



Studio Theatre Raises Curtain on Season 4

POLITICAL LANDSCAPE WILL BE TOPIC OF PRODUCTIONS



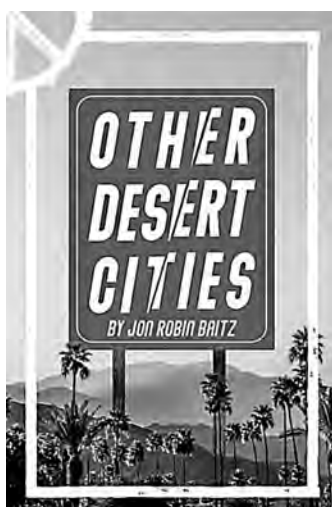
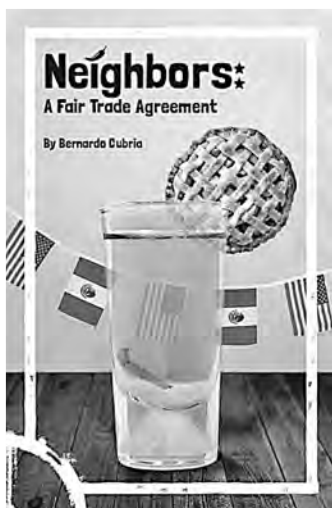
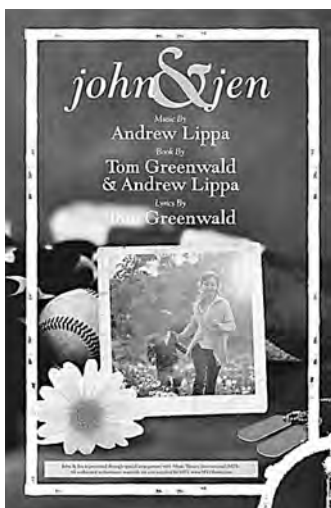
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The musical “John & Jen” officially opens tonight at The Studio Theatre Tierra del Sol.



By KRISTEN FIORE | Daily Sun Senior Writer

Months of script selection, set design, rehearsals and long hours in the theater led up to tonight, the opening of “John & Jen” and the outset of season four at The Studio Theatre Tierra del Sol. The four shows this season, “John & Jen,” “Neighbors: A Fair Trade Agreement,” “Assassins” and “Other Desert Cities” tackle the theme of breaking through the political divide. “We are headed into a big election year, and divides in our nation are really coming to light,” said Nathaniel Niemi, resident director at The Studio Theatre. “With that in mind, we thought it would be the perfect time to explore themes of patriotism, loyalty and the navigating of relationships caught up in the political



Submitted photos

The Studio Theatre's fourth season will feature four shows, with "John & Jen" opening tonight.

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tensions that divide us."

The Studio Theatre's mission is to inspire residents of Central Florida to examine relevant issues through intimate and innovative storytelling, according to Whitney Morse, artistic director at The Studio Theatre.

"When we look at scripts, we try to draw from what we see happening in the world around us," she said.

The season opener is "John & Jen," a musical about a brother and sister, and later a mother and son, and how they navigate their relationships against the backdrop of a changing America between the 1950s and 1990s.

The show, which has a total of 30 performances, opens today and will run until Oct. 27.

"John & Jen" is so touching," Morse said. "It hits on so many moments in human relationships and is a very universal story with a very intricate and emotional score accompanying it."

"John & Jen" will be followed by "Neighbors," a play that explores the relationship between neighbors of different backgrounds, Joe and José.

"I'm very excited for 'Neighbors,'" Morse said. "It's a style of theater we have not done before and a topic we have yet to cover. It's a very broad and absurdist comedy about relating to people who are different from ourselves."

"Neighbors" is slated to run from Nov. 22 to Dec. 22.

Niemi is looking forward to the following musical, Stephen Sondheim's "Assassins," set to run Jan. 24 through March 1.

The show puts the men and women who assassinated (or attempted to assassinate) U.S. presidents all in the same room.

"The results are intense, many times funny and ultimately tragic," Niemi said. "Sondheim's beautiful score

and lyrics are some of my absolute favorites and make this piece a true classic of the American musical theater catalogue. The themes of disillusionment with the American dream, the power of a gun and the tragic loss of a life feel very timely."

"Other Desert Cities" a story about a politically divided family and the lines they cross, closes the season with shows running from March 27 to May 3.

"I really hope the audience walks away from the season examining their own relationships," Morse said. "If they have someone in their life who they have a political issue with, I hope this season will inspire them to reach across that political divide and connect."

To learn more about season 4, visit thesharonstudio.com.

Logistically, season 4 brings a few new upgrades for patrons at The Studio Theatre.

There will be no more general admission, meaning that patrons will select their seats when they purchase tickets. The theater seating itself is equipped with new handrails, and sign language interpreters will be available for specific shows.

Morse said going into season four, she simply feels grateful.

When the idea for The Studio Theatre was first conceived, she was just hopeful for mostly full houses.

"I would have never thought that we would completely sell out for two straight seasons, then add more performances and seats to meet the demand over the next season and still be very close to capacity every night," Morse said. "In a world where theater is losing popularity, it is alive, well and thriving in The Villages."

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