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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Neil Simon's "Fools" Opens October 4**

**CEDARVILLE, OHIO** -- Cedarville University's theatre department presents "Fools," by Neil Simon, opening Thursday, Oct. 4, in the DeVries Theatre at the Stevens Student Center. The play will run through Oct. 14. Tickets go on sale Sept. 18 and can be purchased at [www.cedarville.edu/ticketinfo](http://www.cedarville.edu/ticketinfo).

The story follows newly employed Leon Tolchinsky, who has taken a job as a teacher in a beautiful Ukrainian village. When he arrives, he is startled to find that the town has been cursed with chronic stupidity for 200 years. Tolchinsky must find a way to break the curse and also win the heart of a girl so stupid that she has only recently learned how to sit down! "Fools" is a colorful, light-hearted comedy that children and adults can enjoy.

Neil Simon, Pulitzer-Prize-winning playwright and Broadway legend, passed away August 26 after battling pneumonia and Alzheimer's disease. Simon authored several Broadway shows, including "Barefoot in the Park" (1963) and "The Odd Couple" (1965). Simon also worked on several television shows and movie scripts, earning four Oscar screenplay nominations in his career. "Fools" premiered on Broadway in 1980 and was later adapted into two musicals: one in 1984 and another in 1990.

Dr. Diane Conrad Merchant, who was recently recognized by the online publication [Dayton Most Metro](#) for her direction of "The Diary of Anne Frank" in 2017, will direct "Fools."

"This is the first Simon play that I have directed, but the timing could not be more fortuitous," said Merchant. "I enjoy Neil Simon's comedies because they are intellectual. This play has profound thoughts about what is really important and how your intellect is not based on what other people say about you."

Gisela Beasley, 2016 Cedarville graduate, will design the set for "Fools." Beasley has previously designed for two Cedarville University productions: "The Diary of Anne Frank" in fall 2017 and "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe" in spring 2018.

Rob Rasmusen, 2007 Cedarville graduate and adjunct professor, will design the lighting. Rebekah Priebe, assistant professor of theatre in her third year at Cedarville, will design the costumes and makeup.

"This show is such a joy to be a part of," said Jeremy Smith, senior theatre performance major from Cedarville, Ohio, who performs as Leon. "I get to watch my friends do the most ridiculous things and have to maintain a straight face while playing opposite them! People will appreciate this show as an opportunity to just laugh and forget about any stresses they may have for a couple short hours."

"This is my first show with Cedarville University thus far, and I can't even begin to express the true joy of being a part of this cast," said Beth Oldham, sophomore theatre performance major from Kenton, Ohio,

who plays Sylvia in the play. “I have learned so much already. I cannot wait to see what the future holds for this show and beyond!”

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 3,963 undergraduate, graduate, and online students in more than 150 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings, and leading student satisfaction ratings. For more information about the University, visit [www.cedarville.edu](http://www.cedarville.edu).