

# 'GYPSY'

New South Valley Civic  
show filled with classic  
songs and fun

By **MICHELLE HATFIELD**

Interim Lifestyles Editor

SAN MARTIN – Vaudeville meets burlesque with the opening of the musical “Gypsy” this weekend.

South Valley Civic Theatre is opening its season with the play, which will be performed outdoors, Shakespeare-style at the San Martin Pumpkin Patch. Showtimes for this weekend are 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

“Gypsy’ is a fun musical that has a lot of good music,” said producer Tracy Van Gundy. “It’s a good storyline about the relationship between mother and daughter.”

“Gypsy” is set in the 1920s and 30s and details the relationship between stage mom Rose and her tomboy daughter Louise. Rose pushes her daughters to become actresses, living vicariously through them, and Louise eventually does become an actress, taking on the stage name “Gypsy Rose Lee.” The play is adapted from a true story.

Stars like Bette Midler and Ethel Merman have performed the story, said Vivian Varela, who’s handling publicity for the play.

Van Gundy noted how many theme songs have come out of the play – songs that people have always heard, but never knew where they came from. These songs include “Let Me Entertain You,” “Everything’s Coming Up Roses” and “Together Wherever We Go.” The play



**Top: Peter Svensson as Uncle Jocko talks with a performer on his show, Jessica Damron, during a dress rehearsal for ‘Gypsy’, Tuesday at the San Martin Pumpkin Patch. Above: Madame Rose, played by Christine Varela, gets help with her make-up from JoAnna Evans before heading on stage.**

includes a live band that will be on stage with the actors.

The dynamics between the characters is what makes the play so great, said Christine Varela who plays mother Rose. One of Varela’s favorite lines is “I always promised my daughter WE’D be a star.”

Varela doesn’t think her character is necessarily mean, just determined.

“Rose is a very driven woman,” she said. “She has two daughters and she still isn’t happy. Once one of the daughters

is successful, she is happy, but it’s bittersweet.”

Even though Varela works full time as a property manager, she said it’s possible to do a play at the same time as long as the person likes being involved in plays.

“Almost all of this is done by volunteers,” she said. “With all the effort that’s put into the show, you have to love what you’re doing – to put on a quality show.”

The play features two sets of

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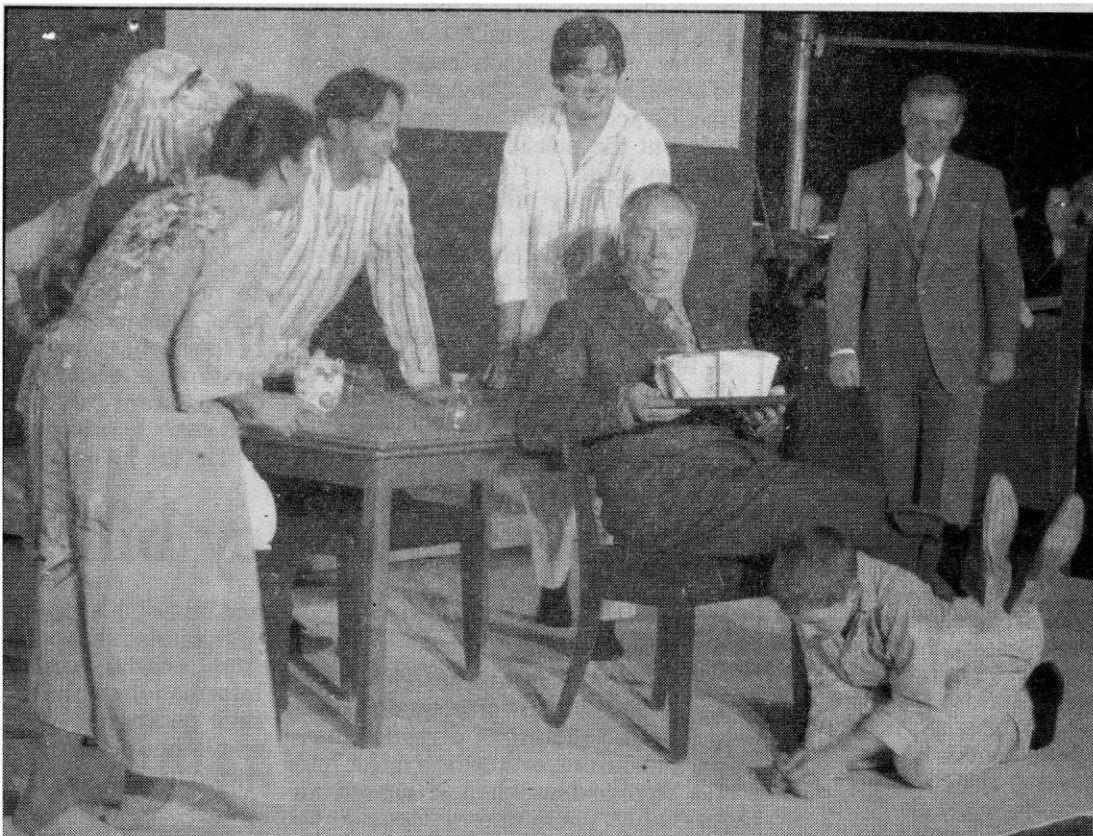
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# LOCAL ARTS: AN OUTDOOR OPENING



