

Directors combine for comedy

When South Valley Civic Theatre's production of Neil Simon's *California Suite* opens on March 27 for a three weekend run in Gilroy and Hollister, the talents of South Valley residents and a world famous playwright will be combined for top-notch entertainment. Highlighted will be the on-stage performances and the back stage capabilities of community theatre members from Morgan Hill, Gilroy and Hollister.

In a first ever arrangement the eighteen year old theatre group is utilizing a different director to present each of the four vignettes with the long running Broadway hit play. All scenes take place in a suite of a Beverly Hills hotel, and Simon's gift for comedy, from clever dialog to outrageous physical humor, sparkles throughout.

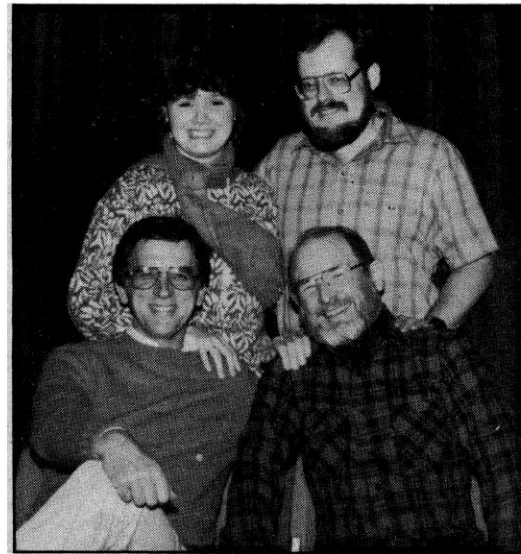
Charles Krahenbuhl of Gilroy, a long-time community theatre activist, will direct the quick-witted confrontation between Linda Fusano and Tom Hepner, subtitled "Visitors from New York." Then Al and Pinky Bloom take the stage as a confused couple from Philadelphia rebounding from the unexpected appearance of a beautiful, but unconscious girl, played by Whitney Pintello. The segment is being directed by Morgan Hill resident Suzie Chastang, actress, singer and veteran of summer stock theatre in Michigan.

Following the intermission, Chuck Myer, himself a playwright and musician, as well as a Gilroy city planner, guides the temperamental and very British antics of the "Visitors from London," played by Marion Pintello and Dennis Chavez, both of Hollister. The final scene is directed by Jim Allen, former drama instructor at San Benito High School. His performers include Betsy Andrade, Rod Pintello, Geri Schmutz, and Bill Corneth battling hilariously at the end of a friendship-trying vacation.

The play will be presented on March 27 and 28, April 3 and 4 at the Gilroy High School theatre, and then at the Hollister Elks Lodge for a Friday evening dinner show on April 10 and a Sunday Matinee on April 12. Ticket prices are \$7.50 for the show and \$15. for the dinner presentation in Hollister.

For more information, call 842-SHOW or 637-3214.

The directors of *California Suite* (L-R standing) Suzie Chastang of Morgan Hill, Chuck Myer of Gilroy. (L-R sitting) Jim Allen of Hollister and Charles Krahenbuhl of Gilroy.



California Suite to open

By Jim Maya
Miracle Miles Staff

California Suite, S.V.C.T.'s latest production, opens next Friday night for a two weekend run at the G.H.S. theatre. The Neil Simon comedy moves the following weekend to Hollister for two dinner theatre shows at the Elks Lodge at 7 p.m. on the 10th and 2 p.m. on the 12th. The G.H.S. curtain is at 8 p.m.

The comedy is actually four one act plays directed by four different directors. The four directors include newcomers Charles Krahenbuhl and Susie Chastang. Local audiences know both of them to be two of the finest character actors alive today. Both Charles and Susie have graced local stages with many wonderful performances and now have the chance to bring their years of training and experience to the directors chair.

