

## To 10/3: 'The Dinner Party' at Desert Stages Theatre

by [Jessica Testa](#) - Aug. 24, 2010 11:26 AM  
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Three divorced couples, who haven't seen their other halves since their divorces, are brought together for comedy's sake in Neil Simon's "The Dinner Party" at Desert Stages Theatre in Scottsdale.

### 'The Dinner Party'

**What:** The Neil Simon play brings three divorced couples together in realistic comedy.

**When:** Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m. through Oct. 3.

**Where:** Desert Stages Theatre, 4720 N. Scottsdale Road, Scottsdale.

**Admission:** \$22 (\$20 seniors and students) in advance, \$25 day of show.

**Details:** [480-483-1664](tel:480-483-1664), [desertstages.org](http://desertstages.org).

"The Dinner Party" takes place entirely in one setting: the private dining room of an upscale French restaurant. The separated couples are each invited to dinner by a meddling mutual friend (also a divorcee), though no one has a clue their ex-spouse was also invited.

"It's a setting for catastrophe, as well as comedy," director Mark-Alan Clemente said.

The play, which debuted in 2000 on [Broadway](#)

starring John Ritter and Henry Winkler, is one of Neil Simon's later works.

Here are five reasons to check out the Desert Stages adaptation:

1. "The Dinner Party" is a very different kind of Neil Simon play.

"People tend to pigeonhole Neil Simon," said Wade Moran, one of the show's actors. "But this is very different than anything else he's written. It's very new angle on Neil Simon for people."

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That angle is one that combines reality and farce with much character conflict, a departure from Neil Simon's typical screwball comedies, including his 1965 hit, "The Odd Couple."

Each character goes through the process of self-discovery, while taking an outside look at their relationship. The themes of forgiveness and love give "The Dinner Party" an emotional depth not often found in Simon plays.

2. "The Dinner Party" is Neil Simon's only work not set in [New York City](#)



, but the director chose to set it there anyway in an effort to make the play more relatable to a Scottsdale audience.

"We decided to set it in New York City to keep it consistent with the other Simon shows, and to help relate it to new audiences and update it a little bit," Clemente said.

3. The New York City backdrop was chosen over Simon's original Paris setting, but that isn't the only aspect of the play that modern audiences can relate to. The play focuses on emotional journey of divorce.

"Anyone can relate to those relationship issues," Clemente said. "But it's funny and it's witty. The characters are supposed to be a bit of aristocrats, so I call it smart comedy."

4. "The Dinner Party" comes to the intimate Actors Café, a theater-in-the-round space that fits 65 guests no farther than 10 feet from the stage.

"You feel like you're in the set with them," Clemente said. "It makes for an even more intimate experience."

5. Though divorce may be heavy theme for young audiences, the play is PG-13.

"There isn't anything a 13-year-old wouldn't see on prime time TV," he said. "I think what they'll enjoy the most is that each character is very likable. There's no villain. We have a nerd, we have a pompous guy, we have a sexy vixen, a bookworm. They could all be real-life people."

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