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# Theatre Three's *Brighton Beach Memoirs* Gets a Standing Ovation

***This heartwarming, humorous family dramedy runs through February 8, 2026.***

**by Cindi Sansone-Braff** **January 18, 2025**

Neil Simon's "Brighton Beach Memoirs" is a superbly crafted, humorous, and heartfelt coming-of-age story. This award-winning play was first presented at the Ahmanson Theatre in Los Angeles on December 10, 1982, and later debuted on Broadway on March 27, 1983, at the Alvin Theatre, which was renamed the Neil Simon Theatre in his honor.

"Brighton Beach Memoirs" reveals the artistic genius of Simon, a man in complete command of his craft. His keen sense of humor, deep understanding of human nature, and uncanny ability to capture the heart and soul of humanity are among the reasons his plays have entertained and will continue to entertain millions of theatergoers around the globe.

Set at the tail end of the Great Depression, this is the first play in Simon's semi-autobiographical trilogy, which follows the life of Eugene Morris Jerome from his adolescent days in the 1930s. The trilogy continues with *Biloxi Blues*, which explores his army training during World War II, and *Broadway Bound*, which centers on his career as a comedy writer.

The action of this two-act dramedy unfolds over the course of a whirlwind week in September 1937. This relatable story about a struggling, lower-middle-class Jewish family is told through the insightful eyes of Eugene Jerome, a 15-year-old Brooklyn boy. Kiernan Urso delivered a charismatic and memorable performance as the protagonist and narrator Eugene, a role first brought to life by Matthew Broderick in the original Broadway production, for which Broderick earned a Tony Award for Best Featured Actor in a Play.

In many ways, Eugene is a typical, awkward American adolescent, obsessed with baseball, girls, and the allure and illusion of sex. However, when Eugene breaks the fourth wall to address the audience directly, it becomes clear that this observant young man, who documents his life experiences and private thoughts in a journal, is more perceptive, astute, and introspective than the average "Joe Schmo."

Eugene's hardworking, principled older brother, Stanley, brilliantly portrayed by Michael Anthony Shapiro, is quick to act without considering the consequences, which often lands him in hot water. Shapiro and Urso stole the show with their banter, bickering, and onstage antics, underscoring that, despite their differences, Eugene and Stanley share an enduring, unbreakable brotherly bond. One of the funniest scenes you will ever see on any stage is Stanley teaching Eugene his hilarious version of the facts of life.

Jack Jerome is the head of this loving household, pushed to the limit by the constant fear of financial ruin. Angelo DiBiase commanded the stage as a caring, work-weary father, overwrought with responsibility and trepidation about his own future and that of his family. In addition to these everyday worries, Jack is plagued by fear of Hitler's rise in Europe and its impact on his Polish-Jewish relatives. DiBiase, a seasoned actor with laser-focused facial expressions and evocative body language, added layers of meaning to Simon's carefully structured script and cleverly written dialogue.

Theatre Three veteran, Linda May, aced the role of the formidable Kate Jerome, the sharp-tongued yet fiercely protective matriarch of the Jerome family. During the play's quieter moments, when Jack and Kate exhibit tender, supportive, and loving affection for each other, May and DiBiase's onstage chemistry was palpable.

The Jerome household is even more cramped and chaotic because Kate's grief-stricken, widowed sister, Blanche Morton, and her two daughters live with them. Suzie Dunn gave a noteworthy performance as Blanche, a woman who has always been dependent on others, but comes to realize she must learn to be more self-reliant.

Emilia Guzzetta delivered a nuanced performance as Nora, Blanche's headstrong, sometimes defiant older daughter, whose dreams of becoming a Broadway dancer are thwarted by her mother's well-intentioned efforts to keep her in school. Erin Risolo, a talented young actor, was well cast as Laurie, Blanche's intelligent yet manipulative younger daughter. Laurie has been pampered and coddled by her mother because of a slight heart condition and uses this malady to avoid helping others and doing household chores.

Theatre Three's awe-inspiring creative team brought their A-game to this show. A special shoutout goes to Colleen Rebecca Britt for her precision-perfect direction. Tim Haggerty's outstanding sound design, Steven Uihlein's innovative lighting design, Randall Parsons' award-worthy set design depicting the Jerome's modest two-story home, and Jason Allyn's authentic 1930s costumes all came together to make this humorous and heartwarming production unforgettable.

Although the themes of sibling rivalry and strained household relationships are examined throughout the play, ultimately, the most important takeaway from "Brighton Beach Memoirs" is this: The world doesn't survive without family. This must-see show runs through February 8, 2026. For tickets, call the box office at 631-928-9100 or visit www.theatrethree.com."Beethoven, The Man, The Myth, The Music," is published by Next Stage Press.

Cindi Sansone-Braff is an award-winning playwright. She holds a BFA in Theatre from the University of Connecticut and is a member of the Dramatists Guild. She is the author of "Grant Me a Higher Love," "Why Good People Can't Leave Bad Relationships," and "Confessions of a Reluctant Long Island Psychic." Her full-length Music Drama, "Beethoven, The Man, The Myth, The Music," is published by Next Stage Press.