The other two are more like "old comers." Chuck Myer, who has just finished an acting stint in the very successful, record-breaking production of *Black Comedy*, has done a great deal of directing, but not for local companies. We are most familiar with Chuck as an actor, writer, barber shop singer, local arts advocate, and as "The Voice of the Great Flood." Jim Allen, the other "old comer," is certainly the most well known director in all of San Benito County. S.V.C.T. in general, and his actors in particular,

are thrilled to be working with such a gifted artist.

I will always remember working with Jim as fellow actors in G.C.T.'s *The Odd Couple* and directing him in *Plaza Suite* and *Play It Again, Sam*. What great memories. What a legend.

Jim is directing the fourth act, "The Visitors from Chicago." Rod Pintello, Bill Cornith, Betsy Andrade and Gerri Schmutz play the doctors and their wives. What more can I say! All four, especially the veterans, Rod, Bill and Betsy, are gifted and well known local performers. *Suite* is only Gerri's third play, but who cares. Some people are born to act!

And the rest of the cast are all All Stars. Act One. . . Tom Hepner and Linda Fusano. . . Act Two. . . Al and Pinky Bloom, in a triumphant return to the company that they helped found, with the lovely and talented and hopefully-not-typecast, Whitney Pintello. . . Act Three. . . Marion Pintello and Dennis Chavez. . . Most other communities like ours would be hard pressed to come up with a cast of half the talent.

Now, there are those of you who think I am, at times, a bit too generous in my praise. Not today. This is an excellent cast and I can't wait to see the show. Producer Jeanene Morgan has done herself proud. . . Call

842-SHOW.

And speaking of proud. . . 12 beginning and advanced G.H.S. drama students performed a program of improvisational theatre for the Gilroy Chamber of Commerce at the Elks Lodge Wednesday morning. Even though I am a bit biased, I must admit that, they were a smash. The young, clean-cut, poised, talented thespians included Craig Rubio, Ron Hannon, Stacy Barnes, Jason Alcock, Laurie Chavez, Tracy Day, Kelly McGovern, Shauna Boomgaarden, Shannon McHam, Jennifer Rich, Wende Matthews and Frank Hasler. The group included athletes, calendar girls, student government leaders, and cheerleaders as well as your standard theatre types and even freshmen. They are all my kids and yes. . . I was very proud of them! And at 7:30 in the morning?

Don't forget the South Valley Symphony, Saturday night at the G.H.S. Theatre and at Live Oak on Sunday.

And *The Best Little Hmmmmmhouse in Texas* opens at the C.L.O. tonight for two weeks. . . (This is a family-oriented column, after all. But watch for the review here next week.)

The assignment for the week? Let someone out there know that you love them and that they are important. And that they have your support.

'California Suite'

*Four divide
director duties
in local production
of comedy classic*

for each of the vignettes that comprise the long-running Broadway hit. All scenes take place in a suite of a Beverly Hills hotel, and Simon's gift for comedy sparkles throughout.

Charles Krahenbuhl of Gilroy will direct the quick-witted confrontation between Linda Fusano and Tom Hepner in "Visitors from New York."

Al and Pinky Bloom take the stage as a confused couple from Philadelphia rebounding from the unexpected appearance of a beautiful but unconscious girl, played by Whitney Pintello. The segment is being directed by Morgan Hill's Susie Chastang — actress, singer and veteran of summer stock theater in Michigan.

After intermission, Chuck Myer guides the temperamental and very British antics in "Visitors from London," played by Marion Pintello and Dennis Charvez.

The final scene is directed by Jim Allen, former drama instructor at Hollister High. His performers include Betsy Andrade, Rod Pintello, Geri Schmutz and Bill Corneth battling at the end of a friendship-ending vacation.

Other performances are scheduled for Saturday, April 3 and 4 at Gilroy High, and a dinner show on April 10 and a Sunday matinee on April 12 at the Hollister Elks Lodge. Tickets are \$6.50 for adults and \$5 for seniors and children. Tickets for the next two weekends are priced at \$7.50 for adults, with the exception of the dinner show, which is priced at \$15.

For more information, call 842-SHOW or 637-3214.

