



Local theater veterans **Bill Corneth** and **MaryAnn Bruegmann** star in GCT's *Lion in Winter*.

OFF, OFF, OFF BROADWAY

The Lion's hype job

By Jim Maya
Miracle Miles Correspondent

A week from tonight, Gilroy Community Theatre's *The Lion In Winter* opens at the Gilroy High School Theater. Since I play the "Lion", Henry II, King of England, as I promised in my very first "O.O.O.B.," I won't be writing a review. I never promised not to hype a play that I'm acting in, however. Therefore, watch me hype away.

A bit about the play. . . *Lion* is a historical comedy, about real historical characters.

Henry II did marry Eleanor of Aquitaine. She did have Richard the Lionhearted, Geoffrey and Prince John, of Robin Hood and Magna Charta fame. Henry did have a mistress Alias, who was the sister of Philip, the young king of France.

Eleanor did go to war against Henry, often. Henry did imprison Eleanor, often. Richard did have a "deep and close" friendship with Philip over many years. Alias was Henry's mistress, among many. She was raised by Eleanor from the age of seven, became "close" to Henry at sixteen. In the play, she is 23 and engaged to John or Richard, or Henry, depending on the scene of the play.

Richard hates Eleanor, then loves her, then hates her, Henry loves John then hates all three boys. Henry and Eleanor and Alias love and hate each other several times during the course of the evening.

A comedy? Yes, and a brilliant one. ("What family doesn't have its up and downs.") But, if you like "Dallas" and "Dynasty" and "Falcon Crest," you'll love *Lion*.

And a bit about the actors — Well there's me. . . Henry (Robert Preston on Broadway/Peter O'Toole in the movie), *gulp*, has been a challenge. MaryAnn Bruegmann plays Eleanor (Katherine Hepburn's movie role). MaryAnn has studied the historical aspects of the play, and is some what of an Eleanor-phile. If she did believe in reincarnation, in one of her lives, she was Eleanor. It has been a moving experience working with her again. We played opposite each other in G.C.T.'s *Cabaret*. I directed her in *Plaza Suite*. As a member of the Gilroy Unified School District board, she is my boss. . .and friend.

Bill Corneth, recently of *The 1940 Radio Hour* and *Father's Day* fame, plays Richard. Bill brings a certain maturity to the role. We acted together in *Father's Day*, and again he has learned his lines sooner than me. Mike O'Connor (Geoffrey) was in *Radio Hour* and also in the

recent G.C.T. production of *Company*. Mike has a great English accent, especially when compared to my "Indiana-English" accent. "Young" Chuck Gilmore ("old" Chuck Gilmore opens in two weeks in Center Stage's next production *Wally's Cafe*) plays John. Even though Alais says, "He has pimples and smells of compost" — My daughter says, "He's cute!" Chuck is a talented drama student at G.H.S., and Nancy Hendrickson's nephew.

Chris Osterbolt (Phillip) is a senior at Gilroy Hi. This is his second stage role, after splitting the role of "Ozzie," in his senior play, with David Harrison — From rich wimp to handsome, young king.

Rosalind Farotte plays Alais. Rosalind is a graduate of the University of Santa Clara Drama Department. She played "Abigail" in G.C.T.'s *The Crucible* in 1977, had the blind lead in 1982's *Wait Until Dark*, and will be in *Vanities* this spring at Center Stage. Rosalind has been one of the true "lights" on the O.O.O.B. stage.

What can I say about director and set designer George Costa. He is right off his smash hit *Radio Hour* at Center Stage. Hopefully, *Lion* will be another hit for him.

Remember, February 22, 23, 24, and March 1, 2 and 3. Call 842-7469 for reservations. . .

The Lion in Winter starts in Gilroy Friday



King Henry (Jim Maya, right) confronts the king of France (Chris Osterholt) in *The Lion in Winter*.

"Well, what family doesn't have its ups and downs?" remarks Eleanor of Aquitaine (MaryAnn Bruegmann) after one of the countless grizzly confrontations in *The Lion in Winter*, forthcoming production of the Gilroy Community Theatre.

The play opens Friday at the Gilroy High School Theater, at Tenth and Princevalle streets.

Eleanor is part of no ordinary family. They are the world in small. King Henry (Jim Maya), first Plantagenet monarch of England, a kind of Lear with three boys, lives now only to control who succeeds him. Eleanor, mother and wife of kings, is a brilliant beauty, and also Henry's prisoner, kept locked in Salisbury Tower between the holidays.

And then there are the kids.

John (Chuck Gilmore Jr.), is Henry's supposed favorite. Richard (Bill Corneth), is killing his way through the world, later to be dubbed Lion-Hearted. Geoffrey

(Michael O'Connor), is the favorite of neither, always calculating, plotting, and maneuvering.