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# Gypsy

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actors playing the two sisters June and Louise at different stages in life – as children and as adults, Varela said. There are also two sets playing news boys who grow up by the end of the play, she said.

Despite the burlesque theme, Varela said that the play is tasteful and a classic.

People involved in the production come from San Jose all the way down to Hollister, Van Gundy said. Actors range in age from 7 and 8 years old to adults. The cast includes 32 actors who have been putting in some late nights this week in preparation for opening weekend.

“This is hell week,” Van Gundy said. “We rehearse late into the night. It (the week) can be kind of a push. But, it’s going pretty nicely.”

Auditions for “Gypsy” were held in late June and practices began July 1, so the performance is being put on in a month and a half, Varela said.

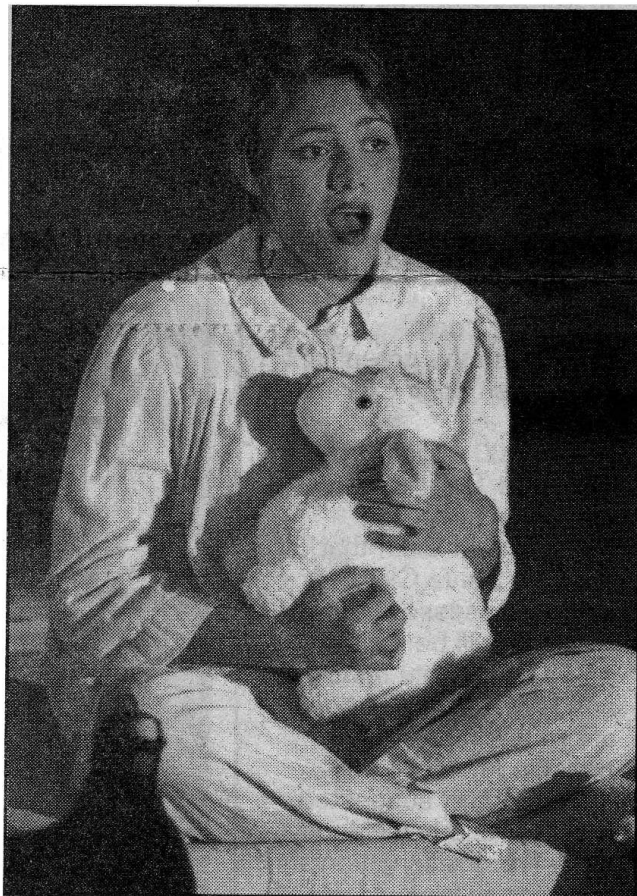
“We want to do well for the audience,” she said. “Everything’s going really well. Everyone works really well together.”

One unique aspect if this play is that it’s outdoors at the San Martin Pumpkin Patch. While some may like the change of pace of being outside, actors have to deal with additional elements that come with the outdoor setting.

“As long as the audience can hear us, I’m fine,” Varela said. “We’ll have to deal with the train noise, and it’s going to be cold, so bring jackets.”

Come December, the SVCT will have a permanent home when construction is complete on a new community and cultural center in Morgan Hill. SVCT will be able to hold its plays in the playhouse next door at 17090 Monterey Road on the corner of Monterey and East Fifth streets.

SVCT usually puts on five plays a year, Van



**Top: Madame Rose and her crew pamper a scout as they celebrate their act being picked up. Above: Alika Spencer, who plays Louise, sings during rehearsals.**

Gundy said. The group is a nonprofit organization committed to “producing quality theater performances to the stage. It is (the group’s) goal to bring (the community) great shows at a very low cost,” according to SVCT’s Web site. SVCT has been a part of the South Valley community for 32 years. This is SVCT’s first time producing “Gypsy,” Van Gundy said.

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**“Gypsy” will run a little over two hours. Showtimes are at 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday nights, Aug. 23, 24, 30 and 31 and Sept. 6, 7, 13 and 14. Tickets are \$12 for adults, \$10 for students and seniors. Tickets can be bought in advance and will be available at the door. The San Martin Pumpkin Patch is located at 13865 Monterey Road.**