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Actress Connie Nelson back in Dallas for play revival - 30 years later

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By LAWSON TAITTE / The Dallas Morning News

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Connie Nelson is acting beside herself.

It's a phenomenon that occurs more frequently with dancers: Performing a different part in a show you've done before – and it sometimes produces an eerie sense of déjà vu or split personality.

The first time Theatre Three produced Alan Ayckbourn's *Bedroom Farce*, in 1981, Nelson played Jan, one of the three younger female characters. She has returned to Dallas temporarily from her home in New York City to play Delia, the mother, in the company's new version, which opens tonight. That's the part Theatre Three's late co-founder Norma Young played the first time around.

"There's one line that I have to say every night that still brings back the way Norma said it – I'm not going to tell you which one," Nelson says. "When we started rehearsals, I had to keep saying, 'Norma, get out of my head!'"

Playing an older character, the actress says, puts a different light on the play. The three younger couples in the show are muddling their lives and look to the older couple for guidance.

"Now I'm seeing the action from the perspective of a different bedroom – where sex doesn't dominate quite so completely," Nelson says.

Nelson grew up mostly in [Tennessee](#) but graduated from Irving High School and [Southern Methodist University](#). Theatre Three gave her her first leading role, right out of college. After her first, temporary, move to New York, she returned to Dallas to become one of the city's favorite stage performers between 1985 and 1997.

Then the success of the independent film *Late Bloomers*, a main selection at the [Sundance Film Festival](#), promised to open some doors. Nelson and her husband again made the big move to New York. There she landed repeated gigs in TV shows like [Law & Order](#) and a continuing role on HBO's dark prison series, *Oz*. She has also played roles at regional theaters all over the country and done a lot of teaching, including work with autistic children.

Nelson also writes – plays and a children's book she hopes to get published someday.



AMY GUTIERREZ/Special Contributor
Connie Nelson returns to Dallas to perform in Theatre Three's *Bedroom Farce*, a show she performed in 30 years ago.

"If I'm not acting, I'm writing or painting," she says. "It's got to come out some way."

A visit last year to friends and in-laws in Texas got Nelson and Theatre Three executive producer-director Jac Alder talking about bringing the performer back to do a show together. When the idea of reviving *Bedroom Farce* came up, Alder called her to see if she had been serious. Indeed she was.

"It's like having a playmate back in town," Alder says. "Her most outstanding quality is that she's extremely versatile. She's also the queen of props – of using objects in ways that relate them to her character. In this show she sits at a table in her bedroom. She puts drops in her eyes, she puts on makeup, she brushes her hair."

This is the sixth [Ayckbourn](#) production Nelson has acted in – she starred in the playwright's *Taking Steps* at both Theatre Three and the Dallas Theater Center, for instance. The prolific British comic playwright has become one of the most popular in the English-speaking world.

"I think Ayckbourn is really as central as Shakespeare," Nelson says. "The difference is that he writes about everyday people that we recognize. These characters take themselves so seriously. The comedy comes out of that, if you're truthful in the way you play it."Plan your life

Through March 28 at Theatre Three in the Quadrangle, 2800 Routh St. \$10 to \$40. 214-871-3300, www.theatre3dallas.com.