everything was gone. It was emptied and dry cleaned and it felt cold... and that's when I knew he was really dead. *(Thinks for a moment.)* Oh God, I wish we had our own place to live in. I hate being a boarder.

KATE:

Sometimes you talk like your life is over. You're still a young woman. You're still beautiful, if you'd ever stop squinting so much. So listen. Jack's company is having their annual affair in New York next Wednesday. At the Commodore Hotel. You should see how some of those women get dressed up. Jack wants you to come with us. You'll meet people. Max Green'll be at our table. He's the one whose wife died of *(whispers)*—tuberculosis... He's their number one salesman. He lives in a hotel on the Grand Concourse. He's a riot. You'll like him. Maybe you'll dance with him. What are you afraid of, Blanche? Dave is dead. You're not. If God wanted the both of you, you'd be laying in the grave next to him.

CONTACT INFO/PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

Please answer the following questions in the space provided and hand these pages to a stage manager before your audition.

Name: _____ Homeroom: _____ Birthdate: _____

Address: _____ Zip Code: _____

Home Phone: () _____ - _____ Cell Phone: () _____ - _____

Email Address: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Email: _____

Parent/Guardian Phone: () _____ - _____

Previous Experience

Please use the space below to list any previous theatre experience, onstage or off.

Feel free to attach a resume.

CONFLICTS

You should be aware that your conflicts will be taken into consideration in casting. That said, it is imperative that you are accurate and honest about your conflicts; we will not hesitate to pull actors from the production if they misrepresent their availability during the rehearsal period. Conflicts that come up as the rehearsal process starts will need to be communicated to the artistic and individual directors as soon as they are known.

Weekly Conflicts

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

One-Time Conflicts

In the space below, please record all specific one-time conflicts (e.g., vacations, doctor's appointments) between September 12 and November 8.

Note: We will try to accommodate conflicts as much as possible.

However, conflicts are not permitted between October 24th and November 8th.

Would you be able to attend night rehearsals (6-9 p.m.)? (Check "Yes" or "No") Yes ___ No ___

Would you be able to attend weekend rehearsals? (Check "Yes" or "No") Yes ___ No ___

QUESTIONS

1. Why do you want to be a part of *Brighton Beach Memoirs*? What skills or attributes of yours could strengthen the process, and what do you hope to learn from participating?

2. Would you be willing to accept all roles? (Check “Yes” or “No”) Yes ___ No ___

3. If you answered “No” to the question above, which role(s) are you willing to accept?

4. If not cast, would you like to be contacted about becoming involved with *Brighton Beach Memoirs* in another capacity? (Check “Yes” or “No”) Yes ___ No ___

5. If you answered “Yes” to the above question, in which capacity or capacities might you be interested in becoming involved (e.g., Stage crew, projections, costumes, props, hair and make-up, marketing, student producing)?

6. Do you have any special skills or talents? If so, what are they (e.g., singing, dancing, gymnastics, composing, accent work, unicycle riding)?

7. Would you be willing to... (Circle “Yes” or “No” for each option)
Cut your hair? Yes No
Dye your hair? Yes No
Kiss another actor onstage? Yes No

Theatre Ink Casting Policy

Both student and staff directors always strive to cast fairly, with the guiding objective of assembling the overall cast that will best serve the directorial vision for the show. This requires many hours of careful analysis by the Directors and Mr. Brown, who take their responsibility in this area very seriously. Mr. Brown watches every audition and participates as a mediator and guide through every casting process.

Theatre Ink casting decisions are not based on seniority (grade level in school), or years of participation in the program. This is a firm programmatic value arrived at after years of assembling casts, and seeing the exciting results that come from having students collaborate across the grade spectrum from freshman to senior, each cast solely on his or her fit for a given role as revealed through a rigorous and thoughtful audition process. Auditioning for a show can be competitive and sometimes daunting. In keeping with the program's emphasis on theatre as a vehicle for learning and individual development, Mr. Brown is available to coach and support students as they seek to improve their speaking, presentation, and performance skills through the audition process.

DIVERSITY: Theatre Ink values and celebrates diversity of all kinds. Encouraging diversity of participation is an overall goal of the program. Theatre Ink actively encourages all students to participate in productions as members of cast or crew. All students who audition are considered equally in an inclusive environment and in accordance with Theatre Ink casting principles. Theatre Ink hopes to be a reflection not only of the varied backgrounds and experiences of Newton North's staff and students but also of diverse world cultures, life experiences, and theatrical traditions. By carefully selecting a range of different shows each year we strive to tell theatrical stories that represent the richness of our world while offering a wide range of opportunities for all students.

ON CASTING: Casting is a very complex process. In the end, the Directors must choose the students who best fit the roles in many dimensions, both by the individual skills they present in audition, but also in the dynamics that develop between actors who will be creating the driving energy of the show in scenes together. Such dynamics are a large part of what is explored in the "Callback" round of auditions. For students, auditioning is an exciting, yet difficult, process that can bring about greater success, whether cast in the production or not. The more a student auditions, the better they will become, especially if they seek and receive feedback and guidance. The feeling of "rejection" over not getting cast seems disappointing at first, but we strongly urge you to encourage your child to get right back to work as soon as possible so they can sharpen their skills for a future audition. In theatre, as in life, all of us experience both disappointment and success. Our goal is to teach our students how to deal with both, so when they leave Newton North High School they will be well prepared to navigate their way toward success in a complex world.

