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Step back in time at the new Stage Door Canteen
The National World War II Museum's new attraction is a tribute to the 1940s
dancing, singing talents that boosted WWII morale

NEW ORLEANS (May 7, 2009) – The time is the present. An elderly man and his wife are listening to a sentimental love song, *I'll Be Seeing You*, perhaps, or maybe *It's Been A Long, Long Time*. The song isn't as important as the memories that go with it. It's the music he heard before shipping off to war six decades before. Suddenly a transformation occurs. The years fall away and the old man is now a young serviceman. His wife, now a girl, is at his side. They begin dancing with a host of other couples back in the year 1942.

So begins The National World War II Museum's dynamic new musical production at The Stage Door Canteen, a Home Front-themed entertainment and dining venue. The hour-long performance opens in November in conjunction with the spectacular 4-D cinematic experience, *Beyond All Boundaries* at the adjoining Victory Theater.

The Stage Door Canteen is also about WWII, but the memories it evokes are sweeter ones – designed to celebrate the triumph of 1940s American popular culture. It's a tribute to the music and entertainers that helped boost the morale of the young servicemen on their way to war and define the values they were fighting to preserve.

“The Stage Door Canteen offers a great juxtaposition with the life-or-death drama unfolding inside the Museum's Victory Theater,” says the Dr. Gordon “Nick” Mueller, President and CEO of the New Orleans-based Museum. “After being on the front lines, so to speak, the Canteen offers an exciting, uplifting experience for the visitor, completely in line with the goals of the Home Front.”

In the 150-seat vintage theater-inspired space, audiences will have a chance to see Swing dancers and an Andrews Sister-styled girl group dance and sing to all the popular old Big Band tunes, recreating the energy and spirit of the Home Front. “Stars” will participate in a War Bond drive

just as they did in the 1940s while a 15-minute film recalls the era's greatest moments and stars. The mixture is designed to be both a sentimental journey and an instructive one.

“The Stage Door Canteen show is about educating through entertainment,” says Gary Solomon, President and Executive Producer of Solomon Group Entertainment, a creative and technical production firm working with the Museum. “I think it’s a great opportunity for museum-goers to understand the role the Stage Door Canteen played to so many anxious young men, many leaving home for the very first time.”

The original Canteens began as two venues – the Stage Door Canteen in Manhattan’s Theater District started by Broadway performers, and the Hollywood Canteen at 1451 Cahuenga Blvd. in Los Angeles founded by film actors Bette Davis and John Garfield. Both venues featured entertainment, dancing and food. The price of admission was a soldier’s uniform.

On any given night they could be serenaded by Dinah Shore, dance with Joan Crawford or laugh at the antics of a Red Skelton or Mickey Rooney. For the privates waiting to be deployed, a visit to the canteens were a way to forget, albeit temporarily, their uncertain futures. For servicemen and women returning from the fronts, the canteens were part of a celebratory homecoming. They proved so successful that by November 1945, ten canteens, including Paris and London, had entertained 11 million troops.

There were plenty of historic moments. One Christmas Eve in Los Angeles, Bing Crosby and his family appeared to sing carols. Marlene Dietrich was a regular when not entertaining overseas troops. In New York, Lauren Bacall jitterbugged with soldiers until exhausted.

The National World War II Museum’s new Stage Door Canteen recaptures that excitement and is an ode to the morale-building experience. Patrons will be able to hear the old songs, laugh at the jokes and grab a bite, a soft drink or a cocktail while discovering the sights and sounds of the era. During live performances, the Museum will offer the option for dinner furnished by The American Sector, a Chef John Besh restaurant.

“The National World War II Museum’s current expansion will result in significant job creation for Louisiana,” said Louisiana Governor, Bobby Jindal. “The state played a critical role in the construction of the Stage Door Canteen live performance venue via our live-performance tax credit program. This venue will build momentum for the completion of the Museum’s expansion and continued visitor growth.”

Stephen Moret, Secretary of Louisiana Economic Development added, “The Stage Door Canteen will help grow New Orleans’ live performance industry, which has a rich tradition and history. In addition, this is significant for LED because the Stage Door Canteen is the first project to use LED’s live performance infrastructure incentive as well as live performance production tax credits. These incentives underscore our support for various forms of entertainment such as live performance, film and digital media.”

The Museum will be opening all three new attractions on November 6 as part of their overall expansion plans: The Victory Theater, The Stage Door Canteen and The American Sector. The

opening weekend red carpet extravaganza will be attended by Hollywood celebrities led by Tom Hanks and Tom Brokaw, many World War II military veterans and their families, active military and others.

Solomon Group Entertainment with offices in New Orleans and New York, is a creative and technical management production firm dedicated to the art of storytelling. They are experienced producers, writers, designers and problem solvers who provide design, management and production services to the live event, sports, theater and attraction markets. Their work has included the musicals *Same Color Sky* and *White Noise: A Cautionary Musical*, which has its Broadway debut in October 2009. The firm also manages New Orleans' Le Petit Theatre Du Vieux Carre, the oldest continually operating community theater in America.

The National World War II Museum tells the story of the American Experience in the war that changed the world – why it was fought, how it was won, and what it means today. Dedicated in 2000 as The National D-Day Museum and now designated by Congress as America's National World War II Museum, it celebrates the American Spirit, the teamwork, optimism, courage and sacrifice of the men and women who fought on the battlefield and the Home Front. For more information, call 877-813-3329 or 504-527-6012 or visit www.nationalww2museum.org. Follow us on Twitter at [WWIImuseum](https://twitter.com/WWIImuseum) or visit our [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/WWIImuseum) fan page.

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