

SVCT, Wild Rose pair to offer dinner theater

► "Run for Your Wife" opens tonight at downtown eatery

By JODI ENGLE

Lifestyles Editor

GILROY - The South Valley Civic Theatre and The Wild Rose House of Taste are teaming to offer dinner theater each Friday and Saturday this month in Old City Hall, starting tonight. Dinner will be served at 6:30 p.m. and the adult comedy "Run for Your Wife" will follow at 8 p.m. once the dishes are cleared.

"You wouldn't want anyone to eat during the show, because you'd have to have someone to do the Heimlich maneuver at every table," Director Steve Spencer said. "This is a very funny show."

"Run for Your Wife" is a farce about John Smith, a cab driver in London, who has two wives. Through carefully orchestrated antics, John - played by Kevin Heath - has insured that each woman won't know the other exists. But John's love life hits a snag when he becomes injured and in his dazed condition gives the hospital two different addresses.

"The police more or less innocently are just following up to clear up this perplexity, and then John's life begins to unravel," Spencer said.

John enlists the help of his friend and neighbor Stanley to try to keep the wives and police detectives from discovering the truth.

"It's just this constant stream of lying and trying to keep people apart," said Jonathan Bass who plays Stanley. "It turns out to be a wild ride."

Old City Hall may seem like an unusual place to perform such a play, but "Run for Your Wife" was actually staged in the same location in 1996 by Russ Hendrickson who owned the now-defunct Center Stage. Spencer played Stanley in Hendrickson's production. Rod Pintello (Bobby) and Bill Corneth (Detective Sergeant Porterhouse) played the same characters six years ago and in an earlier production by Center Stage in 1988.

"I finally got it right after 14 years," Corneth said, joking.

"Run for Your Wife" was easy to adapt to the dinner theater setting, Spencer said. The set is split between each wife's apartment, eliminating the need for complicated scene changes. Since the play is contemporary, the cast of seven was able to pull costumes from their own closets.

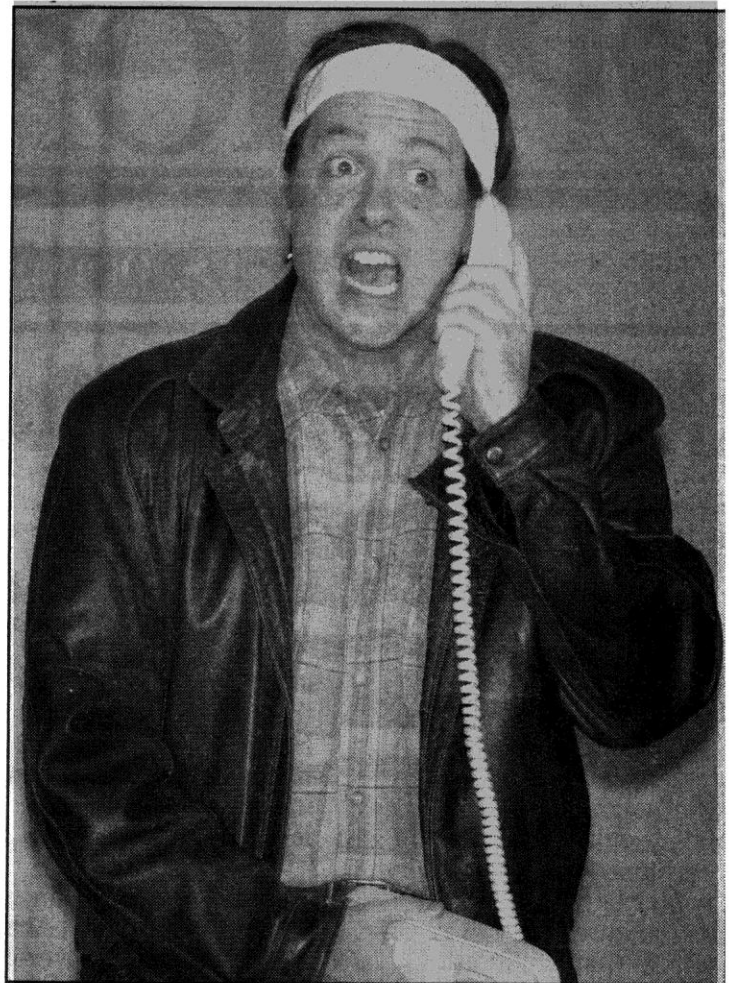
Moreover, the two-hour, 15-minute play is split into only two acts.

playwright, Ray Cooney, just got to page 81 laughing hysterically at his typewriter ... so he just stopped it there and then Act Two picks up in exactly the same spot."

