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21

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Broadway star headlines in Signature's 'Ace'

Musical about the Greatest Generation opens theater's season

By **Emily Cary**
Special to *The Examiner*

Broadway star Jill Paice leaves Scarlett O'Hara and the Civil War in her wake as she time-travels to World War II. Arriving directly from London and the Trevor Nunn production of the musical version of "Gone With the Wind," she heads the stellar cast of "Ace."

The musical exploring the lives and legacies of America's Greatest Generation opens Signature Theatre's new season and features music by Richard Oberacker; book and lyrics by Robert Taylor and Oberacker and choreography by Karma Camp. Eric Schaeffer directs.

Paice went directly from graduation at Baldwin-Wallace College into the national touring company of "Les Miserables." Since then, her impressive credits on Broadway and London's West End include originating the roles of Scarlett O'Hara, Laura Fairlie in "The Woman in White" and Niki Harris in "Curtains," and playing the original Sophie in the Las Vegas company of "Mamma Mia!"

She has also performed in "The Gig," "Weird Romance" and on numerous cast recordings, including the "Andrew Lloyd Webber on Broadway" album. The 2007 Tony Awards, CBS's "The Early Show"

and "Live with Regis and Kelly" are among her TV appearances. In "Ace" she plays Elizabeth Lucas, the mother of young Danny.

"As I age, so do my characters, even though I keep insisting that I'm still an ingénue," she says, laughing. "Elizabeth is a mother who hasn't done a very good job being a mother. The story starts at its end in 1952 and goes back to the beginning with flashbacks of my character in college. Danny's background is revealed page by page so that the audience becomes a character learning along with the boy."

"Dalton Harrod is fantastic as Danny. His performance breaks my heart. The music is some of the best I've heard recently and makes you feel like flying. It's emotional and story-telling at the same time whether it's about falling in love, experiencing your greatest dream or losing your love."

When Paice's father retired from the Air Force and the family moved to Dayton, Ohio, her mother took the third-grader to a community theater audition to make new friends. Captivated by the stage, she performed throughout high school and even won a local contest that sent her to New York and firmed her intention to major in theater at Baldwin-Wallace College, despite her mother's urging to become a pharmacist.

After taking curtain calls the opening night of "Woman in White" in London, Paice shared a laugh with her mother, who came backstage and said, "Aren't you glad you didn't become a pharmacist!" Now she is

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— Broadway star **Jill Paice**

eager to move the audiences attending "Ace."

"This is a story told through a child's eyes that people haven't heard before," she says. "It's about mothers and sons, fathers and sons and foster families. It will stay with every person in the audience and help them appreciate their own families and all the people in their lives."

IF YOU GO

'Ace'

Broadway stars Jill Paice, Emily Skinner, Christiane Noll and Florence Lacey launch Signature's season.

- » **VENUE:** Signature's MAX Theatre, Arlington, Va.
- » **WHEN:** Aug. 26 through Sept. 28, Tues. and Wed. at 7:30 p.m., Thurs. and Fri. at 8 p.m., Sat. at 2 and 8 p.m., Sun. at 2 and 7 p.m.
- » **TICKETS:** \$49 to \$77
- » **INFORMATION:** 703-573-7328



Jill Paice

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