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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Sabes JCC Presents Neil Simon's Classic Brighton Beach Memoirs

Minneapolis, Minn...The Sabes Jewish Community Center in Minneapolis is pleased to continue its 2008-2009 Performing Arts Professional Season with *Brighton Beach Memoirs* by Neil Simon. Performances will take place March 19–April 5, 2009; Thursdays and Saturdays at 7:30 p.m., Sundays at 2 p.m., and Friday morning matinees at 10 a.m. All of the productions will take place at the Sabes JCC's Dolly & Edward Fiterman Theatre, located at 4330 S Cedar Lake Road in St. Louis Park, MN, 55416, and are open to the public with handicap accessibility. Tickets are \$20 for the general public, \$18 for JCC members, \$16 for students and seniors, and \$12 for groups of 8 or more. Additional discounts available for larger groups. For more information and tickets, please visit www.sabesjcc.org or call 952.381.3499.

THE PLAY: The first of Neil Simon's autobiographical trilogy and one of his most widely-respected plays, *Brighton Beach Memoirs* focuses on Eugene Jerome, a 15-year-old boy from 1937 Brooklyn who is just coming to terms with puberty, the looming threat of World War II, and his extended Jewish family. Through daily journal entries, the aspiring writer begins to understand the hardships of life, the need for family, and the humor in it all. Recommended for ages 13 and up—great for the whole family to see together! “Simultaneously poignant and funny. The characters are fully dimensional, believable... An outstanding show.” – Variety

ARTISTS: *Brighton Beach Memoirs* features Sari Abelson, Jeff Angell, Mark Benzel, Maya Raz, Tina Sigel, Danielle Siver and Edwin Strout, and is directed by Anya Kremenetsky. Erica Zaffarano is set designer, Lori Opsal costumes, and Shannon Kiley is lighting designer.

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SUPPLEMENT: ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

Sari Abelson (Marie) is a senior at St. Louis Park Senior High School, began performing in fifth grade and trained with the Stages Theatre Conservatory for four years culminating in the creation of *Deep Boy* for the 2007 Minnesota Fringe Festival. With Stages, Sari was part of the touring production of *Eyes Wide Open* and the

musical *Schoolhouse Rock*. Sari has also performed in *The Laramie Project* with Children Theatre's Senior Company, and was recently a "featured" extra as one of the girlfriends of Sarah in the Coen Brother movie, *A Serious Man*. In addition to acting, Sari also enjoys rock climbing, singing, editing the "Features" pages of her school newspaper, salsa dancing and playing outside. Next year she will be attending St. Olaf College and plans to major in theatre and psychology.

Jeff Angell (Performer) is a graduate from the University of Minnesota, Department of Theatre Arts and Dance. He was most recently seen in the "A View from the Bridge" at the Guthrie. He is delighted to be working at the Sabes JCC for the first time, with such a wonderful cast and crew.

Mark Benzel (Eugene) is excited to be performing at the Sabes JCC for the first time. He has done work with companies including Sandbox Theatre (*The Horse, The Bird, The Monkey and The Dancer*), Upright Egg (*Love Project, Chuck Mee Project*), 20% Theatre Company (*elephant shoes and olive juice*), Walking Shadow (*The American Pilot*), and others. He thanks friends, family, fellow performers, and Danielle for all the inspiration and support they give him.

Shannon Kiley (Stage Manager/Lighting Designer) is the resident stage manager and theatre technician here at the JCC. This marks the third show with the JCC having also stage managed *The Fence* and *Wellstone!* Shannon also works with the local company, Urban Samurai, having stage managed *The Diana Story, Musical: The Musical* this summer at the Minneapolis Fringe Festival, and most recently *Touch*. She will also have a chance to work with 20% Theatre Company this winter, stage managing *Perfect Pie*. Shannon has worked with several other theatre companies in Fargo, St. Cloud, and Minneapolis, working as a stage manager, lighting designer, and technical director.

Anya Kremenetsky (Assistant Director) is pleased to be directing for the Sabes JCC's professional season again. She most recently assistant directed the critically acclaimed *Perfect Pie* with 20% Theatre Company Twin Cities. Anya got her B.A. in psychology & philosophy from George Washington University in DC, followed by study at Atlantic Theater Company's professional acting conservatory in NYC. Current projects this season include *The Shadow Thieves* at Stages Theatre Company (asst. director) and *Fiddler on the Roof* at the Sabes JCC (director), and *When We Are Married* at the Guthrie Theater (directing intern). Anya also works with The Directors, LLP - a company which takes on a wide array of projects in the arts nationwide.

