



Special to The Dispatch

Cast members sing "Perfect Young Ladies" in "The Boyfriend," opening Friday in Gilroy.

The show goes on

South Valley's upcoming production of teen musical dedicated to memory of fellow thespian Josh Brawn

GILROY — The cast and crew of South Valley Civic Theater's upcoming production of "The Boyfriend" are into last few days of rehearsal before the curtain goes up at 8 p.m. Friday at Gilroy High School Theater.

Producers Grace and Russ Brawn are checking daily with staff members on the myriad of projects that must be coordinated to bring the show together by opening night.

Director Carol Harris said she will be working with all 50 teen-age cast members at rehearsals every night, "polishing the show."

"By now everyone knows their part, and things are going smoothly, but during this final week special touches will be added — to the characters, the costumes, the set — things that make the show really sparkle," she said.

Choreographer Toni Saletta is watching the ensemble of dancers

very closely, and practicing with the young couples who are featured in several energetic dance numbers. While some members of the cast were accomplished dancers before being cast in the show, many have learned new dance steps and rhythms, Saletta noted.

Off stage, the costumers are sewing detailed period costumes for the play, which is set in the 1920s. Scenes include a masquerade ball and a beach scene with the cast in old-fashioned bathing attire.

Extra attention has been paid by cast and crew during this production for a special reason, according to Harris. The show will be performed in memory of Josh Brawn, who was killed in a car accident during the second week of rehearsal.

Brawn, who had a feature role in "The Boyfriend," was very active in community theater, includ-

ing many plays with this cast of teens, Harris said. In response to the tragic death of their friend and fellow thespian, the cast, crew and staff met and decided that "the show must go on" and that it would be dedicated to the memory of a dear friend and talented young man, she said.

South Valley Civic Theater will donate the proceeds from the six performances of the show to the Joshua Grant Brawn Memorial Scholarship Fund, a perpetual fund for South Valley students continuing their education in the fine arts.

"The Boy Friend" may be seen at Gilroy High School on February 26, 27, March 4, 5, 10 and 11. Curtain time is 8 p.m. Tickets are \$5 for adults, \$3.50 for students and seniors. Reservations are recommended. For information or tickets, call the theater box office at 842-SHOW.

"The Boy Friend"?

Great!

By Jim Maya

Miracle Miles Correspondent

No, Jane... I am not going to do another of my usual hard hitting, sarcastic, brutally honest and incredibly perceptive reviews of the South Valley Civic Theatre-Gilroy Unified School District production of *"The Boy Friend"*, which opened last weekend at the GHS Theatre. Why? Well, it's simply another case of a show starring the children of several close friends, lots of my own GHS drama students, and... Let's see... There was another reason... Oh yea! Two of my own children are in the show. So, no individual performers will be singled out for/either praise or criticism.

I can report, however, that the full house opening night audience loved it! And, if I may, not without good reason. Producers Russ and Grace Brawn have blended the excellent direction of Carol Harris, along with some inspired choreography by newcomer Toni Saletta, with some yummy sets of their own design, into a delightful show.

Technically, the show moves well and was delightfull to look at. The colorful 1920 costumes, right down to the great sounding band, "The Bearcats," completed the visual feast. Designer Carol Harris plus Bernadette Engehausen and Lorraine Ross, and all the many others that worked on the costumes, deserve a special note of praise. And the lighting of Brian Durbin and Mike Duke was great.

The show simply looks great!

And sounds great! Most of the youthful soloists and the chorus, especially for a teenage production, sounded super. In fact, the boy's chorus numbers were particularly strong for this kind of production.

And the acting was great! But then this is South County young people's theatre, so what should I expect? I am continually made aware of the superior theatre tradition that exists locally, and this legion of fine young artists is a reflection of that tradition. (It is a shame that not nearly enough opportunities are available for them to practice that art!)

Also deserving of special note are... Linda Fusano, the stage manager who also spent hours working on the sets... Fay Pettner, the bubbly, beautiful and always giving rehearsal pianist, for her umteenth great job... Beth Brawn's masks... All the master crafters... Joyce Pagan's good humor and efficiency, for the umteenth time... And stage crew member Ernesto Bourne, who, in the finest tradition of the theatre, at the last moment, with less than an hour's notice, performed the role of Percival Brown in Act I. Mark Hoebick, the original P. Brown, exhausted from the week of dress rehearsal, had taken a nap, and forgotten to get up. He did make it for Act II and III. (I can't imagine the terror that must have gone through Mark's mind upon waking and looking at the clock!) Ernest did a super job! If this was Broadway, Mr. Bourne would now be a star. What a story! What a show!

