

'ANNIE'

The wide-eyed orphan makes her local debut

By VALERIE MIRELES

Let's Go! staff

By day she is a Gilroy mail carrier and by night she turns into an evil headmistress of an orphanage. Joline Grimes recently landed a lead role in South Valley Civic Theater's production of "Annie." Grimes said she was thrilled when she was cast in the role of the menacing Miss Hannigan.

"It's such a juicy role. When I got the role I was totally blown away," she said. This is probably a dream show for me. It's such a daring comedic role — the nasty roles are always like that."

The mother of two, Grimes said her family is supportive of her play acting. But her daughters are less enthusiastic about her villainess role. "I have two little girls at home and they say, 'oh great, Mom gets to practice on us,'" she said with a laugh.

"Annie" is the opening show for the 1994-95 season of SVCT. The musical is based on the comic-strip heroine, Little Orphan Annie, and chronicles her journey from the Depression-era poverty of an orphanage to the opulent estate of a tycoon, Daddy Warbucks. "Annie" is packed with choreographed musical numbers and features a cast of more than 60.

More than five weeks into rehearsal, Director Paul Myrvold of Gilroy said the excitement is building. "I'm pleased with the cast. I guide and shape the performers. But, there comes a point when it is no longer mine — it is theirs."

The play will belong to the cast Friday night when they take center stage and open the show.

"Annie" is the second play Myrvold has directed for SVCT. Myrvold, 47, has been acting since the age of 17. He's acted professionally for the last two decades, gracing the stages of New York City, playing in Broadway and off-Broadway productions. Most recently he performed with the Western Stage in Salinas.

Producer Grace Brawn thinks highly of Myrvold and cites enthusiasm and experience as two of his biggest assets. "The community doesn't really know what a resource he is. He relates well to cast members of all ages. You really grow when Paul is working with you," Brawn said.

Grimes's view of Myrvold mirrors



TINA BAINE/Staff Photographer

Annie (Holly Bettencourt) rejoices when Grace Farrell (Betsy Andrade) selects her to come live with the billionaire Daddy Warbucks.

Brawn's view. "Paul is so incredible to work for. He's got me doing things I never knew I could do," Grimes said.

Competition was fierce and Myrvold said he probably could have cast "Annie" four times over.

More than 60 little girls vied for the 12 orphan roles.

Twelve-year-old Holly Bettencourt landed the title and lead role of "Annie."

Acting since the ripe old age of 8, "Annie" marks her sixth performance and first lead role for the SVCT. "This is the part I've always wanted. I really got

excited when I got the part," the South Valley Junior High School seventh-grader said.

At 4-foot 7-inches, and weighing 74 pounds, Bettencourt is all energy. "We probably have the most adorable orphans in the world. Our Annie is just a peach. She does her homework and everything I ask. She's a serious kid and very talented," Myrvold said.

Citing Carol Burnett and Lucille Ball as her all-time favorite actresses,

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TINA BAINE/Staff Photographer

The arch villains in 'Annie,' from left Miss Hannigan (Joline Grimes), Rooster (Lawrence-Michael Arias) and Lily St. Regis (Tiffany Glover) dance together as they sing "Easy Street" and plot a way to take advantage of Annie's good fortune.

Annie

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Bettencourt herself aspires to be a marine biologist who has time on the side to be an actress.

When casting, Brawn said, it was really difficult to make the choices. "We have a fairly eclectic season. It provides opportunities for people of all ages to both participate and come and see the show. We try to do a little of everything that's what it's all about."

Grimes is quick to say that she has auditioned for a number of other productions as well and wasn't cast. "The audition itself is fun, but is highly competitive."

She advises would-be thespians to get involved in another part of the production other than acting. "Come back and build sets. Do all the different aspects of theater. For every person on stage there are 30 people you don't see,"

Grimes said.

In her second role for SVCT, Grimes also serves on its board and is an enthusiastic supporter of the theater. She believes the theater belongs to the community and most of all to families. It is a family event for her and her loved ones. Grimes even expects some family members to journey up from San Diego to see her dastardly performance.

Brawn describes "Annie" as a family show and it is a goal of SVCT to cast some family members in productions. There are a number of family groups in "Annie," but Brawn made it clear that wasn't the reason they were selected. "We hope to cast some family groups and if we're lucky we do. It adds cohesion and families do it together. It's fun," Brawn said.

All involved in the production are volunteers and none receive any kind of monetary payment for their work. A tremendous amount of time and commitment is what it takes, Myrvold

said. "This is done for pure love ... in the community, for the community."

'Annie'

Dates: "Annie" will be playing: July 15, 16, 22, 23, 29 and 30 and Aug. 5, 6, 12 and 13 at 8 p.m. Matinee performances are set for July 24, and Aug. 7 at 2 p.m.

Location: All performances are at the South Valley Civic Theater Playhouse at 235 Tennant Station, Morgan Hill.

Cost: Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$8 for students and seniors.

Miscellaneous: There is an opening night gala with a champagne reception on this Friday.

Information: For tickets call 842-SHOW