

# WHO GOT THE PART?

BY LEESA DAVIS

## Charlie Newell

**Project:** *A non-Equity production of 'Brighton Beach Memoirs'*

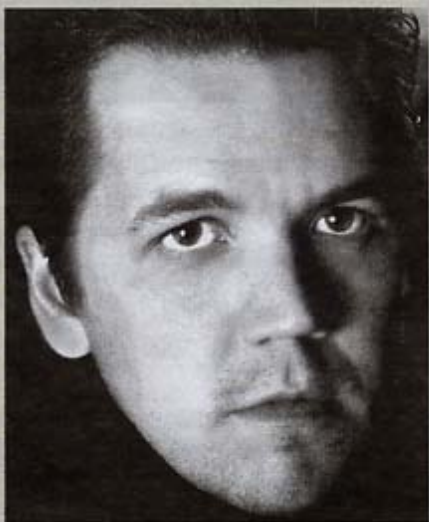
**Role:** *Stanley Jerome*

Charlie Newell couldn't resist the opportunity to audition for a production of Neil Simon's *Brighton Beach Memoirs* when he saw the casting notice in the July 15, 2005 issue of *Back Stage East*.

*Brighton Beach Memoirs* is Simon's autobiographical story of a family living in Brooklyn in the 1930s and undergoing some trying times. Newell played the role of Stanley, the older brother, and describes the play as "bittersweet, with a lot of humor." The 29-year-old New Orleans native, who moved to Brooklyn just five weeks before Hurricane Katrina, says his audition was exhilarating, and *Brighton Beach Memoirs* will always be special to him as his first stage role in New York.

Performed on three September weekends, the play was produced by the Heights Players, a non-Equity community theatre in Brooklyn. Director Robert Weinstein says Newell definitely has what it takes to be an actor. "Charlie had a vibrant enthusiasm and a real handle on the relationships and contexts of the scenes I had him read during the audition process," says Weinstein, who has directed over 40 plays in 15 years and says he would happily work with Newell again.

Newell also stars in the comic indie film short "Attack of Ernie," which was directed by John Strong, also from New Orleans, and shown at the University of New Orleans. He plays the role of a struggling, introverted artist who gets attacked by the giant puppet Ernie, of *Sesame Street* fame. Strong is also supportive of the actor and sure that he will go far in his career. "He has a lot of energy and focus; he'll try any suggestion you throw his way," Strong says. "He's



great with comedy; he's a very funny guy. He brightens up the atmosphere around you."

And Newell is definitely moving up in his acting career: He will be seen on the big screen this fall alongside Jude Law and Sean Penn in *All the King's Men*, directed by Steve Zaillian. Newell, who has a speaking role as the lead reporter, got cast in the film in New Orleans in 2004 with the help of his New Orleans agent.

Newell is ecstatic about his success thus far and admits that acting is a difficult industry, though he says he's enjoying it: "[Building a career] is one of the hardest things I've ever done. It builds your character to climb up that steep hill." <

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