

**PERFORMING ARTS**

# Gardner-Webb Theatre Department Presents Neil Simon's 'The Odd Couple (Female Version)'

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- ▲ Raleigh Wallace as Florence Unger, left, and Cara Cole as Olive Madison rehearse a scene from "The Odd Couple (Female Version)."

## Two Newcomers to GWU Play Lead Roles of Olive Madison and Florence Ungar

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Two newcomers to the Gardner-Webb University stage, freshman Cara Cole and sophomore Raleigh Wallace, play the lead roles in “The Odd Couple (female version),” presented Oct. 6-9 in Dover Theatre. In this female version of Neil Simon’s hilarious contemporary comic classic, Olive Madison is divorced and living in cheerful chaos in her New York apartment. At her invitation, the suicidal Florence Ungar, newly separated from her husband, moves in. While Madison is unconcerned about the state of her apartment, Unger is obsessively clean. When their two styles clash, their friendship is tested to its limit.

While this is their first play at GWU, Cole and Wallace are veteran actresses. Cole, a nursing major, had various roles in high school theater and is excited about being in her first college play. “I have always loved acting, because it gives me the opportunity to express myself in different ways,” she shared. “I also love acting because of the people it brings into my life. I have met some of my closest friends while in a show and have also grown closer to people. It’s always super fun seeing people act in their own unique ways, and you can learn from them and lift each other up.”



▲ From left, Erica Clontz plays Sylvie; Raleigh Wallace is Florence Ungar; and Mia Cotty plays Mickey. Standing behind is Cara Cole playing Olive Madison. Photos by Danielle Billups / GWU Photo Team

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Playing Madison has been a fun learning experience for Cole. “I feel like I go on this emotional roller coaster every time we run through the show,” she described. “I like Olive because she is true to herself and not afraid to speak up and say what’s on her mind. It’s fun to play her because in real life, I have trouble speaking up and being blunt with people. But Olive is confident and very outgoing, which I admire about her character. The hardest part about learning her character is the aspect of diving into her sarcasm and very cutting tone. I remember the first note I got during rehearsals was that Olive ‘needs more edge.’”

In addition to acting, Wallace likes to write and direct short films and post them on YouTube. An American Sign Language major from Kansas City, Mo., she has acted in numerous plays and musicals. “Most recently I’ve been in “Clue,” “Our Town,” “Descendants,” and “Les Miserables,” Wallace noted. “I want to give a shout-out to First Act Theatre Arts in KCMO—thank you, Mr. and Mrs. Milbourn—and to my mom, who is coming all the way from Missouri to see the show.”

She added, “Live theater is powerful because each show only happens once. The actors and the audience experience something together that can never be replicated; it has to be experienced and appreciated in the moment. I’m really glad that this show is a comedy; I love making the audience laugh.”

Wallace said playing Unger is fun, but also a challenge because she has had to learn to be uncomfortably silly on stage, “like playing a cartoon toddler on her worst day—whiny, melodramatic, and wanting to be the center of attention,” she stated. “Usually, directors tell me to tone my acting down, so it feels strange to play Florence so ‘big.’ I trust Dr. (Chris) Nelson’s judgment, and when he tells me to play Florence big, I do. I look silly, but that’s OK, because it makes the audience laugh!”



▲ From left, Aliyah Eugene as Renee, Raleigh Wallace as Florence Ungar and Mia Cotty as Mickey rehearse a scene from “The Odd Couple (Female Version).”

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She also appreciates Cole and the rest of the cast and crew. “I feel at home when I’m on stage, and I feel at home with all of my castmates,” she asserted. “Cara is awesome, and we play off of each other really well. When she changes the way she says a line, I adjust to match her; when I add a new layer of motivation to something Florence does, I can feel Cara react. Everyone else in the cast is phenomenal, too, and I’ve had a blast with each and every one of them.”

Both actresses said the play offers laughs from start to finish. Cole offered that it reminds her of the “Golden Girls” television sitcom from the 1980s. Wallace observed that the GWU cast has their own unique take on the script and concluded, “We’re very excited to share with all of you.”

Showtimes are Oct. 6-8 at 7:30 p.m., and Oct. 9 at 2:30 p.m. Tickets are available [here](https://ie1.glitnirticketing.com/ieticket/web/ev_list.php) ([https://ie1.glitnirticketing.com/ieticket/web/ev\\_list.php](https://ie1.glitnirticketing.com/ieticket/web/ev_list.php)).

## Other Cast Members:

Mickey: Mia Cotty

Renee: Alyiah Eugene

Sylvie: Erica Clontz

Vera: Katrina Shauf

Manolo: Gavin Weinstock

Jesus: Jonah Hill

***Auxiliary aids will be made available to persons with disabilities upon request 10 working days prior to the event. Please call 704-406-4270 or email [disabilityservices@gardner-webb.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@gardner-webb.edu) with your request.***

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