

February 12, 2010

FRIDAY **GO!** ON & OFF BROADWAY



Bobby Steggert (l.) and Jeffry Denman from the 2007 production of the WWII musical "Yank!"

Soldiers fight for a chance to love

We asked, he told. Bobby Steggert, seen recently as Younger Brother in "Ragtime," talks about playing Stu, a young gay recruit, in the World War II-era musical "Yank!" The York Theatre Company's production starts Tuesday at the Theatre at St. Peter's, 619 Lexington; (212) 935-5820.

Q: Even before you knew "Ragtime" was closing you'd requested a furlough to do "Yank!" True?

A: Yes. I've always been attracted to the story of Stu's awakening. He goes from being a scared young man to one who knows who is and what he needs. People don't realize the inner strength that they have. Any actor knows that's exciting to play.

Q: In 2007, you starred in the Gallery Players production in Brooklyn. Have steps to end Don't Ask, Don't Tell given "Yank!" new resonance?

A: I think so. Even though it's set in the '40s, I never approached the show as a period piece. It's always felt oddly contemporary. And with these themes and issues flying around, even more so.

Q: The creators, Joseph and David Zellnik, are brothers. Was that an interesting dynamic?

A: Yes. They're very different people. Joe, the composer, is incredibly intellectual, and plays things close to the chest. David, the lyricist and book writer, is emotionally driven. They really complement each other.

Q: Some actors are reprising their roles from 2007, including Jeffry Denman and Nancy Anderson. Three years later, what's new about your Stu?

A: I've grown up a lot, so I find his innocence a little harder to connect with. But I still believe it's important to fight for love. **Joe Dziemianowicz**