The hardest part was memorizing the lines well enough to deliver them quickly, said Angela Doss who plays Barbara, one of the wives.

"This is the type of play where every line is a joke and if you don't time the lines correctly the audience won't catch the joke," Doss said. "So it's really getting your cues really fast, saying the lines right after one another."

On opening weekend, The Wild Rose House of Taste will serve Barcelona chicken -



CHRIS RILEY/Staff Photographer

Kevin Heath plays John Smith, a taxi driver trying to hide the fact that he has two wives in SVCT's production of "Run for Your Wife."

chicken prepared with stewed tomatoes, artichoke hearts, Spanish olives, basil and the secret seven herbs of Wild Rose - and penne pasta with asaiago cheese and chopped fresh basil with carrot or zucchini cake for dessert. The dinner menu will vary from week to week.

The SVCT has been putting on plays for more than 30 years. "Run for Your Wife" is the last of five plays in this year's season. Last fall's adult comedy "The Foreigner" played to a full house each

night at the Pumpkin Patch in San Martin. "Run for Your Wife" should be just as popular.

"There's not much to do around here in Gilroy. We don't have a lot of entertainment," Doss said. "So this is just a great way to escape for a moment. Come in, have a nice dinner and enjoy live theater."

Tickets must be purchased in advance at BookSmart, 17415 Monterey Road, in Morgan Hill and California Music, 7565 Monterey Road, or The Wild Rose House of Taste, 7400 Monterey Road, in Gilroy.

Details: www.svct.org or call 842-SHOW.

Rhoda Bress



.....
BRAVO!

ARTS TAKE CENTER STAGE IN GILROY

There is more on the menu at **The Wild Rose House of Taste** than just delicious food. Under the proprietorship of executive chef **Patricia Caradonna**, Gilroy's beloved landmark, Old City Hall, has been recycled into a unique cultural center featuring local performing and visual artists. Summer fare includes a dinner show of a well-known British farce, jazz, and an art exhibit.

South Valley Civic Theatre's last play of the season, Ray Cooney's **Run For Your Wife**, is being performed upstairs at The Wild Rose on weekends through the end of June. "Oh what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive" sums up the plot of this fast-paced comedy about an ordinary man with an ordinary name in an extraordinary marital situation.

John Smith finds himself sinking into connubial mire when his marriages to two different women living in two different parts of London run the risk of being discovered. After helping an elderly woman escape a mugging, John suffers a head injury and is taken to the hospital where he gives the doctors the address of one wife and the police the address of the other.

Doors slam, telephones ring, far-fetched stories are woven, and characters take on two or three identities, as John and his friend, Stanley Gardner, desperately try to prevent his two separate lives from becoming one. Add to the mix a gay dressmaker, and the double entendres and innuendoes never let up. Yes it's sexist, yes it's homophobic, yet it's what you would expect of British humor, and yes it's funny.

This is just the kind of adult comedy that South Valley Civic Theatre does well. The success of a play like *Run For Your Wife* depends so much on timing, and the outstanding cast (**Whitney Pintello McClelland, Angela Doss, Kevin Heath, Jon Reed, Jonathan Bass, Bill Corneth, and Rod Pintello**) seems to effortlessly exit and enter off the stage as telephones and doorbells are answered right on cue.

Director Steve Spencer has skillfully choreographed the play by having both households share the same set. Not only does this contribute to the humor by having the characters almost but not quite run into each other, but it also ensures that there are no interruptions to the play's hectic pace.

My final note about this show is actually a welcome back to Whitney Pintello McClelland, who, according to the program, is returning to local stage after taking an eight-year break. Her portrayal of Wife #1 is a highlight of this show, and she definitely wins my award for The Best Incredulous Look as her well-scheduled, peaceful life falls apart on stage.

Tickets includes dinner at 6:30 p.m. and the show at 8 p.m. and must be purchased in advance at BookSmart, 17415 Monterey Road in Morgan Hill and California Music, 7565 Monterey Road, Gilroy, or The Wild Rose House of Taste, 7400 Monterey Road, Gilroy. For details, call (408) 842-SHOW or go online at www.svct.org.