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Posted on Fri, Oct. 29, 2004

## 'G.I. Jive' parallels today

DONNA HARTMAN  
Herald Staff Writer

"G. I. Jive" is Florida Studio Theatre's tribute to the greatest generation - and more.

"It's timely," said actor Danny Vaccaro, one of two male singers in the show. "These are war songs and there is absolutely no denying the parallels today."

"G.I. Jive" opens FST's cabaret season on Nov. 2, Election Day, in the theater's Goldstein Cabaret. It runs through Jan. 8.

The theme for the entire 2004-05 cabaret is "Something to Say," with songs that have entertained, enlightened and inspired generations in America.

In two acts, "G.I. Jive" spans the entire World War II era from pre-war, to wartime, to post-war and the nation's growing paranoia about the atom bomb.

The first act begins before the bombing of Pearl Harbor when there was still an innocence pervading the nation. The actors are dressed as civilians, wearing suits and ties and cocktail dresses. The scene is a Saturday night social around a jukebox at a soda fountain.

"It's about being young, falling in love, and wanting to have a more mature relationship," said Dennis Courtney, who directs and choreographs the show. Courtney is a director and choreographer in residence at FST.

Voice-overs give news flashes about the impending war, however. And, when the actors get the news about the bombing of Pearl Harbor, they prepare to go to war.

"The music is so reflective of a generation," Courtney said. "People weren't as fragmented as they are today. There was a collective consciousness in this country. Everyone thought going to war was the right thing to do."

The second act takes off from that historic moment and the actors are in military garb, as if they were members of a USO show. The tone is slightly darker.

"They are hoping and praying the soldiers will come home and they're dealing with the possibilities of the atom bomb," Courtney said.

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Many familiar tunes from the 1930s and 1940s were selected for the cabaret, including "G.I. Jive," "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy," "In the Mood," "Keep the Home Fires Burning" and "I'll Be Seeing You in Apple Blossom Time."

Courtney, who helped create the show, said the tunes were selected from an original list of 100 songs.

"(Artistic director) Richard Hopkins wanted it to be more than just a 1940s show," Courtney said. "There is a reason why they are called the greatest generation. It is a celebration. It is the music that kept the people and our troops happy."

Besides Vaccaro, the cast includes Steven Cates, Sarah Pramstaller and Deanna Greene. The musical director is Michael Sebastian, with sets and costumes by Marcella Beckwith and lighting by Lee Mack.

Other cabarets this season include: "The Rise and Fall of Western Civilization According to Tom Lehrer," Jan. 11-March 19; and "Three Friends, Two Guitars (and a broken tambourine)," March 22-28.

**What:** "G.I. Jive"

**When:** Tuesday through Jan. 8. Please call the theater for performance times.

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

**Tickets:** \$18-\$22

**Information:** 366-9000

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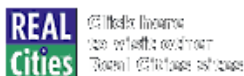
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