Summer’s Remarks: Joseph Gordon-Levitt on In the Loop

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The great thing about Jay Chae’s “Almond Eyes” is that it tells the completely overlooked historical story of two Asian dancers, Dorothy Takahashi and Paul Wing, who came to be known as “Tyo and Wing, the Asian Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers.”

The play begins with the voice of Dorothy, “Almond Eyes” is the subtitle of her memoir. She tells the story of her friendship with her roommate and co-star, Paul Wing, the first Asian Americans to perform at the Grand Avenue Revue in 1939, and the story of their careers, which were cut short when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor in December 1941.

Unfortunately, the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor interrupted their careers, bringing it to an abrupt halt. Dorothy, who was Japanese, lived on the East Coast and wasn’t interned. However, her parents, who owned a restaurant in Los Angeles, were. Paul, who was Chinese, volunteered for the Navajo code talkers. When he returned, things between the two were never the same and they parted ways.

Dorothy continued dancing solo at the famous “Forbidden City” nightclub in San Francisco for quite a few years. Paul Wing died in 1939, but Dorothy Takahashi, at 91, wearing a sparkling black and silver evening gown, attended the opening night of “Almond Eyes.” She continues to dance at age 91 today.

This play helps us to remember the impact that Pearl Harbor had on American culture, and the impact that the bombing of Pearl Harbor had on the lives of Dorothy and Paul.

“Tyo and Wing” is a must-see for anyone interested in American history, dance, or Asian American culture.