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## John Randolph: Tony Award-Winner to Reprise Broadway Role on IWU Stage

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May 16, 1994

**Contact:** Bob Aaron, 309/556-3181**John Randolph****Tony Award-Winner to Reprise Broadway Role on IWU Stage;  
Neil Simon's *Broadway Bound* Set for Next Month at IWU**Locals,  
Chicago,  
Central IL,  
Entertainment

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--He's played just about everyone's "father" or "father-in-law" on television and on the silver screen. His straight-talking, slightly crusty roles include Jack Nicholson's "father" in *Prizzi's Honor*, Roseanne Arnold's "father" in the top-rated TV sitcom *Roseanne*, Bob Newhart's "father-in-law" on the old *Bob Newhart Show*, and Chevy Chase's "father" in *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*.

Next month, famed character actor John Randolph brings his half-century of experience to the stage of Illinois Wesleyan University's McPherson Theatre, when he recreates his Tony award-winning role in the comedy-drama *Broadway Bound*, written by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Neil Simon.

Randolph--in his first college guest artist performance--will play Ben, the grandfather of *Broadway Bound*'s character, Eugene, who is modeled after Simon as a young man in the late 1940s, when he was launching his career as a CBS radio scriptwriter.

"John Randolph loved this role in New York," said Jared Brown, *Broadway Bound*'s director, and professor and director of IWU's School of Theatre Arts. "It was perhaps the proudest moment in his career, especially since he won a Tony for his performance."

A Tony is Broadway's equivalent to Hollywood's Academy Award.

Randolph also captured a Drama Desk Award for his performance as the socialist grandfather in *Broadway Bound*.

"John Randolph is an actor with integrity," Brown said. "He is the kind of actor who immerses himself in a role without losing his own personality. His professionalism is symbolized by his ability to do many types of roles and to do them with skill."

As a teenager, Brown met Randolph, who was a friend of his parents. Randolph also served as a source for two books written by Brown: *The Fabulous Lunts: A Biography of Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne*

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## ***Broadway Bound/2***

and *Zero Mostel*.

*Broadway Bound* is the third of three autobiographical plays written by Simon. The first play in the trilogy is *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, which IWU staged two years ago. Many of the cast members from that production will appear in *Broadway Bound*, an idea Brown found intriguing. The second play is *Biloxi Blues*, which has a U.S. Army setting during World War II.

*Broadway Bound* is the type of play that appeals to Brown as a director since it blends laughter with an array of other more serious themes, along lines common in the writings of playwrights like Anton Chekhov and Tennessee Williams.

"The challenge of *Broadway Bound*," Brown explained, "is to bring forth the laughter and the tears at various moments."

Another challenge for director Brown is to mesh Randolph's star quality with the rest of the cast.

Randolph has appeared in more than 30 Broadway shows and 100 feature films and TV shows, including some of television's all-time hit series: *Family Ties*, *Who's the Boss*, *Angie*, *Trapper John*, *Seinfeld*, *Dynasty*, *Married with Children*, *Facts of Life*, *Dallas*, and *Murder, She Wrote*. His feature film credits include: *Heaven Can Wait*, *Serpico*, *King Kong*, and *Fun with Dick and Jane*. Among Movies of the Week that Randolph has appeared in are *Blind Ambition*, *The Winds of Kitty Hawk*, *Backstairs at the White House*, *LBJ*, and *Nero Wolfe*.

Recently, Randolph appeared in the British Broadcasting Corp. production of *A Foreign Field* for Masterpiece Theatre. He was joined in the cast by Sir Alec Guinness, Lauren Bacall, Geraldine Chaplin, Jeanne Moreau, Leo McKern, and Ed Herrmann.

Randolph also has recently completed *Hotel Manor Inn*, a comedy-drama about a man who is obsessed with turning an institution for the insane into its former existence as a grand hotel.

He opened the 1994-95 television season on NBC's hospital drama

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### ***Broadway Bound/3***

hit *ER* with a performance as an elderly man having to face his wife's death.

Randolph made his Broadway debut in 1939 in *Hold on to Your Hats*, a play that marked the stage comeback of legendary singer and entertainer Al Jolson. Among his other stage credits are:

- *Command Decision*, a play about the stresses and strains of B-17 bombing missions over Europe in World War II.
- *Come Back Little Sheba* with the celebrated actress Shirley Booth.
- *The Visit* with Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne.
- *The Sound of Music* with Mary Martin.
- *Prelude to a Kiss*, the Tony-nominated play by Craig Lucas.

In the 1950s, Randolph and his wife, Sarah Cunningham, were blacklisted in Hollywood, when the House Committee on Un-American Activities attacked many actors, writers, and others in the entertainment industry for political reasons. The Randolphs continued working in the civil-rights movement and against attacks on trade unions. The blacklisting period ended for Randolph in 1965, when he appeared in director John Frankenheimer's film *Seconds* with Rock Hudson.

*Broadway Bound* focuses on Eugene's professional aspirations as a radio comedy writer and his home life, building on characters and situations portrayed in *Brighton Beach Memoirs*.

The cast for *Broadway Bound* is:

- Eugene . . . Duke Novak, a junior theatre major from Elk Grove, Ill.
- Kate, Eugene's mother . . . Mara Hesed, a junior music theatre major from St. Louis.
- Stanley, Eugene's brother . . . Rhys Lovell, who earned a bachelor of fine arts degree at IWU in 1987.
- Jack, Eugene's father . . . Don Shandrow, an actor affiliated with the Heartland Theatre.
- Blanche, Eugene's aunt . . . Lori Adams, an IWU instructor in theatre arts, whose specialty is teaching acting.

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## ***Broadway Bound/4***

➤ Ben, Eugene's grandfather . . . John Randolph.

*Broadway Bound's* scene designer is John Stark; costume designer is Catherine Sutliff; and the lighting designer is Ken Johnson.

IWU's second theatre production this summer will be *Greetings*, a comedy by Tom Dudzick, which will be directed by John Ficca, professor of theatre arts. The plot revolves around a young man who brings home to his Catholic family at Christmas his Jewish-atheist girlfriend.

**Editor's Note:** Rehearsals for *Broadway Bound* begin May 23. The play opens June 12. Performances are June 12-18 and June 20-25 at IWU's McPherson Theatre, 304 E. Graham, Bloomington. All performances are at 8 p.m. Ticket prices: \$8, general admission; \$7, senior citizens.

A \$13 season ticket is available for IWU's two summer productions: *Broadway Bound* and *Greetings*, which will be staged July 7, 8, 10, 13-15, 17, 20-22. Individual tickets for *Greetings* are \$7, general admission; \$6, senior citizens.

For more information about tickets and performances, contact: McPherson Theatre Box Office, 309/556-3232. Box Office hours: 12:30 p.m.-5 p.m., Monday, Wednesday-Friday; 12:30-4 p.m., Tuesday.

To arrange for interviews with John Randolph, call: IWU Public Relations-News Services, 309/556-3181.