If too many cooks can spoil the broth, it seems only logical that too many directors could spoil a play.

That is, unless that production happens to be Neil Simon's "California Suite."

For the first time in its 18-year history, the South Valley Civic Theater is utilizing four directors in the same production when "California Suite" opens a three-week run tonight at Gilroy High School.

Producer Jeanene Morgan says the multiple director format has advantages and disadvantages.

"One of the advantages is that it has enabled us to use people who have had little or no directorial experience," she said. "The directors can feel more comfortable in knowing they have only a small piece to chew off instead of tackling an entire play.

"There are some disadvantages, of course," she added. "For one thing, you have four times as many people to keep track of and each of the directors has a different idea of things such as where the furniture should go. But I think all four directors have pulled together their parts spectacularly."

A different director will be used



How suite it is

Actors (from left) Pinky Bloom and Al Bloom, Whitney Pintello take direction from Morgan Hill resident Susie Chastang in a scene from Neil Simon's "California Suite," which opens tonight at Gilroy High School. In another scene from the comedy classic, Betsy Andrade screams with pain from sprained ankle while Geri Schmutz, Bill Corneth and Rod Pintello try to help.

California Suite

By Luellen Reese
Miracle Miles Staff

California Suite, Neil Simon's hilarious comedy about the comings and goings of the guests in a Beverly Hills hotel, opened Friday night at the Gilroy High School Theatre.

South Valley Civic Theatre's production of this fine play is outstanding. Jim Maya was definitely right when he said, "Most other communities would be hard pressed to come up with a cast of half the talent!"

The play is really four plays in one, and each play, or act, was directed by a different director. All of the acts are set in Suite 203 in a very elegant hotel, and each is one story of the guests that occupy that suite.

In the first act, directed by Charles Krahenbuhl, we have the visitor from New York, played by Linda Duarte Fusano, who has come to California to collect her seventeen year old daughter who has run away to the home of her laid back and very "California" type father, played by Tom Hepner.

The bantering back and forth between the two, who have been divorced for nine years, is strident and very funny. As the discussion about what to do with their daughter goes on, Fusano and Hepner very skillfully and smoothly make the transition from sharp to warm and touching.

Hepner's calm and cool manner is in perfect contrast to Fusano's uptight, "New York" style. With the sophisticated dialog in this segment, it would have been easy for this act to lapse into nothing but words, but Hepner and Fusano made the words come alive and made them tell a story. Fusano's comic timing is flawless.

Act II, directed by Suzie Chastang, has a couple, played Al and Pinky Bloom, out from Philadelphia to attend their nephew's bar mitzvah. Their visit is complicated by an unconscious girl in their bed, played by Whitney Pintello.

Chuck Myer directed the third act which was the bittersweet tale of an English actress, played by Marion Pintello, come to Hollywood for the Oscars, and her husband, played by Dennis Charvez.

In the course of the act, the visitors from London become inebriated. I can well image the difficulty of acting in a British accent; but playing the part of a person who is drunk in an English accent seems to me to be nearly impossible for all but the most gifted actors. Pintello

is a hit



Rod Pintello, Betsy Andrade, Bill Corneth and Gerri Schmutz have a falling out in Act Four of S.C.V.T.'s production of Neil Simon's *California Suite*.

and Charvez did not disappoint; they were brilliant. Charvez is one of the most believable actors in this community. No matter what role he is playing, he never seems like he is acting.

In the final act, directed by Jim Allen, two couples, Rod Pintello and Betsy Andrade as the Hollenders and Bill Corneth and Gerri Schmutz as the Franklyns, from Chicago on a vacation together have what could be described as a falling out.

Pintello and Andrade were fantastic! Corneth and Schmutz were great! I wish I could say something clever about their technique, their style, but the truth is that I was laughing so hard throughout this segment that my "critic's eye" went on vacation. Andrade has a range of comic facial expressions that are killers. Pintello is hilarious. I have not laughed this hard in years. I laughed all the way home, I'm still laughing.

