

'Legally Blonde' comes to Community Playhouse stage



Photo by Marty Cheek

Cast members playing sorority girls go through a dress rehearsal for "Legally Blonde," the musical, which opens Feb. 21 and runs through March 9.

SVCT show begins this Friday, plays for four weekends

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By Marty Cheek

A "ditsy" young woman goes to Harvard University and discovers her true self as she tries to win back her boyfriend by earning a law degree in "Legally Blonde," the South Valley Civic Theater's latest teen musical show starting Friday.

The romantic comedy story provides young girls with a lot of positive messages about their self-identity, one of the reasons it was selected by the SVCT's board of directors, said Robin Bezanson, the show's co-producer with Roberta Vinkhuyzen Rasmussen .

"I think it's very empowering for the females, for the girls in the audience," she said. "I think it's entertaining for the audience as a whole. It shows a young lady who is looking for the wrong things but realizes the strength in herself and realizes who she really is and that she's capable and able to do the things she chooses to do."

The show also has humorous scenes to entertain the males in the audience, Bezanson said. "It's just a very all-around exciting, fun show," she said. "The music is excellent, it's really good. I find myself singing it all through the day."

Oakwood School senior Baily Konold, 17, plays "Elle Woods," the leading female role who starts off her college career majoring in fashion merchandising. "I'm kind of a ditsy blonde girl at the beginning who has a really clear sense of who she is," she said, describing Elle's character. "And that kind of gets shaken up when she follows her ex-boyfriend to Harvard and she finds out that she's got a lot more potential than she thought. She follows that and realizes she's an awesome person and great at law."

As Elle discovers her true self, she grows more independent and moves on to bigger and better things in life, Konold said.

Konold, who wants to major in nursing when she goes to college, has performed in nine different shows throughout her school years but hasn't been a central character since she was in sixth grade. Playing the role of Elle has helped her get a better sense of how "not to be in the background" any more but be more of an extrovert.

“When I started with the show, I think I struggled a lot with my being toned down because that’s the kind of person I am. That’s kind of my background,” she said. “And Elle’s kind of just out there and in your face, and so I’ve had to learn to do that. It’s enhanced my own character by being more outgoing.”

Many young people don’t connect to the classical musical show and so “Legally Blonde,” with its more modern style of music, can serve as a gateway musical that gets them into the theater art form where they can build an appreciation for some of the classics as well, said director Andrew Cummings.

“It’s a show that I’ve liked for a long time,” he said. “I was very excited that the (SVCT) board picked it because this is a fun show and very appropriate for this age group.”

Although the show’s story is a light-hearted one, Cummings said he was “pretty aggressive” about preparing the performers for “Legally Blonde” because of its demanding nature.

“It’s actually one of the most difficult productions that we’ve had the kids do for a number of years,” he said. “It just has a lot of high levels of acting and singing and dance all at the same time. ... With this show, they’ve all got to be triple threats, so we’ve really been pushing them hard.”



Photo by Marty Cheek
Baily Konold, an Oakwood School senior, plays the lead of Elle Woods, in South Valley Civic Theater’s production of “Legally Blonde.”

SHOW TIMES

Dates: 8 p.m. Friday Feb. 21, 28, March 7 and 14; 8 p.m. Saturday Feb. 22, March 1, 8 and 15; 2:30 p.m. Sunday March 2 and 9.

Location: Morgan Hill Community Playhouse, 17090 Monterey Road.

Legally Blonde the Musical: Feb 21-March 15

Morgan Hill Times |Lora Schraft/Chief Photographer

Legally Blonde the Musical opens Friday February 21 and runs through March 15 at the Morgan Hill Community Playhouse. Showtimes are Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m. and Sunday March 2 and March 9 at 2 p.m. Tickets are available online or at the door, \$19 for regular admission, \$18 for seniors and \$15 for students.



Members of the cast of the South Valley Civic Theater production of Legally Blonde the Musical perform during a dress rehearsal Tuesday.





Bailey Konold, playing the role of Elle Woods, performs with Zack Goller, playing the role of Warner, during dress rehearsals Tuesday for the South Valley Civic Theater production of Legally Blonde the Musical.



From left, Danielle Moore, playing the role of Vivienne, Anthony Daly, playing the role of Callahan, and Zack Goller, playing the role of Warner, perform during dress rehearsals Tuesday for the South Valley Civic Theater production of Legally Blonde the Musical.



Bailey Konold, playing the role of Elle Woods, center performs with Francisco Alvarez, playing the role of Padamadan and Andrew Stebbins, playing the role of Aaron, during dress rehearsals Tuesday for the South Valley Civic Theater production of Legally Blonde the Musical.



From left, Emily Carrillo, playing the role of Margot, Marisa Hruby, playing the role of Serena, Shelby Shutt, playing the role of Pilar, Bailey Konold, playing the role of Elle Woods and Hannah Bezanson, playing the role of Kate, perform during dress rehearsals Tuesday for the South Valley Civic Theater production of Legally Blonde the Musical.





Bailey Konold, playing the role of Elle Woods, performs with Pascale Vinkhuyzen, playing the role of Paulette, during dress rehearsals Tuesday for the South Valley Civic Theater production of Legally Blonde the Musical.

Broadway connection to Morgan Hill's 'Legally Blonde' show



Photo by Mitchell Kearney
Tom Gabbard

Residents' son helped co-produce Broadway musical in 2007

South Valley Civic Theater's upcoming performances of the musical "Legally Blonde" have a Morgan Hill connection with its Broadway hit co-producer Tom Gabbard. His parents, Nelson and Bonnie Gabbard, resided in our city. Now both deceased, the couple were great supporters of community theater, especially shows encouraging children to get on the stage.

As the president of the Blumenthal Performing Arts Center in Charlotte, N.C., since 2003, Gabbard has been involved in the creation of many musicals that run on Broadway, London's West End theater district, and tour nationally. He has co-produced hits including "Monty Python's Spamalot," "Kinky Boots," and "La Cage aux Folles."

Launched in 2007, the musical "Legally Blonde" is based on the 2001 romantic comedy film starring Reese Witherspoon. Gabbard was drawn to the empowering theme of the story, especially for young girls who can get the message that "smart is good" and that they should never dumb themselves down to try to please someone. "I also love that it is a multi-generational show," he said. "In New York, London, and cities all across

the country, I see two and three generations of women in a family enjoying the show together."

The show's pre-Broadway tryout was in San Francisco and Gabbard was able to take his mother Bonnie, who was undergoing chemotherapy at that time. They visited with the star of the show afterward and the whole experience lifted her spirits for days, he said.

His school and community theater experience served to help grow Gabbard's passion for producing shows.

"While I think it is in my DNA, I was blessed by schools and a family that nurtured that in a big way," he said. "Through school and community theater I was able to do more shows by the time I was 18 than many people do by the time they graduate from college. As soon as I could drive I was in San Francisco a lot to see shows at ACT, the Curran and elsewhere. I was a very lucky kid."

Many school-sponsored theater programs no longer exist, so community theaters such as SVCT are more important than ever to nurture and inspire kids. The opportunity to develop and share their skills in community theater provides a welcoming place to meet people who share their passion for theater, he said.

"It's great to know that there are others who are like you and who share the unique interests you have," he said. "The friendships made there can last a lifetime."

Gabbard offered his congratulations to the actors and producers of SVCT's "Legally Blonde" show. "'Being true to yourself never goes out of style,' is one of the last lines in the show," he said. "I'm thrilled that SVCT audiences coming to this show will be reminded of that great advice through the work of these talented actors."