

Camelot Opens Soon

By Jim Maya

Miracle Miles Correspondent

The blockbuster 1960 Lerner and Loewe musical, "Camelot" is coming to Gilroy, courtesy of the South Valley Civic Theatre. In one of their most ambitious projects in recent years, the local theatre company has organized a splendid production staff and a cast of thousands to bring local theatregoers the wonderful tale of King Arthur, his Queen Guinevere, Merlin, the evil Nimue and Arthur's loyal and trusted friend, Sir Lancelot. You know, all the boys and girls from the first Round Table.

Producers Joyce Pagan and Ann Hepner [Have I ever done a column on Anne, what's his name's wife and one of the cornerstones of S.V.C.T. for the past few years? I guess not. That's a real shame because Anne is one of the nicest, hardest working persons in the local theatre scene. She has done so much for South Valley productions, both with S.V.C.T. and Center Stage, since moving to Gilroy. It seems a shame that I have never extolled her many virtues the least of which might be giving what's his name permission to be in so many productions. Sometime I'll have to do that!] have hired a director new to Gilroy theatre, Don Porter, Holly's uncle, and theatre director for the Frohman School in Monterey.

Don has been bringing raves from the production staff and several of the actors that will speak to me on a regular basis. It is vital to have new artistic blood injected into the local artistic gene pool on a regular basis, like Don's. Don has worked both as an actor and director in Monterey and Santa Cruz counties for many years.

Others on the staff include choreographer Toni Saletta, who did such excellent work in last Spring's S.V.C.T. production of "The Boy Friend". Carol Harris is the vocal director while Hank Park will be directing the orchestra. I have seen some of the costumes and props for the show, which are so important for a period piece like "Camelot". They're going to be wonderful! Lorraine Ross and Grace Brawn are the costume co-ordinators, and Sandy Lorber will be handling the props. If you have any OLD stuff, like swords, in the attic, let her know. The set and light design is being done by Gav's talented Greg Light, while the construction is being headed up by Anne's husband, Tom.

I have spent a bit more space than usual on the production staff because they work so hard and are so important and deserve more recognition than they ever get, so there.

But what a cast! Doug Hagdohl, Jr. is playing Arthur, the role made famous by Richard Burton and later by Richard Harris. I have seen Hagdohl do the role of another rather famous English theatrical character, Professor Henry Higgins, in the West Valley Light Opera production of the same Lerner and Loewe's "My Fair Lady". He was excellent in that role, beside co-star Gilroyan Sarah Taylor. I have no doubts that he will also shine while doing Arthur.

Hagdohl comes by his theatre talent through hard work, training and having talented parents, Doug and Stella. Both have appeared before S.V.C.T. and Center Stage audiences. Stella is playing the role of the wicked Nimue.

Lancelot is being played by Gilroy newcomer Ken Weiner. When he auditioned it is rumored that everyone knew instantly that he was going to get the coveted role. His, or perhaps Arthur's, Guinevere is Cheryl Neilson, also new to local stages. Both are very experienced and are very talented.

