

Tallahassee Democrat

Limelight

Tallahassee's Weekly Entertainment Magazine

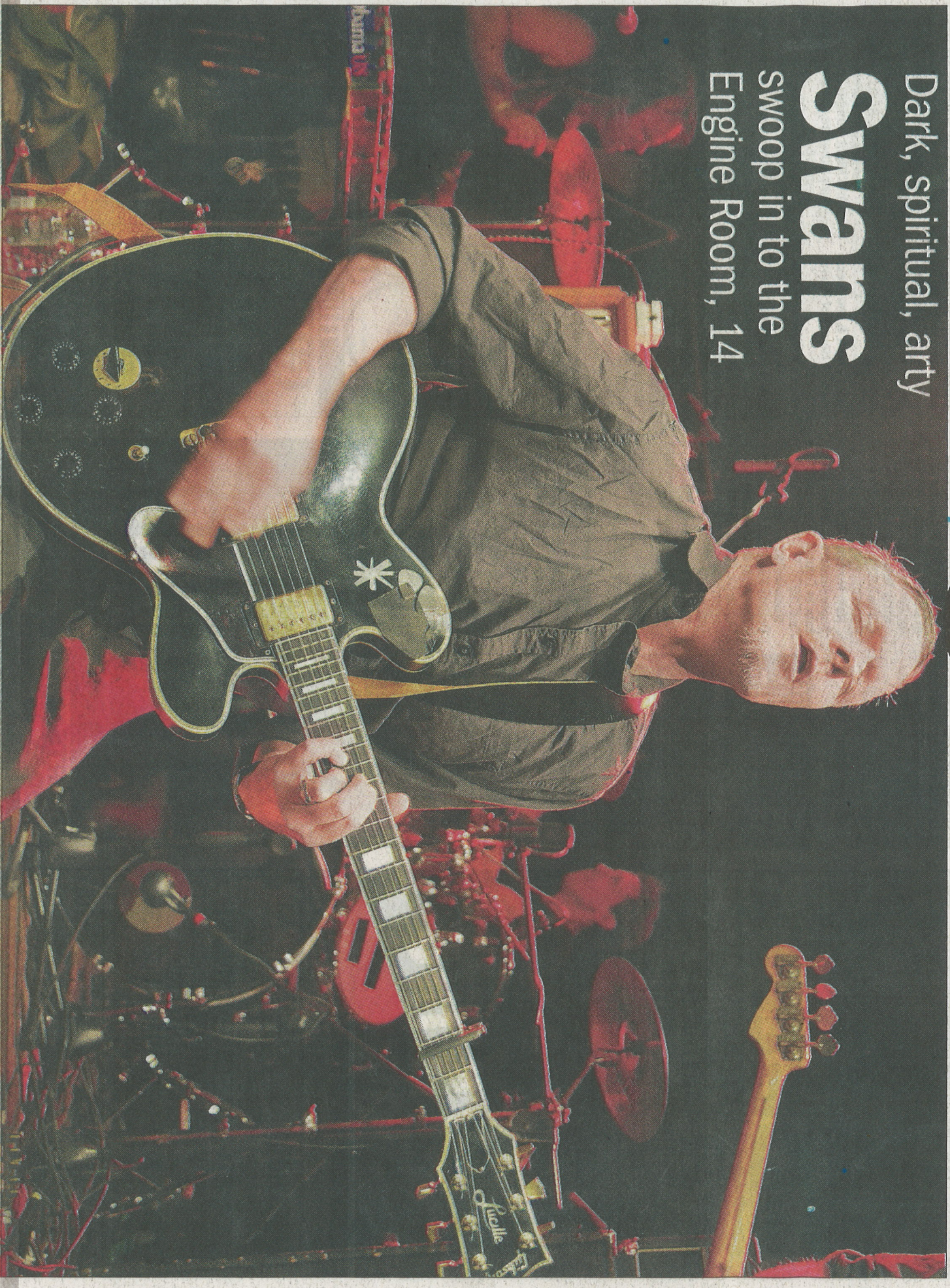
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TLT pays tribute to 9/11 victims, survivors with 'The Guys'

