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For Immediate Release

In Their Footsteps Explores True Life Struggles of Women Veterans

Veterans Day honors those who served our country, but how many of us know the personal stories of those who served?

In Their Footsteps, a documentary-theatre piece exploring the lives of women veterans of the Vietnam War by Infinite Variety Productions (IVP), has received critical acclaim at theater festivals in the U.S. and United Kingdom. The production now makes its Jersey City debut in a special co-presentation by Jersey City Theater Center (JCTC) and Salons for Life (SLF) at Merseles Studios, 339 Newark Avenue, Jersey City, NJ 07302 (November 9/2:00pm).

IVP and SLF are two women owned and operated entities whose collaborations utilize theater, audience interaction and facilitated discussions. IVP is a theatre company whose work spotlights the true stories of women in historical events. SLF is a learning and community design company specializing in experiential workshops and programming. Their collaboration at Merseles Studios will be an interactive theater event featuring a performance of *In Their Footsteps*, followed by a guided conversation and reflection where veterans and civilians alike can gather to reflect on what we mean when we say “Thank you for your Service.”

Thousands of American women served in the Vietnam War one of the most violent conflicts of the 20th century, but their personal stories of bravery and survival are rarely recognized. *In Their Footsteps*, based on interviews the scriptwriters conducted with its subjects, portrays the traumas they endured and the healing they eventually found to survive.

In Their Footsteps has been performed at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Border-Light Fringe Cleveland, The Women’s Overseas Service League Conference in San Antonio, and off-Broadway at 59E59th Street Theatre. The Merseles Studios performance marks the first time this play has been presented in Jersey City.

The production has received widespread praise for its emotional authenticity – “...relevant, present-day conversations about politics, war, sexual harassment, and PTSD, told through honest storytelling.” – *Thereviewshub.com*

“After over a year of performances, IVP is thrilled to bring our original documentary theatre piece to Salons for Life and JCTC,” said Kate Szekely, Producer, IVP. “IVP strives to make women’s history more than just words, dates and names on a page; to show that the past repeats itself unless heeded; and to connect the human experience inter-generationally.”

Since April 2018, SLF has designed salons as “micro-retreats” that combine the transportive power of the arts and storytelling with actively facilitated conversation to create distinctly intimate and engaged experiences. SLF events are inspired by the *salonnières* of the French Enlightenment (circa the 18th

century) when women transformed living rooms into social spaces that catalyzed a network of ideas and learning.

“The larger intention behind the Salon Project has always been to bring us together, as a community in small and intimate numbers so we can start the important journey of healing, reflection and transformation,” said Nirupa Umapathy, Founder, SLF. “The stories of the veterans portrayed in *In Their Footsteps* are stories of extreme transitioning. They go from war to civilian life, but as one character says, how do you separate the war from the warrior? Through the true stories of these veterans we find the human issues of trauma and healing that affect us all.”

Realizing the living room inception of their namesake, SLF presented salons in settings as small as apartments, private rooms of restaurants, college classrooms and design studios. Previous collaborations between IVP and SLF have been invitation-only affairs in private spaces. The Black Box Theater at Merseles Studios – considered an intimate performance space by most standards – will be the largest venue – not to mention one of the few that are technically equipped with professional sound & lighting – for the IVP and SLF collaboration. In fact, *In Their Footsteps* will be their first public space salon.

“I love the idea of theater in someone’s living room and expanding that idea to Merseles Studios,” said Olga Levina, Artistic Director, JCTC. “Theater started with people telling stories to each other around the fire. The lives of the women who’ve been to war are stories we all need to hear. *In Their Footsteps* opens up the creative process by inviting people to be part of that process.”

In Their Footsteps

Saturday/Nov 9

Doors:1:30 PM / Show:2:00 PM

Tickets: \$20.00/\$10 – Veterans, Students & Senior Citizens (Proper ID Required)

To purchase tickets visit: www.JCTCenter.org

**Merseles Studios
339 Newark Avenue
Jersey City, NJ 07302
(201) 795-5386**

Photo Caption: In Their Footsteps is a Documentary theater experience exploring the lives of Women Veterans of the Vietnam War (pictured: Caroline Peters as Judy Jenkins Gaudino).

In Their Footsteps

Written by Ashley Adelman, Caroline Peters and Kelly Teaford
Veteran Interviews conducted by Ashley Adelman and Petol Weekes
Directed by Ashley Adelman

Cast

Ashley Adelman as Jeanne “Sam” Christie
Caroline Peters as Judy Jenkins Gaudino
Criena House as Lily Adams
Kate Szekely as Ann Kelsey
Chrystal Bethell as Doris “Lucki” Allen

Infinite Variety Productions (IVP), is a woman-owned and women-run 501(c)3 and theatre company whose mission it is to create awareness by spotlighting women who have served in different capacities in historical and current events but are often overlooked by both history and popular culture.

Salons for Life (SLF) is a woman-owned and woman-run creative enterprise based out of Jersey City-based that specializes in the design and production of salons as small-format events where conversations for change are front and center.

In Their Footsteps was made possible by generous support from the Hudson County Office of Cultural & Heritage Affairs/Tourism Development, Thomas A. DeGise, Hudson County Executive and the Hudson County Board of Chosen Freeholders and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.

In Their Footsteps was also made possible through the generosity of Ben LoPiccolo Development Group, JCTC’s Board of Directors, private donors and local Jersey City businesses.

Jersey City Theater Center, Inc. (JCTC) is a nonprofit, 501c3 arts organization committed to inspiring conversations about important issues of our times through the arts.