It has been said many times before, but it bears telling again. The South Valley area is blessed in its wealth of fine actors. And S.V.C.T.'s production of *California Suite* is strong testimonial to that fact. If you miss this show, you are missing a lot. Congratulations to the directors and company!

California Suite will be at the G.H.S. theatre April 3 and 4 at 8 p.m. There will be a special dinner show at the Hollister Elks Lodge on April 10 at 7 p.m. and the final performance will be a Sunday matinee on April 12 at 2 p.m. at the Hollister Elks Lodge.

'California Suite:' four for price of one



Chas Metivier/The Dispatch

A tourist couple (Al and Pinky Bloom) puzzle over unconscious girl (Whitney Pintello).

Suite, Fusano, Indiana shine

By Jim Maya
Miracle Miles Staff

It has been wonderful to see Linda Duarte Fusano bloom as an actress. Long known for her wit, charm and great physical beauty, from now on, she will also be known as an excellent actress. . . . One with great range and sensitivity. Her performance as the hostile, hurting and bantering Hannah Warren in S.C.V.T.'s latest production, *California Suite*, is superb.

I really like Neil Simon, but how often does he make you feel the pain? He does in Act I, during "Visitor from New York," but he couldn't have done it without Linda and her stunning performance. She projects such an understanding of Hannah's predicament, that at the end of the act (*Suite* is actually four one acts), many in the audience are moved to tears. (Tom Hepner plays her ex.)

The whole play is very strong. After too long an absence, Al and Pinky Bloom are back on the boards as the "Visitors from Philadelphia." Pinky's Millie finds Bunny, played by Whitney Pintello, passed out in her Melvin's bed. The act works very well and is very funny, with several lines prompting cheers from the audience. Pinky's timing is great.

Act III, "Visitors from London," showcases two wonderful performances by Marion Pintello and Dennis Charvez as Diana and Sidney Nichols, "The Visitors from

London." (The two were played in the film by Oscar winners Maggie Smith and Michael Caine.) We are lucky to have the two gifted performers in our community. They handled the delicate subject with grace and skill.

I only had one problem. Dennis, the black socks have to go. Your bare feet can't be that ugly. Perhaps slippers?

The last act, "Visitors from Chicago," deserves a review unto itself. It is a farcical commentary on two couples taking a vacation together. The timing was precise, the energy intense, and the results hilarious. Bill Cornith was the perfect foil for Rod Pintello's comic anger. Their wives, played by Betsy Andrade and Gerri Schmutz are so cute and so funny.

Suite continues the 3rd and 4th at G.H.S. at 8p.m. and then on to the Hollister Elks Lodge for a special dinner show on the 10th at 7 p.m. and a matinee on the 12th at 2 p.m. Call 842-SHOW.

It has been several years since I graduated from Indiana University, but those days will always be vivid in my heart's mind. The "dramatic" I.U. victory over U.N.L.V., and especially the cliff-hanger win over Syracuse, brought a new wave of memories. For those of you who never attended an old fashion, traditional, "real," non-commuter university, it will be hard to understand the emotion that such wins provoke.

GILROY — Four directors will have their work featured, all for the price of one play, in South Valley Civic Theater's *California Suite*.

The play by Neil Simon actually is four mini-plays, tied together by all happening at the same Beverly Hills hotel. Gilroy residents Chuck Myer and Charles Krahelbuhl take on a segment each, while Suzie Chastang of Morgan Hill and Jim Allen of Hollister take the others.

Show dates are this Friday and Saturday, plus April 3, 4, 10 and 12. The first four performances are at Gilroy High School theater at 8 p.m. The last two will be at Hollister Elks Lodge: April 10 as a 7 p.m. dinner show and April 12 as a 2 p.m. matinee.

The vignettes feature Linda Fusano and Tom Hepner as visitors from New York; Al and Pinky Bloom as a confused couple dealing with the appearance of an unconscious girl, played by Whitney Pintello; Marion Pintello and Dennis Charvez as visitors from London; and Betsy Andrade, Rod Pintello, Geri Schmutz and Gil Corneth battling at the end of a friendship-trying vacation.

