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Swing's Mood

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Brace yourself—something big is set to ignite Cabrillo Stage

Back in the '90s it found new life again—the swing movement had a revival and swept across the nation. And from there, it hasn't lost steam. Hence, a musical titled "Swing" opened on Broadway in 1999 and played at the St. James Theater through 2001. It also enjoyed a national tour, and now the beloved musical will find a new home with a new cast at Cabrillo Stage this summer. The show, which is more of a revue than a plot-based performance, runs from June 25-July 18 in the junior college's new Crocker Theater. Expect a smashing good time since this project is being directed by one of Cabrillo Stage's favorites, Janie Scott, who is also providing choreography on the

show as well. Scott, who has a distinguished theatrical history, has provided directing and choreography services on numerous other previous shows with Cabrillo Stage. Theatergoers might remember her in a stunning performance as Peter Pan a few years back.

"Swing" showcases an enormous assortment of swing dances, including a new spin on things, like a jazz version of swing, a boogie-woogie country style, and of course the classic staples of East Coast and West Coast swing.

"I have been acquainted with swing dancing for most of my life," says Scott. "My parents met at a military canteen dance, and dancing was an important part of their lives. By 11 or 12 I had learned all the basic swing dances and I've loved it ever since then.

"The way this show is put together, the dancers for the show do a minimal amount of singing, because [there's so much] athletic, acrobatic dancing, ... so we have five lead singers, who are the types that would have been singing with a band at that time [in history]."

The musical has 12 dancers—six guys, and six girls, along with the five lead singers and an eight-piece band who are on the stage, directly involved in the performance.

For Scott, while she's taking on an enormous amount of work with launching this show, in many ways, it's nothing new to the longtime triple-threat. She has an extensive personal history with dancing, singing, and acting, and works as a professor at San Jose State University.

As for how an artist such as Scott can create wildly imaginative and vibrant dances in a show such as "Swing," that skill is an art form unto its self. The process is lengthy: "I start listening to the music incessantly," Scott says. "Even before casting it, I know the music and what's going on. I'm a very visual person. I see things literally in my head. It's like playing a film. I see bits and pieces of what something should look like, a rise and a fall, a picture of someone in the air, random things that can spur my imagination, and I incorporate the storylines into the dance. ... I work to relate those things, so there's more than just the dancing that you're looking at—the characters are being drawn for you."

For those who catch the show, Scott says it will be memorable and will draw people back into the old school swing era; it's a "window into this time period," she says. "It's non-stop excitement from start to finish."

"Swing" runs from June 25-July 18, produced by Cabrillo Stage, at the Crocker Theater, 6500 Soquel Drive, Aptos. Show times are at 7:30 p.m. on Thursdays through Saturdays, and 2 p.m. on Sundays. For more information, visit cabrillostage.com or call 479-6154. Send comments on this article to letters@gtweekly.com

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