

# Theater review: 'The Odd Couple' at SART

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It's safe to say that Neil Simon's *The Odd Couple* might be one of the most popular and most produced plays in the history of theater. It's also been a movie, had a sequel, was adapted for TV twice, and a female version was written by Simon due to the popularity of the play. Southern Appalachian Repertory Theatre brings *The Odd Couple* to the Owen Theater stage as part of its summer season. The show runs through Sunday, June 30.

The titular couple are Oscar Madison, a sloppy divorced man, and Felix Unger, a hypochondriac neat freak who's wife has just left him. Oscar takes pity on his friend and lets him move in. What follows is a series of events that are both funny and sometimes touching, as the two men anger, frustrate and eventually complete each other.

Jef Canter is pitch perfect as the messy rascal Oscar. His comedic timing is sharp, and much of the show pivots on his great performance. Randy Noojin's Felix is everything he needs to be: a bit annoying and tragically funny. The duo are a great match, and we easily root for them, even though it's fun to watch them bicker like an old married couple.

Actors Tony Medlin and Timothy Wilds stand out as gambling buddies. There's a rapid-fire pace to the scenes where a group of men plays poker. Younger actors Paul Penderman and Tristan Brown do a great job of holding their own among a stage of well-seasoned professionals.

Rebecca O'Quinn and Lara Holloway have small but significant roles as two attractive women whom Oscar convinces to go on a double date with him and Felix. The ladies make the most of their roles and give the men a run for their money, laughs-wise.

The show was probably played as contemporary from its 1965 Broadway premiere through at least the early 1990s, but it's become a bit of a relic of its era, with its casual approach to what can be considered somewhat toxic masculinity today. The treatment of divorce, alimony and relationships in general makes the show even more outdated. But, as a nostalgia piece, it still works great and has plenty of Simon's gentle humor as well as full-on belly laughs. There's a sweetness to how it ultimately views male friendship.

Charlotte Tiencken directs the show with precision and makes it feel very real and lived in. And Richard Seagle's splendid set allows us to feel as if we're in a 1960s New York apartment, with its green wall color and period decor. Some of the props look clearly modern, while others (like a period Kentucky Fried Chicken bucket) are nice touches.

**WHAT:** *The Odd Couple*

**WHERE:** SART, Owen Theater, 44 College St., Mars Hill, [sartplays.com](http://sartplays.com)

**WHEN:** Through Sunday, June 30. Thursday through Saturday at 7:30 p.m., Saturday and Sunday at 2:30 p.m. \$25