Cost is \$7.50 for adults, \$5 for children and seniors, and \$15 for the dinner show. Tickets may be obtained by calling 842-SHOW or 637-3214.

We lose all sense of reality and perspective. We find out just how superstitious we really are. (The sweatshirt finally got washed.) We become young again, filled with the frivolity and blush of totally childish behavior. . . . much like 49er fans at the Super Bowl. . . . Or me with the Bears and Cubs.

An I.U. National Championship means so much more though. I'm an I.U. grad! I lived in Bloomington for three years. It was my extended family. When I.U. wins, so do I. And the fact that I grew up in Indiana, home of "Hoosier Hysteria," (basketball) makes the win even sweeter.

And if you haven't seen the movie (*Hoosiers*) yet, don't miss it. It's a fine sports film, but goes beyond the genre. It's also a super parent/child film.

By-the-way, a Hoosier is anyone who comes from the state of Indiana. And no, I don't know where the word comes from. There is a story about the Indiana dialect, and how the word grew from the way early Indiana natives answered the door when somebody knocked. . . . "Who's 'ere?" If anyone has the definitive answer, please let me know.

Oh, yes! (Thanks for reminding me, Darin. . . .) The next time you see Darin Carter or Kevin Fallis, ask them how they did against the old men (Maya and Larry Gable) on the racquet ball court!

Comedy performs in theater

South Valley Civic Theatre's "California Suite" will have its last Gilroy showing this weekend tonight and Saturday (April 3 and 4) at the Gilroy High School Theater. The four-act play will then hit the road with two more performances April 10 and 12 at the Hollister Elks Lodge. "California Suite" opened successfully last weekend.

The Neil Simon comedy hit consists of four "mini-plays" within a play, depicting relationships between four sets of visitors to a Beverly Hills hotel. In a first-ever arrangement, each segment will be directed by a different director. The show will be the directorial debut with SVCT for Suzie Chastang of Morgan Hill, and Charles Krahenbuhl and Chuck Myer of Gilroy and marks the return to community theatre for Jim Allen of Hollister. The show is produced by Jeanene Morgan.

The cast also represents talent from several south valley communities: Tom Hepner, Linda Fusano, Whitney Pintello, Al and Pinky Bloom, Dennis Charvez, Marion Pintello, Besty Andrade, Bill Corneth, Geri Schmutz and Rod Pintello.

Ticket prices for the Gilroy shows will be \$7.50. In Hollister, the April 10 show will include dinner for \$15 and the April 12 show will be a matinee for \$7.50. For more information, call 842-SHOW or 637-3214.

SVCT: How suite it is

GILROY — South Valley Civic Theater is getting ready for a trip to Beverly Hills — via the stage, of course.

Produced by Jeanene Morgan, the Neil Simon hit *California Suite* will run in Gilroy on March 27 and 28, and April 3 and 4 at the Gilroy High School theater. The show will go on the road, moving to Hollister Elks Lodge for performances on April 10 and 12.

The show consists of four "mini plays" within a play, depicting relationships between four sets of visitors to a Beverly Hills hotel. In a first-ever arrangement, each segment will be directed by a different director.

The show will be the directorial debut with SVCT for Suzie Chastang of Morgan Hill and Charles Krahenbuhl and Chuck Myer of Gilroy, and marks the return to community theater for Jim Allen of Hollister.

The cast also represents talent from Gilroy, Morgan Hill and Hollister: Tom Hepner, Linda Fusano, Whitney Pintello, Al and Pinky Bloom, Dennis Charvez, Marion Pintello, Besty Andrade, Bill Corneth, Geri Schmutz and Rod Pintello.

Ticket prices for the Gilroy shows will be \$7.50. In Hollister, the April 10 show will include dinner for \$15 and the April 12 show will be a matinee for \$7.50.