

# Now begins Act II ...

## more than musicals: Capital Playhouse opens its season with straight play

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Change is continuing at Capital Playhouse after a season in which the theater parted ways with founder Jeff Kingsbury and faced a budget crisis big enough to threaten its existence.

The change on stage at the playhouse this weekend is a pretty dramatic one as well: The opening production of the 2011-12 season is not a musical, but Neil Simon's "Brighton Beach Memoirs."



"Nobody bursts into song, and we certainly don't cut a rug," said Brian Tyrrell of Olympia, who's directing "Memoirs."

For the first time since moving to its current location, the 25-year-old theater company is offering straight plays in addition to its mainstay musicals.

"It's an experiment," said Troy Arnold Fisher, the playhouse's interim artistic director and longtime music director. "We're putting our feet in the water to see. We have such a great space that adapts nicely for a play. And that was our roots."

When Fisher began working for the playhouse in 1988, he said, seasons offered a variety of shows, musical and not.

"I'm the guilty party," said Tyrrell, a theatre professor at Centralia College and frequent director in Olympia, Seattle and beyond. "The rights and royalties for non-musical plays are less expensive. I suggested they might want to give that a thought, and they said, 'Would you be interested in directing?'"

"I actually anticipated they would only bite for one, but strangely enough, they agreed to two."

The second is "Fiction," a comedic drama about two married writers trying to separate fact from fiction. Tyrrell will not only direct that but star with wife Jana Tyrrell, seen at the playhouse last season as Marmee in "Little Women."

The playhouse plans its usual lineup of five musicals for its Season in the Box. The straight plays, dubbed "Act II," are optional add-ons to the season ticket package.

"We have an audience that likes new and old, edgy and soft," said Ned Hayes, who's on the playhouse's board. "We have everything from a nostalgic look back at the '30s with 'Brighton Beach Memoirs' all the way up to a very contemporary story of the depression in England with 'The Full Monty.'"

“Monty” was chosen by early season ticket subscribers who were given a choice between the popular comedy about men who take an unusual path to earning money and the recent Broadway hit “The Drowsy Chaperone.”

Another newer show, “Always ... Patsy Cline,” will star Kittra Coomer, a former Olympia resident who starred in a national tour of “Mamma Mia.”

Classics are well represented, too. There’s “Hello, Dolly,” which Fisher calls “a perfect musical,” and the holiday favorite “Scrooge: The Musical,” which the theater company has done many times.

“People like traditions,” Fisher said. “I’m one of them. I have to see a production of ‘A Christmas Carol’ every year. It’s a favorite for me.”

And then there’s that other mainstay of musical theater: “Hair.”

“It’s become a classic,” Fisher said. “It’s weird to say that I’ve lived long enough that ‘Hair’ has become a classic of musical theater.”

Capital Playhouse season

Season in a Box (musicals): “Always ... Patsy Cline” (Sept. 29-Oct. 23), “Scrooge” (Dec. 1-30), “Hair” (Jan. 26-Feb. 19), “Hello, Dolly” (March 15-April 1) and “The Full Monty” (May 10-27)

Act II (straight plays): “Brighton Beach Memoirs” (through Sept. 18) and “Fiction” (April 6-16)

When: 7:30 p.m. evening shows and 2 p.m. matinees

Where: Capital Playhouse, 612 E. Fourth Ave., Olympia

Season tickets: \$147-\$172 for adults, \$126-\$151 for seniors and youth for five-show season of musicals; \$58-\$66 for adults, \$50-\$58 for seniors and youth for the two ACT II plays

Individual tickets: \$35-\$39 for adults, \$30-\$34 for seniors and youth; pay-what-you-can tickets available for select performances

More information: 360-943-2744, [capitalplayhouse.com](http://capitalplayhouse.com)