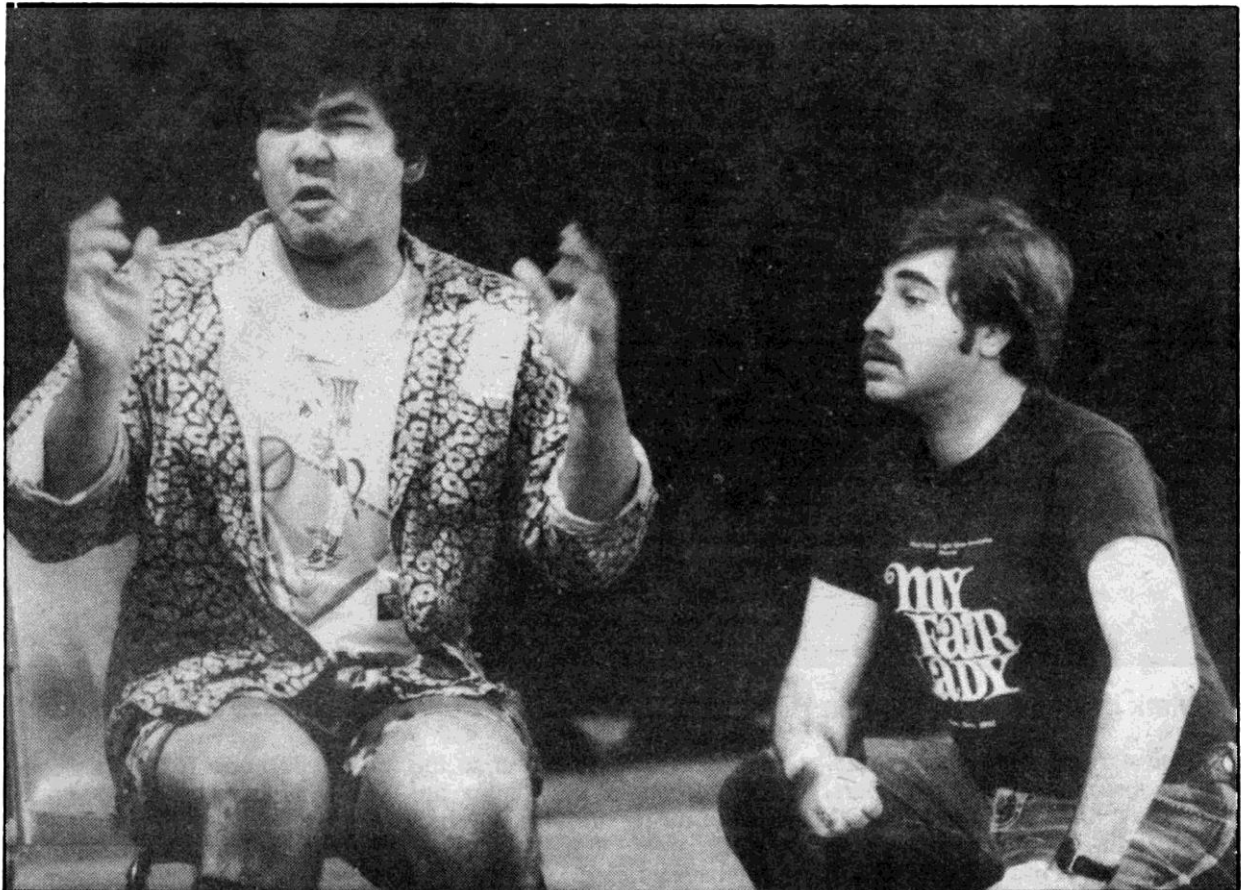
Other major roles have been filled by the returning Jim Aceves as Sir Dinadan, Lawrence Arias as Merlin, Matt Tidwell as Mordred and David Lorber will be doing Tom of Warwick. Rod Pintello brings his comic genius to the role of Pellinore.

Others in the cast, all important, but too many for me to make cute comments about each one of them, even old dear friends like Virginia Bench, Mandy Duarte, Tom Harris, Andy Hepner, old, old friend Ed Leonard, who is playing Squire Dap, Lindy Mallonee, Donny O'Neil, Sonia Rodriguez, who is cute, as is Jennifer Ross and Cinnamon Warfield, and old chums Suellen Rowleson and Gerri Schmutz. And just because I don't really know Donna Aceves, Gary Caswell, Willy Frey, Jim Grace, Britt Gunter, Steve Johnson, or Steve Kawanami very well, I shouldn't avoid mentioning their names. I won't mention all of the thousands of extras.

Well, that's about it. What? OK, I'll mention your name too. Josh Maya is playing Clarius.

"Camelot" opens August 12 for three weekends at the Gavilan Theatre. Call 842-SHOW for tickets and info.

Faerie tale setting and songs of 'Camelot' coming to Gilroy



Kory W. Hansen/Staff photographer

Lawrence Arias, left, and Doug Hagdohl rehearse "Camelot" at Gilroy High School.

By Eric Pfeiffer
Staff Writer

GILROY — When Doug Hagdohl steps on stage as King Arthur in the South Valley Civic Theater's musical production of *Camelot*, opening Aug. 12 and playing through Aug. 27, he will be playing a role made famous by two Richards — Richard Burton and Richard Harris.

In fact, with two successful Broadway runs, a popular motion picture and an equally popular sound track, virtually everybody knows the story of *Camelot* — King Arthur marrying Guinevere, Lancelot declaring love for Guinevere, which leads to battle and the destruction of the Round Table. Many in the audience will even be able to hum the songs right along

with the actor's voices, *If Ever I Would Leave You*, *What Do Simple Folk Do* and *C'est Moi*.

