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Entertainment 

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'British Invasion' revives the '60s

JANUARY HOLMES
Herald Staff Writer

What: "The British Invasion," a musical revue of British music from the 1960s

When: Preview shows 7:30 p.m. Tuesday and Wednesday; 7:30 p.m. Jan. 11-12; 6 and 9 p.m. Jan 13, and 4 and 7:30 p.m. Jan. 14; additional shows run various times through March 24

Where: Florida Studio Theatre's Goldstein Cabaret, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota

Tickets: \$19-\$29

Information: 366-9017

Whenever director Dennis Courtney reminisces about his youth, a montage of Beatles music quickly floods his mind, connecting each childhood memory to a song.

Apparently, he isn't the only one at Sarasota's Florida Studio Theatre whose life is set to music. The same can be said for artistic director Richard Hopkins, the composer of the theater's newest musical revue, "The British Invasion." The production features the tunes of the Beatles and other well-known 1960s British performers.

"This idea came from Richard," Courtney said of the show. "It's his baby. We've been talking about it for the last four years, about how much we love the era of the Beatles music. It's probably music that's the soundtrack of our lives. We like it - it's the perfect soundtrack for American history since the 1960s."

Florida Studio's Goldstein Carabet will host the show, which features a cast of five and 30 songs that came from or were influenced by the era, showcasing the works of performers such as the Rolling Stones, The Who and Elton John.

The music is a mixture of genres, with a sound that includes a bit of jazz, a dash of Elvis and other shadings of rock 'n' roll, said Paul Binotto, who is performing in the show. They are songs such as "I Want to Hold Your Hand" by the Beatles and "He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother" by the Hollies - a favorite of Binotto's.

The music of that era dealt with a variety of issues during the time - from relationships to women's liberation, subjects the nation is still dealing with today, Courtney said. It has helped America find its identity through the turbulent times of the civil rights era, which also affected the music industry, Binotto said. The British invasion of music "pulled all of us together," he said. "We were ripe and ready for it."

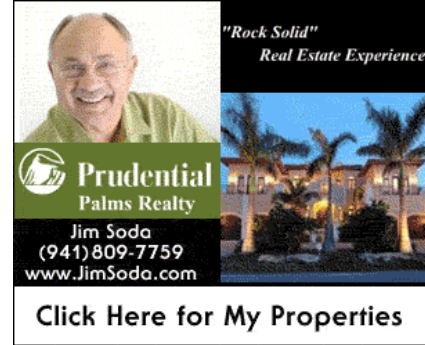
Binotto and Courtney said they can't imagine America's musicscape or history without the onslaught of British acts, whose music challenged society.

Without it, maybe there would just be "bubble-gum" music, said Binotto. And maybe society would have taken a little longer to change in the wake of civil rights and women's liberation, said Courtney.

"Americans need something seismic to shake us up," Courtney said. "We don't like to change. Maybe we just would have things like what it was for a while longer. I don't know."

But this show's not meant to be political - it's about an era of music that spurred a generation and continues to do so today.

British music had a second "invasion" during the 1980s, with acts such as Def Leppard,



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Rick Astley and Adam Ant, which later gave rise to bands such as U2 and Coldplay, Courtney said. But that's too much British material to cover in one show, though.

"I think there's maybe another show there," Courtney said.

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