Lori Opsal (Costume Design) has been working as a costume designer in the Twin Cities for the past 16 years. Some of the theatres she has worked with are Stages Theatre (15 seasons) Mixed Blood Theatre Great American History Theatre, Emigrant Theatre, The John Hassler Theatre, Frank Theatre, Minnesota Shakespeare Project, and Teatro del Pueblo as well as many Twin Cities high schools. Some of the productions she has costumed are

Wellstone! Urine Town, Les Miserable, Midsummer Night's Dream, Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat, Sweet Nothing in My Ear, Rookery Blues and Miss Nelson is Missing. She also recently designed *Wellstone!* for the Sabes JCC stage.

Maya Raz (Performer) has been attending StageCoach Theatre Arts school since she was five years old. She has also been playing violin since that age. She is currently 12 and is attending SLP Junior High. She graduated from Park Spanish Immersion School and in addition to speaking Spanish and English, Maya also speaks Hebrew. She goes to Israel, to visit her family there, every summer. Maya currently sings in the Junior High Select Choir, plays Soccer in the fall and practices Gymnastics throughout the year.

Tina Sigel (Performer) has been performing in the Twin Cities for many years. Recently, she portrayed Mother Teresa in Urban Samurai's, "The Diana Story". She has also performed roles with The Minnesota Jewish Theatre, Theatre Mu, and numerous productions at Stages Theatre Company, including Grandma Miller in "Junie B. Jones & A Little Monkey Business", and Rochelle in "Jack and Rochelle". Regionally, Tina has performed with The St. Louis Repertory, and The One Act, Eureka, and Oakland Ensemble theatres in the San Francisco Bay Area. Tina was the recipient of a Los Angeles Dramalogue Award for her ensemble performance in "The Dead End Kid."

Danielle Siver (Blanche) is happy make her debut at the Sabes JCC with *Brighton Beach Memoirs*. She has also performed with Upright Egg Theatre Company, Swearing Jack Theatre Company, In the Basement Productions, and 20% Theatre Company (most recently in the sold-out run of *The Naked I: Monologues from Beyond the Binary*). Love to Colleen, Mark, and all of her family and friends.

Edwin Strout (Performer) is thrilled to be back at Sabes JCC after having had a grand time performing 12 different roles in "Wellstone!" last Fall. In the 17 years that he has been performing in the Twin Cities theater community, he has worked with over 20 different theater companies in over 100 roles. In the last year he has performed the Head Nurse in "Well" at Park Square Theatre, Father in "The Giver" at Stages Theatre, John Cristow in "The Hollow" at Starting Gate Theater, the Emperor in "My Emperor's New Clothes" at Theatre L'Homme Dieu, and Lou Cohn in "1940's Radio Hour" at 8-Ball Theatre. Next up for Edwin is "Around the World in 80 Days" at The Jungle Theatre and "Othello" at Park Square Theater. He wishes to dedicate this performance to Stella, his love, his life, his wife.

Erica Zaffarano (Set Design) was a founding member of four theatre companies: the Iowa State Mime Troupe, Masque Seattle, The School of Performing Arts of the Virgin Islands and Iowa's Old Creamery Theatre Company. Erica got her MFA in Theatrical Design from the University of Washington. She spent years in California working with the Old Globe in San Diego, as head scenic for the Pacific Conservatory of Performing Arts in Santa Maria, ACT in San Francisco, Theatre 40 in Beverly Hills and with The Lobero Playhouse in Santa

Barbara. While living in L.A., Erica worked in a specialty prop house, was a scenic artist and art directed commercials, films and TV. Since moving to Minneapolis, her work has been seen at the Jon Hassler Theater, the Guthrie's Dowling Theater, Stages, the Southern, Ten Thousand Things and the Mixed Blood. She started her affiliation with the Sabes JCC a year ago with *Sight Unseen* and feels this theater is a yet undiscovered diamond! She is delighted to team up once again with Todd Bruse and Lori Opsal in interpreting Mark Rosenwinkel's script. "Mark asked me if the design process for "Anschel" was fun...with this team, how could it NOT be?"

For more information on the Sabes JCC's Performing Arts department and season, visit www.sabesjcc.org and see Jewish Arts and Humanities.

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