



Times photos — MICHAEL RONDOLU

Working on a scene from *Your People are Mine* are Sharon Reaboi, left foreground, Colman Reaboi and Cary Reich. In the background, studying their scripts, are from left, Joy Katzen-Guthrie, Ellie LeVine, Mitch LeVine and writer and director Shimon Gewirtz.

Ruth musical stays true to original

■ A St. Petersburg synagogue will stage the poignant saga of loyalty and love, which draws Christians and Jews alike.

By WAVENEY ANN MOORE
Times Staff Writer

"For wherever you go, I will go. Wherever you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God."

Ruth 1:16

THOUGH AT LEAST 3,000 years have passed since Ruth's poignant declaration, her biblical story of love and loyalty still possesses the power to captivate the hearts and minds of modern-day readers.

For Jewish congregations, Ruth's narrative is subject to an annual retelling. Recounted on Shavuot, the festival that begins at sundown Thursday and commemorates the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai to the Jewish people, Ruth's story is especially appropriate.

Not only does it give an account of a foreigner's acceptance of the Jewish faith, in essence the Torah, it serves as a reminder of that ancient time when the Israelites made their own historic covenant with God.

If you go

Your People are Mine will be performed at 7:45 p.m. Sunday at Congregation B'nai Israel, 300 58th St. N., St. Petersburg. Tickets are \$15, available at the door.

With Shavuot's approach this year, the story of Ruth will get a special retelling. Sunday, a concert version will be presented at Congregation B'nai Israel in its new sanctuary at 300 58th St. N.

The show, *Your People are Mine*, played for more than a decade to religiously diverse audiences in Israel, said Shimon Gewirtz, who wrote the musical with his sister, Gladys Hedaya.

"All these Christian groups would come to see it," said Gewirtz, cantor at Congregation B'nai Israel for the past five years.

"I saw personally on my trips to Israel how much these groups enjoyed the show."

Their reception is an illustration of the story's universal appeal, Gewirtz said.

"The fact of people having faith and devotion in times of trouble and stress and working it out together is something that we all go through. The essence of the story is one that could apply anywhere," he said.



Shimon Gewirtz, right center, works on a number with, from left, Sharon Reaboi and Ellie LeVine. Seated in the back is Joy Katzen-Guthrie. The musical is based on the biblical story of Ruth's love and loyalty.

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