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## The Odd Couple courts a crowd

By GRAEME MCRANOR, 24 HOURS

The world has long embraced The Odd Couple, the vintage Neil Simon play about two aging male misfits sharing an apartment in the wake of wrecked marriages.

It has been translated into at least 15 languages since its 1965 Broadway opening and, in turn, became a classic movie and a hit TV series.

Now, the small but venturesome Vancouver Asian Canadian Theatre has mounted a production that, although in English, will be performed in two locations and feature a mainly Asian cast while projecting Mandarin-translated dialogue above the stage.

"We really have an opportunity here to grow our audience base in a big way," says producer and VACT president Joyce Lam, indicating that while the show will appeal to the core audience of first- and second-generation Asian Canadians, the company is hoping for broader appeal.

"We think we'll also attract recent immigrant Chinese, especially those living in Richmond, plus older Asian Canadians and parents, especially those who are familiar with the works of Neil Simon, and then finally everyone else who isn't Asian Canadian but is looking for a unique and entertaining cross-cultural experience."

The play - which in various hit versions featured tandems of Walter Matthau, Jack Lemmon, Jack Klugman, Art Carney and Tony Randall - centres on sportswriter Oscar, a lifelong slob, who invites neurotically neat newsman Felix to share his apartment.

Their mutually exclusive habits trigger furious and funny exchanges, complicate a long-time poker-buddy setup and also involve the Pigeon sisters, Cecily and Gwendolyn, who live upstairs.

Directed by Raugi Yu, the VACT show stars Ron Yamauchi (Oscar) and Jimmy Yi (Felix), with Sean Cummings, Jono Lee, Tom Chin, Ed Fong as the poker buddies and Carmine Bernhardt (Gwen) and Lissa Neptuno (Cecily).

It opens Thursday at 8 p.m. and runs until July 27 at venue No. 1, the Richmond Cultural Centre (7700 Minoru). Venue No. 2 is the Roundhouse Performance Centre, Pacific at Davie, for a run Aug. 13 through 21.

Showtimes, information and tickets - \$23 in advance, \$25 cash-only at the door - at [www.VACT.ca](http://www.VACT.ca) and 778-885-1973.