Despite the recognition and popularity, audience expectations don't bother Hagdohl, who has played King Arthur before and is something of an amateur Arthurian historian.

"I've read every book on Arthur," he said in a recent phone interview. "To me this is a fascinating time period."

Hagdohl, who has directed and performed at various theater companies in the area, even went so far as to make a backstage visit with Richard Harris when the traveling production came through the area in the early '80s. "A lot of the things he said I agreed with," explained Hagdohl.

"I don't consider myself in competition with them (Burton and Harris)," he said. "Some of the things they did I will do different, and some of the things I will do the same. You can't imitate them. It will come off looking like you are imitating them. I try to make the part my own."

Hagdohl is joined in *Camelot*, which is the opening production of South Valley's 1988/89 season, by Ken Weiner playing Lancelot and Cheryl Neilsen playing Guinevere. In all, 35 people are in the cast. The production, directed by Don Porter and produced by Anne Hepner and Joyce Pagan, is the largest one the company will stage all season.

Camelot opened on Broadway

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in December of 1960. Critics, who made comparisons to Lerner and Loewe's earlier success, *My Fair Lady*, were not kind.

Yet advanced sales, going over the \$3 million mark, and a stellar cast — Richard Burton playing King Arthur, Julie Andrews playing Guinevere, Robert Goulet as Lancelot — helped make the production a success.

marriage with Guinevere and the fall of his kingdom.

Much of the appeal of Camelot is this fantasy: Knights and fair maidens and Merlin, the magic magician.

While critics have pointed to its uneven story line — one minute serious, the next light and fluffy creating an unbalanced whole — the singable tunes and the fairy-tale setting are enough to carry the play.

"Arthur's a king who does not act as a king," said Hagdohl "He is willing to admit that he has not

and sentimental memories of John F. Kennedy's fallen presidency.

"Whether by accident or design, Mr. Burton heightened this emotional link by creating a King Arthur who exemplified the witty, youthful and sexy Kennedy style."

Beyond the character Arthur, for Hagdohl the appeal is the kingdom of Camelot.

"It's a mythical time," said Hagdohl. "It's never historically been proven to have existed, and we will never know if Arthur ever existed."

Hagdohl, however, likes to think both the king and his kingdom did exist ... if just "for one brief shining moment."

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The subsequent Broadway revival and cross-country traveling productions in the early '80s, found Richard Burton and Richard Harris starring as King Arthur.

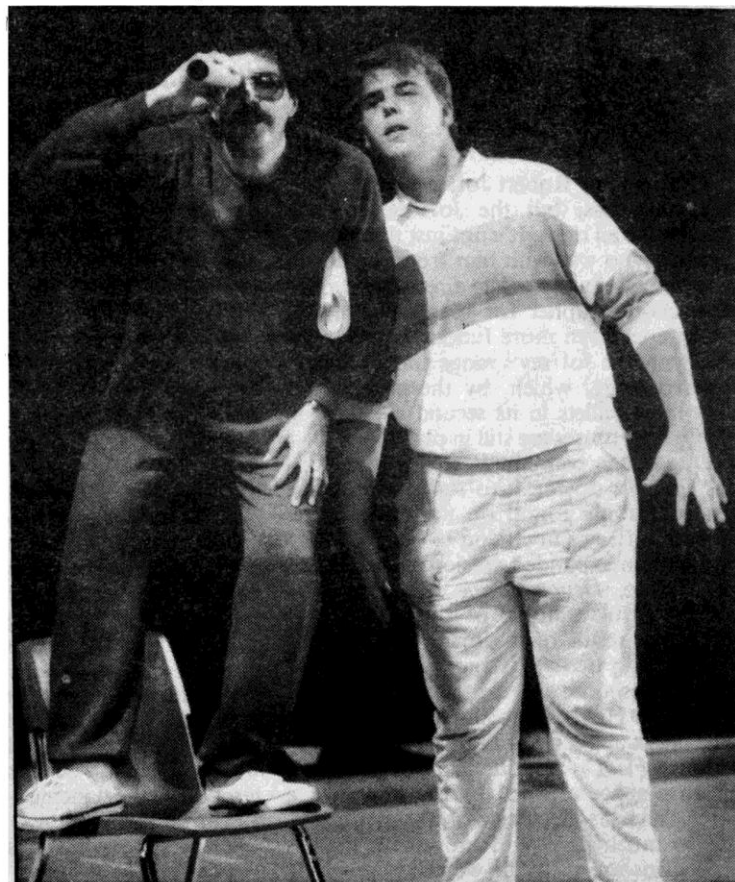
Harris also starred in the popular 1967 Warner Brothers film, opposite Vanessa Redgrave.