TO PARENTS: Due to the large audition pool Theatre Ink shows typically experience, your child's audition does not guarantee him or her a role in the show. If your child is not cast (and also if he or she is cast), we strongly suggest that (s)he meet with the Directors and/or Mr. Brown to obtain valuable feedback while it is freshly in mind, in order to further develop skills for future auditions. While disappointment for some is an inevitable part of the experience in any competitive tryout situation, be it an academic, athletic or artistic pursuit, one of the hallmarks of Theatre Ink is that **there are many other ways to get involved** working on the production if you are not cast in an on-stage role. These include technical crew (set design and construction, lights, sound) working with Mr. Barrington-Haber, Theatre Ink's Technical Director; or on the many other teams, such as props, costumes, publicity and makeup. There are also opportunities to be a student producer or stage manager, which you can discuss with Mr. Brown or the Directors. If slots of interest are not available in the current show, please consider looking into such opportunities in an upcoming show. The wide range of types of shows, and the large number (11-12 per year) is designed to make as many theatre arts opportunities available to as many students as is feasible within the resources provided by the Newton Public Schools. We also strongly encourage each student to take a Theatre Arts and Speech class -- offered as an elective to all grade levels-- and go to Improv Club during X-blocks. These theatre education experiences will further enhance your child's skills in these areas and give them more confidence for the audition process. The wonderful spirit of camaraderie and collaboration that develops during shows is equally shared by on- and offstage participants. Talking to students who have worked in various roles and jobs will confirm this for your student. Keep an open mind, and seek out a new experience!

GET INVOLVED! If you and/or your child are/is not satisfied with the casting decision and wish to inquire as to the reasons for it, the first step is for the student to meet with the show's Directors. If further discussion is desired, the student should then meet with Mr. Brown. If, after those meetings, you and/or your child do not feel you received valuable feedback or information you are satisfied with, you are then encouraged to make a joint parent/student appointment with Mr. Brown. Please be assured that a student's future participation in Theatre Ink will not be jeopardized in any way by seeking to have concerns addressed according to this established process.

Student signature _____ **Date** _____
Parent signature _____ **Date** _____

Theatre Ink Production Agreement

(Please read and fill out the following Theatre Ink Agreement)

I agree to the following terms in this agreement and promise to abide by the conditions and expectations set forth by my director, choreographers, music director, technical director, producer, and fellow cast and crewmembers. I will dedicate myself as a true team member to this production process in order to present a show that we as a cast, crew, and production team will be proud of.

1. All actors, technical stage crewmembers and musicians should have fun working on this production as collaborative artists. We expect a positive attitude, open communication, and ownership from beginning to end.

2. All actors, technical stage crewmembers and musicians must be in good academic standing to participate in and remain in this production. All actors, technical stage crewmembers, and musicians are expected to be in school during the day in order to participate in rehearsals and performances after-school. It is also required that a progress report be completely filled out every two weeks and returned to Mr. Brown via your stage manager. You will not be allowed to attend rehearsal if this is not turned in on time.

3. All participants must be passing a minimum of 20 credits each marking period or they will be removed from the process when the report card is issued. N's in a class do not count as passing.

4. All actors, technical stage crewmembers, and musicians must be on time to all scheduled rehearsals and technical crew duties. If late for three rehearsals, you may be cut from the production.

5. All actors, technical stage crewmembers and musicians must be present at all scheduled rehearsals. Rehearsals will generally be Monday through Friday from 3:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Some weekend rehearsals may be requested in advance. If you have three unexcused absences from rehearsal, you may be cut from the production. *In order to be excused you must have a legitimate note explaining why. Valid excuses are an illness, a death in the family, etc. It is also important to turn in all notes to the director and notify them directly in advance if you cannot attend a rehearsal. In case of emergency, you must call 617-559-6306 and leave a message.* Communication is the key to good relationships during a production.

6. All actors, technical stage crewmembers, and musicians will keep the rehearsal spaces, stage, dressing rooms and costume room clean throughout the rehearsal and performance process. There will be no food or drink allowed on the stage at anytime. Water Only!

7. All actors, technical stage crewmembers, and musicians are responsible for their props

and costumes. If props or costumes are damaged or lost while in your possession, you are responsible for the replacement cost.

8. All actors, technical stage crewmembers and musicians will use the rehearsal process productively. Actors who are waiting to work on stage should be memorizing lines, reviewing blocking, dances, music, or reading materials related to the production. *You are a student first, so you must stay current with your class assignments. We strongly encourage you to do homework at rehearsal if there is time.* Please bring snacks and water in case you are hungry.

9. All actors, technical stage crewmembers, and musicians must stay in the rehearsal area during a rehearsal unless given permission to leave. Your presence may be called upon at anytime while you are at rehearsal.

10. All actors, technical stage crew and musicians must be supportive of each other's roles in this production. It is important to communicate with one another in a respectful manner. Whether onstage or offstage, all roles in this production are equally important.

11. All actors will complete 8 technical theatre shop/stage crew hours during the rehearsal process. This may include painting, set construction, lighting, costumes, props, or other related areas as designated by the technical director or producer.

12. All actors, technical stage crewmembers, and musicians are required to take part in a full stage strike directed by the technical director, Michael Barrington-Haber, on the Monday and Tuesday (if necessary), after the production. All cast and crew will remain until the strike is complete and the stage, costume room, dressing rooms, music rooms and shop is cleared and cleaned. *Anyone who misses strike will not be allowed to work on the next show unless they put in the hours they missed with the technical director.*

The spirit of this agreement is to ensure that all actors, technical stage crewmembers and musicians are treated fairly as creative, collaborative artists who are working towards the same goal. Mr. Adam Brown, Director of Theatre Ink; Mr. Michael Barrington-Haber, Technical Director; and your Directors will enforce this agreement to the best of their ability in the spirit of a high quality theatrical production process.

This production can be an incredible experience if the entire cast, crew, musicians, and production staff work together, create together, and have fun together!

Actor Name _____

Actor Signature _____ Date _____

Parent Signature _____ Date _____