

What's the Buzz?: Quad City Music Guild Showcases Female Musicians of the '60s in "Beehive"

Written by Mike Schulz

Wednesday, 21 March 2007 02:23

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"I was really nervous," recalls Jackie Madunic. "I love Tina Turner - she's, like, one of my idols - and I was *terrified.*"

Madunic is describing the first time she rehearsed her role as Turner in the Quad City Music Guild's production of *Beehive*, and the actress' fears are understandable. The revue, running March 23 through 25, is a celebration of the 1960s' most prominent female musicians - among them Turner, Janis Joplin, Lesley Gore, Aretha Franklin, Diana Ross, Connie Francis, and Annette Funicello - yet in addition to portraying one of our country's most identifiable rock icons, another factor is conceivably *adding* to the performer's

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(As, it should be noted, is actress Sarah Ulloa, who plays both Franklin and Ross.)

"We really worked hard," says director Tom Vaccaro about finding African-American performers to audition for *Beehive*. In addition to notices in local newspapers, he lists, "We sent out fliers to Baptist churches, I contacted people from [2005's] *Ragtime*, we went to all the colleges around here, the high schools, people from when we did

Aida

last year ... but we just didn't have African Americans turn out. There was one woman that was, I believe, 62, that auditioned. And that was it.

"So," he says with a shrug. "What can you do?"

You cast the show *anyway*. And discussing his all-Caucasian, all-female ensemble, Vaccaro says he couldn't be happier with the chosen performers: "When auditions were over, we were ecstatic. We were just *ecstatic* with who came in."

The director certainly recognizes that the 10 women cast in *Beehive* may not exactly *look* like the performers they're representing. "I don't doubt for a moment," Vaccaro says, "that when Jackie and three white girls come out, and they [audiences] look in their programs and they see that it's

Tina

next ... they might, for a moment, blanch just a little bit.

"But as soon as she opens her mouth - as soon as Sarah opens *her* mouth, as soon as they *all* perform - then," he says, snapping his fingers, "it's all gonna disappear. Sure, it would've been great [to have African-Americans in the cast]. But it didn't happen. And I wouldn't trade anyone in the show for anybody else."

While *Beehive* marks the directorial debut of longtime Music Guild veteran Vaccaro - most recently seen in the organization's *Aida* and *Sugar!* - it's a show he has long been acquainted with, having worked at the Circa '21 Dinner Playhouse during its 1996 run of the musical, and serving as guitarist for a 2005 production at Davenport's First Presbyterian Church.

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"I guess it just had to be something that I really felt strongly about," Vaccaro says of finally making the leap into direction. "For years, I thought, 'Well, I like being *in* them more,' and when this came along ... well, obviously I couldn't be *in* it."

But with Vaccaro's *Beehive* familiarity making the show "almost formed in my head" even before rehearsals began - not to mention the 52-year-old's familiarity with the show's musical time frame - the director was insistent that his cast didn't merely *perform* the music of the period; he needed them to *live* it.

"Otherwise," he says, "it might as well be karaoke. That's what we *didn't* want. We wanted to try to make this as much of a re-creation as possible, 'cause that's what people want to hear, you know? They can hear *anybody* sing a song in a club somewhere, but the essence of this show is going back in time and hearing it the way you *remember* it."

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...with the help of the Quad City Music Guild. For more information on the event, visit <http://www.quadcitymusicguild.com> or call the Quad City Music Guild at 314-425-1111. The event will be held at the Quad City Music Guild on Wednesday, March 14, 2007, at 7:00 PM. The event is free and open to the public. For more information, visit <http://www.quadcitymusicguild.com>.