Lerner and Loewe based their musical on T.H. White's *The Once and Future King*, which traces the Arthurian legend from the point Arthur pulls Excalibur from the stone and becomes king, to his

been trained to be king. He is not a dictator; he is very compassionate."

New York Times theater critic Frank Rich feels that some of the success of *Camelot*, stems from Arthur's archetypal role as the enlightened, compassionate leader. For the 1980 revival on Broadway, Rich wrote, "... Camelot endures for a very simple and potent reason. As historical circumstance would have it, this 1960 show is forever tied to our most idealized

Camelot — Featuring Doug Hagdohl as King Arthur, Ken Weiner as Lancelot and Cheryl Neilsen as Guinevere. Directed by Don Portner. Produced by Anne Hepner and Joyce Pagan. Begins Aug. 12 at Gavilan College Theatre. For more information, call 84-STAGE.



Kory W. Hansen/Staff photographer

Jim Aceves, left, and Britt Gunter get high on acting.

Show's swords swiped

By Marshall Wilson
Staff Writer

8/29/88

GILROY — Excaliber has been stolen.

Two swords used in South Valley Civic Theater's production of *Camelot* were stolen from an actor's car Wednesday night, forcing the cast to use substitutes.

A replica of Excaliber, the legendary sword King Arthur pulls from an anvil in the famous story, was one of the swords stolen, said Jim Aceves, out of whose car the swords were stolen.

"Every night I take them out and lock them up. That was the only night I left them in the car," Aceves said.

Hours before a performance Friday and with no substitute swords in sight, Aceves said, "I'm leaving it up to God at this point ... Excaliber is a special sword, it has to be magical. Finding a special sword that will work on this short notice is going to be tough."

Acevas is offering a \$100 no-

questions-asked reward for the return of both swords. He can be reached at 848-1566 or 842-1248.

Today, Aceves said the performers had to make do with other swords used in the play. Saturday was the play's last performance, but he needs to return the swords to their owner.

The second sword is perhaps as many as 200 years old and is from the Sudan, Aceves said. The sword has Arabic writing etched on the blade and is 38 inches long with a straight blade, Aceves said. It was in a leather scabbard attached to a leather belt.

The swords were loaned to the theater company by a local collector, Aceves said. "We'd like to get them back and keep the reputation of the company."

After placing posters around town telling of the reward, Aceves received a phone call Saturday from a person claiming to have the swords. The caller, however, never showed up to a scheduled rendezvous, he said.

'Camelot' show benefits 'Homebound' program

By Dani Parkin
Staff Writer

A special matinee performance of South Valley Civic Theater's *Camelot* will be presented Sunday, 2 p.m. at Gavilan College to benefit seniors.

The money collected from the \$25 ticket prices will go to Homebound Senior Program, an agency committed to improving the quality of life for the frail elderly.

It is even possible to sponsor a senior for \$25 so that he or she may attend the second annual fund raiser.

The musical performance will be followed by an ice cream social, where the charitable audience can hobnob with "celebrity scoopers," like Gilroy Mayor Roberta Hugan and Morgan Hill Mayor Curtis Wright, and the stars of *Camelot* still dressed in their 14th century regalia.

During the social, Society for Creative Anachronisms will be

staging a jousting match for the entertainment of the crowd.

Miss Morgan Hill, Susan Schoepe; Mr. Morgan Hill, Mark Galbraith; Miss Gilroy, Kimberley Beckley; Suellen Rowilson, patron of the arts, and former county Supervisor Sig Sanchez, will be other "celebrity scoopers" at the ice cream social.

"We will dress them all in aprons," said Luellen Reese, coordinator of the event.

Last year, at the first annual fund raiser, the seniors enjoyed *Annie Get Your Gun*. "One of the seniors had met Buffalo Bill as a child so we took her up and took pictures of her with the actor," Reese said.

"But I don't think anyone ever met King Arthur — of course with this crowd you never know," Reese joked.

She expects even more seniors to be able to attend this year than last. "The ones that got to go last year just really loved it," she said.