

Neapolitan

ARTS
& CLASSIFIED

SECTION D



SURVIVOR TAKES STAGE

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Sabine van Dam today

*Gulfshore
Playhouse
forges timely
school play on
Naples woman
who endured
the Holocaust*

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Sabine van Dam of Naples and her sister were 4 and 9 years old when their family put on all clothes they could wear, loaded their coat linings with valuables and slipped out the door of their Polish home forever.

The sisters were close to the age of schoolchildren who will see their chilling story this year wherever the drama "In Flight: The Story of Sabine van Dam" is invited in Collier County schools. It's a collaboration between the Holocaust Museum of Southwest Florida and Gulfshore Playhouse, based on van Dam's life.

Their family hid in abandoned houses and used their last possessions to bribe Nazi informants. Still, they didn't run far enough

See **HOLOCAUST**, Page 2D

Holocaust

Continued from Page 1D

or fast enough, as the children will learn.

“In Flight” is meant to make fourth through sixth graders think and ask questions about intolerance and discrimination. It cuts an even sharper edge after the political events of the last two weeks, as Hester Kamin (KAY-min), director of education for Gulfshore Playhouse notes.

“I feel that it’s very timely — and that is important — and that art is a way for us to talk about the choices we make in the world,” she said of “In Flight.”

The 25-minute play runs a bit more than half the length of a school period to allow time for student comments and questions. Kamin said the students can even ask what might happen if a certain character had made a different choice, and watch as the characters improvise, acting on that choice and showing its ramifications.

Kamin is already setting up potential guides for those alternative actions, although this means the troupe will have to think on its feet.

Make that troupes: Because its cast requires people in the young-adult age bracket who may have employment conflicts, Kamin is trying to rehearse at least two sets of actors to guarantee performances.

That Gulfshore Playhouse has dropped its requirement that the actors be Equity members underscores the organization’s



Sabine van Dam in her childhood years

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dedication to its potential.

“Her story is an amazing story,” Kamin said, recalling her jitters after finishing “In Flight” and emailing it to van Dam, who spends part of the year in the Netherlands. “I was probably more nervous about this than anything I’ve ever done.”

Kamin has created plenty of plays before. This one is her tenth. She has worked as

Seeking actors

Sabine: Young woman (20.) who is assertive, curious, brave; the role ages from 4-9 years and as an adult

Hadassah: Young woman (20s) to play Sabine’s older sister, serious, quiet, old for her age. Plays the character from age 9 to 13

Rosa/Orphanage attendant: Woman (40s-50s) who plays two roles, a mother and a harried, but kind, orphanage attendant

Naychem/John/ Soldier/Uncle: Older man (40’s-50’s) who plays multiple roles as father, Nazi collaborator, soldier, quiet uncle.

To schedule an audition, please contact Hester Kamin at 239-261-7529 ext. 207 or at hkamin@gulfshoreplayhouse.org.

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co-artistic director of the bilingual Drama Ties Theatre in France; was youth theater associate of Honolulu Theatre for Youth; and was director of education of Barrington Stage Company.

She’s won the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists National Award, the Academy of Paris Award for Contribution to Arts and Culture, and the Academy of American Poets Prize.

Still, said Kamin: “I feel so lucky to be trusted with anybody’s story. But such an experience so devastating and powerful as Sabine’s. ... I feel extremely lucky that Sabine has agreed to do this with us.”

“I never thought my story would become a play — after all, there are millions of those stories, unfortunately — and I am very curious to see it in due course,” said van Dam, responding to questions via email. She and her sister, who lives in Israel, are both still alive, and van Dam volunteers at the holocaust museum.

“My main reason for volunteering at the museum and telling my story is my hope to play a small part in educating kids, teaching them some respect and tolerance. This is what I hope the effect of the play will be,” she wrote.