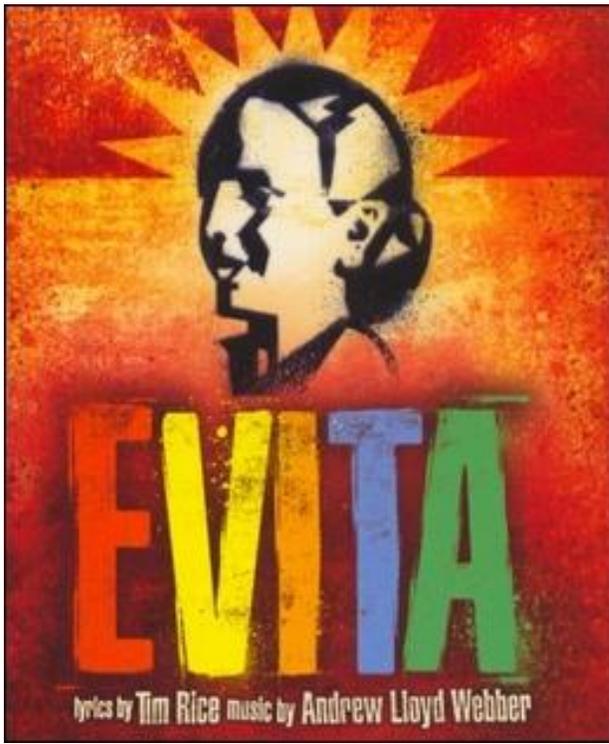


Musical 'Hair' to top off TheatreZone's season



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06/29/2007

TheatreZone is letting the sunshine in next theater season.

Naples' only professional theater troupe plans to cap its 2007-08 season with the irreverent hippie musical "Hair."

Director Mark Danni says he's always been attracted to the '60s — a conflicted era marked by drugs, music, flower power and war. The musical "Hair"

plays off all that and more. It's best known for the songs "Aquarius," "Good Morning Starshine" and "Let the Sunshine In."

"This was the first rock show," says Danni, who played percussion on the show's 25th-anniversary tour. "This came along and revolutionized everything." "Broadway went pop after that."

TheatreZone announced its 2007-08 schedule last week. The upcoming season also includes the musical "Evita" and the return of the heart-wrenching drama "Miracle in Rwanda."

TheatreZone is expanding its offerings with five shows next season instead of the usual four. And several of the shows will run two weekends instead of one.

Danni says he wanted to take advantage of theater reviews and word of mouth.

This year's "Miracle in Rwanda," for example, saw packed houses, but the show closed before more people could come.

"A lot of people wanted to see it and couldn't," Danni said.

TheatreZone's season starts Nov. 29 with "Nine," the 1982 Tony-Award winner for Best Musical. Based on filmmaker Federico Fellini and his movie "8 1/2," "Nine" follows Fellini as he's pursued by hordes of beautiful women — some of them imaginary. Along the way, he tries to come up with a plot for his next movie. "He's having a midlife crisis," Danni says.

Next comes "Leader of the Pack," a hit Broadway musical celebrating the life and times of doo-wop singer and composer Ellie Greenwich. Greenwich penned such hits as "Chapel of Love," "Da Do Ron Ron," "Be My Baby," "Leader of the Pack" and "And Then He Kissed Me." The show will star Karen Gray Cipriani, former lead singer for the '60s girl group The Secrets.

TheatreZone takes a sharp turn toward drama with its next show, "Miracle in Rwanda." The one-woman show tells the true story of Immaculée Ilibagiza, whose family died violently in Rwanda's 1994 genocide. TheatreZone regular Leslie Lewis Sword wrote and starred in the show after meeting Ilibagiza at a woman's conference. After its TheatreZone debut this year, "Miracle" went on to New York City's Ohio Theater, where it earned strong reviews. It's also scheduled for Scotland's Edinburg Festival Aug. 5-27.

It's a powerful, riveting and ultimately inspirational story that deserves to be seen, Danni says.

After "Miracle," TheatreZone moves on to "Evita," the classic Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice musical about Argentina's controversial first lady, Eva Perón. It's a challenging piece, Danni says, and he knows he's got his work cut out for him. "Evita" is full of complex and dynamic music that takes strong pipes and a strong musical direction.

"It is somewhat ambitious," Danni says. "But then again, so was 'Chess' (a musical that ran earlier this year)."

TheatreZone's season closes June 12 with "Hair." It's a great musical, Danni says, but he warns people that the show also features wall-to-wall bad language and adult subject matter. If you can get past that, "Hair" offers memorable songs and an emotional story.

"It's a very powerful piece," Danni says.