

Capon and On

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Femme-fronted Neil Simon classic is at odds

The folks at Langham Court are playing it safe with their season opener by presenting the female version of Neil Simon's 1965 classic *The Odd Couple*. The play, perhaps one of Simon's best known, was made famous by a 1968 film adaptation starring Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau as a pair of mismatched bachelors forced to co-habitate, and the popular TV sitcom that followed. But does reversing the genders to make Oscar an Olive and Felix a Florence work? Despite Langham's best efforts, not quite.

The Odd Couple left me with a lot of questions. Just what era is the show set in? (Neil Simon's re-vamp of his classic was penned in 1985, but the aesthetic of this production feels a bit older and all the Trivial Pursuit questions, which replace the original script's poker gatherings, are pre-1960). If all these women know each other from high school, as the play alludes, why does there seem to be such an age gap between them? And, most importantly, what is the deal with plays that portray women as incapable of doing anything other than collapsing into hysterics when they get together? Perhaps it's just me, but not only do I not find a bunch of women running around in circles panicking tiring, but at times borderline offensive.

While this show was not my cup of tea, there were some bright spots. Edmonton's Shelley Superstein is a great addition to the Langham Court fold; her no-nonsense, down-to-earth sportswriter Olive is the strongest member of the lady-led cast. And Langham vet Wayne Yercha reveled in his role as Manolo, one of the Costazuela brothers, who sub for the original's double-dating Pigeon sisters. Indeed, the whole cast here did a good job; it's just hard to spice up a script that relies on bad double entendres and language barrier jokes. And director Sylvia Rhodes keeps the action going at a good clip; the 45-minute first act seems to fly by.

If you're looking for a night of cheesy puns and lights laughs, this might be a good excuse to check out Langham Court's comfy—and roomier—new seats. Folks looking for ground-breaking female comedy should rent some of *The Golden Girls* instead.