"The Boy Friend" continues this weekend (Fri. & Sat.) and next Thursday and Friday. Call 842-SHOW for reservations. Curtain is at 8p.m.

The Boy Friend Opens Tonight

By Jim Maya

Miracle Miles Correspondent

Tonight the GHS stage comes alive with dancing feet and youthful voices blending into the 1920-ish musical, *"The Boy Friend."* The South Valley Civic Theatre-GUSD production has been rehearsing at a furious pace, keeping the sixty person cast and crew out until all hours of the night getting ready for opening night.

This cast, made up of young persons from Morgan Hill to Hollister, 7th through 12th grade, is also one of the closest I have ever been connected with. The show has had to endure through the trauma of the tragic death of cast member, Josh Brawn. Not only have they endured, but have thrived as a cast and as individuals.

One of the finest studies of courage and grace I have ever witnessed has been that of the Brawn family over the past few weeks. Jennifer, Josh's sister, is still one of the leads in the show (Maisie,) and would have spent opening night dancing and acting opposite her brother. I can only speculate what must be going through her mind as the opening curtain rapidly approaches.

My experience in theatre for the past thirty-five years has given me nothing of a similar nature to relate with.

Jennifer has handled herself with great dignity.

And I must put down in print, for this corner of the world to read, that I have never witnessed strength coupled with patience and good cheer for others, as shown by the producers of *"The Boy Friend"*, Russ and Grace Brawn. I have never felt the degree of admiration I feel when it comes to the Brawns.

Producers for such community theatre shows are often left with tasks that go far beyond the normal job description. The Brawns have done finish painting, construction, clean-up, programs... everything. And hours upon hours upon hours of doing everything, all with a smile, a great perspective, and respect for all of those around them.

All these shows are a labor of love. For Russ, Grace, Jennifer and Beth, this labor of love goes flowing into a show that has been dedicated to the memory of their son and bother, Josh.

It all has been an inspiration to watch.

The rest of the cast list reads like a "Who's Who" of South Valley young theatre people... Jane McIntosh, Chris Lloyd, Nancy and Wendy McAllister, Mark Hoebick, Mandy Duarte, Tom Harris, Lisa Raff, Amy Lawrence, Cinnamon Warfield, Anita Razo, Elaine Engehausen, Jennifer Ross, Michele Ledesma, John Epperheimer, Jay Gowen, Matt Tidwell, Simon Pintello, Sidney Espinoza, Mike Montez, Josh Maya and (deep breath) Greg Harsh, to mention a few.

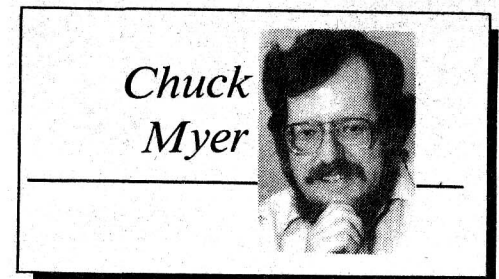
Have you ever noticed that in articles like this, there are always cast members who don't ever get mentioned. Well, not in this column, (at least today)... *"The Boy Friend"* has a very talented ensemble, many of whom, at another time or another place might well have the leads... That group included Rebecca Alonzo, Christine Amos, Caroline Anaya, Karen Anger, Tami Espinoza, Sonia Gariaeff, Allie Gown, Sabrina Lloyd, Leslie Lorber, Jessica Maya, Sabrina Montalvo, Heather Nicklin, Helen Huang, Sonia Rodríguez, and (deep breath) Chance Wood.

As saying goes, 'Better late than never...'

Well, the show must go on, even if the curtain is a half an hour late. The SVCT teen production of *"The Boyfriend"* opened last Friday, despite one of its leads being at home having a snooze.

It was a fairytale opportunity for stagehand Ernest Bourne, who saved the day by stepping in to portray the role of Percival Browne (dances and all) in Act I. Cast member Mark Hoebick evidently awoke in time to play the role in Act II and III, and did it quite well. The program prophetically remarked that Hoebick is active in "too many extra-curricular activities."

Bourne and cast member John Epperheimer (Bobby) were Lincoln High School friends of the late Josh Brawn, to whom the show was dedicated. Epperheimer inherited the role originally



assigned to Josh, playing it to the hilt with a contagious enthusiasm opposite Josh's talented twin, Jennifer.

The show, produced by Josh's parents, has a lot of polish, energy, and imagination, and is a tribute to the young actor who we will always remember. It continues at the Gilroy High School Theater for two more weeks...