By Dana Edwards

Special to the Democrat

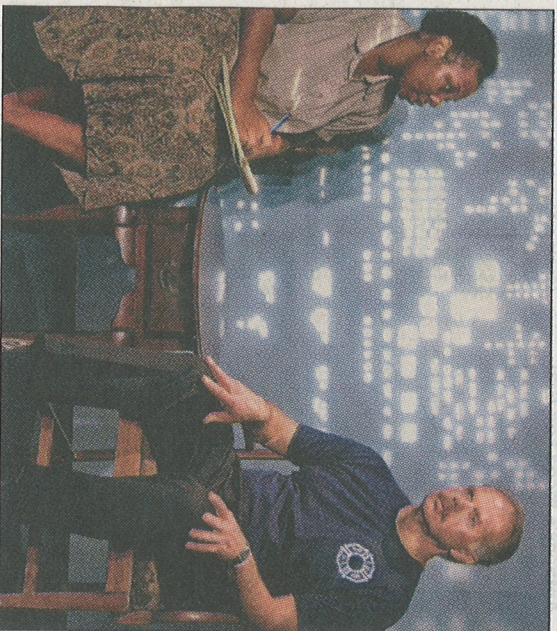
Maggie (Mateer) Pasquarelli, a 22-year-old college graduate at the time, took the subway under Manhattan to her second day of work at Safe Horizon, a victims' services agency in New York City, on Sept. 11, 2001. When she reached the agency on the East River just after 8:30 a.m., she saw the second plane crash through the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center.

"I had just sent my grandma an email that I was OK, and then the whole system went down," Pasquarelli said. "We all had to evacuate after the attacks, but all transportation was shut down — we had to walk home across the bridge. The thing that was really alarming of that the air smelled of burning flesh at Ground Zero weeks after the attacks."

Pasquarelli's work with domestic violence victims turned into disaster relief work for 9/11 victims and their families. Stories of families finding the body part of a relative after six months and firefighters yelling words of frustration became part of daily life for Pasquarelli. She said many of her friends dealt with the stressful job by smoking, gaining or losing a lot of weight, and having affairs. She chose to move to Tallahassee to pursue a massage therapy license.

After living in Tallahassee for the past nine years, Pasquarelli now works her dream job as an Advanced Placement English teacher at Lincoln High School, but she said she still looks for her own closure after helping 9/11 victims cope with loss.

Art as a mirror
With the 10th anniversary



CAROLINE V. STURITZ/SPECIAL TO THE DEMOCRAT
Dee Selmore as Joan and Keith Andrews as Nick in "The Guys," on stage at Tallahassee Little Theatre.

ry of the terrorist attacks on Sunday, Americans will remember and honor victims in different ways. For some, art is therapy. In tribute to victims and survivors, Tallahassee Little Theatre is presenting "The Guys," a 2001 play inspired by author Anne Nelson's experience as a journalist helping a fireman cope with the loss of his New York City crew on 9/11.

The original production of the play featured Sigourney Weaver and

Bill Murray in the starring roles at the Flea Theater in Manhattan, where Weaver will perform again this year in a production that will benefit local fire departments.

Rod Durham, a Leon High School drama and language arts teacher of 11 years, encourages healing through theater. He is directing the TLT production of "The Guys" — his third time working with the play. In 2003, Durham secured Nelson's permission to stage the work,

IF YOU GO

What: "The Guys," by Anne Nelson
When: 8 p.m. today and Saturday, 2 p.m. Sunday
Where: Tallahassee Little Theatre, 1861 Thomasville Road
Cost: \$13
Contact: Call 224-8474 or visit www.tallytheatre.org

making Leon the first high school to perform "The Guys."

"What's interesting to me is that this is an adult play with no curse words, yet the content is distinctively for those of a mature age," Durham said.

The 47-year-old educator said "The Guys" has always been of interest to him. He followed the production in *The New York Times* and charted its success in the struggling Flea Theater.

"I think art can hold a mirror up to a society and can help people in a cathartic way," Durham

said. "It can ask hard questions and say things that people either can't or won't."

In 2004, Tallahassee Little Theatre asked Durham to direct "The Guys" again, and this time, Durham's cast featured the first African-American woman to portray the female journalist role. The 2011 production will again feature Dametria "Dee" Selmore as Joan the journalist.

"This play focuses on the heroes of the 9/11 events by remembering and celebrating these people's lives after the attacks," Selmore said. "I understand this play a whole lot differently and now it makes perfect sense."

Pasquarelli said lots of people created art after

the 9/11 attacks, but she felt most of it seemed "cheesy, bad and even tacky." She remembers a co-worker giving out CDs with a song he created about the Twin Towers tragedy as Christmas presents. Pasquarelli said she usually avoids reading articles and watching movies and television programs about the terrorist attacks.

"I am going to go to ("The Guys"), though I don't know if I want to go alone," Pasquarelli said. "I dealt with a lot of firefighters. Part of their job is to be strong, but they didn't get enough help because they didn't want to get help. They saw help as a sign of weakness, and I'm interested to see if the play accurately portrays their feelings."

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