The scene is set for Christmas in the year 1183. The place is Henry's castle at Chinon, France. The boys have been called, Eleanor is there, and young Phillip, King of France (Chris Osterholt) has come to spend the holidays. He has come to demand the fulfillment of a treaty made 16 years prior, under which his sister, the young French Princess Alais (Rosalind Farotte) would either be married to Henry's successor, or her dowry returned. Neither event has taken place.

And so on this eventful Christmas day, these seven — who in their persons carry war, peace, succession, justice, religion, and all the mischief of history for millions then living and worlds to come — claw and betray and shout each other down in a style which will only be familiar to those who remember their own Christmases when nobody got what they wanted.

The James Goldman soap-opera-of-the-realm was first produced on Broadway starring Robert Preston and billed as "a comedy." The motion picture version starred Peter O'Toole and Katherine Hepburn.

The local production, under the direction of George Costa, will be seen at the Gilroy High School Theater on February 22-24, and again on March 1-3. The Sunday performances are at 2 p.m., all other performances will be at 8 p.m.

Tickets are \$7.50 general admission non-reserved seating. Children and seniors are \$5. Tickets may be reserved by calling 842-SHOW (7469).

The GCT Box Office will be opened weekdays from 1 to 5 at the Theater Angels House, located at 140 W. 5th Street, Gilroy. Group rates are available for theater parties and special discounts to educational groups, youth clubs, and church organizations. Parental discretion is advised. **(more photos on page 15)**

Last moments in rehearsal for *The Lion in Winter*

The last moments of rehearsal for G.C.T.'s *The Lion In Winter* dwindle down to the last few hours, and the actors work their scenes.



At right — Princess Alais (Rosalind Farotte), one of the pawns in the royal chess game — King Henry's mistress — shares a lighter moment with Henry's wife and queen, Eleanor (MaryAnn Bruegmann).

Middle — Richard, the lion hearted, (Bill Corneth) and Mom discuss why they hate and love each other.

Below Right — Richard gets Alais, or does he? Will her brother, King Philip (Chris Osterholt) of France get her dowry back? Does the king's crown fit?

Left — Alais ponders her fate. Will she be forced to marry John, Richard or Henry? And what will she fix the kids for dinner?



GCT delays 'Lion' till 22nd

GILROY — The Gilroy Community Theater has rescheduled performances of *Lion in Winter* for February 22, 23 and 24 and March 1, 2 and 3 at Gilroy High School. All shows will begin at 8 p.m. except for Feb. 24 and March 3 performances which begin at 2 p.m.

The play was originally scheduled for Feb. 1, 2, 3, 8, 9 and 10, but had to be delayed because of casting difficulties, said GCT president Mike Dorn. Dorn said GCT needed a second set of auditions in January after the first ones during Christmas holidays did not draw enough actors for the play.

"It put us a month behind," said Dorn.

Both he and GCT general manager George Costa said the delay had nothing to do with financial difficulties the GCT is currently experiencing. Due to a mix-up in location for one play and lower-than-expected turnouts at other plays, the theater group ended up with a deficit last year, said Dorn.

Another local theater organization, Center Stage, performed two benefit performances of *The 1940's Radio Hour* last weekend, reaping \$1,700 for GCT, said Costa. Although that does not bring the troubled company out of the red, Costa said it will provide cash to see them through the *Lion in Winter* production.

Tickets to the performance will be \$7.50. Reservations can be made by calling 842-SHOW. Tickets are also available from any GCT board member.

Jim Maya portrays King Henry

Actor's stomach churns for the opening curtain tonight

By Jim Maya
Miracle Miles Correspondent

As you read this column today, February 22, 1985, James Mead Maya and the rest of the *Lion in Winter* cast will be in the last few hours before opening curtain. Stomachs will be churning . . . Those "I'll never remember that line" lines will be studied for the last time . . . All the wasted hours will be cursed and fear will have set in . . . All the hours of rehearsals and memorization time . . . All the unwinding hours after rehearsal and those countless minutes on this and that come to a head tonight — for the love of art. We all hope you'll get to see one of the performances —

February 22, 23, 24 and March 1, 2, and 3 — call 842-Show for tickets. Eight o'clock at the Gilroy High School Theater, 2:00 on Sunday.

4 Thursday, February 28, 1985 **Viva**

GCT's 'Lion in Winter' strong funny

By Billy Allstetter
Staff Writer

Play review

It was worth it.

Plagued by financial difficulties, Gilroy Community Theater originally planned to perform a dramatic reading of the play *Lion in Winter*. But as the players and director became more and more involved in the play, it was evident that actors with books in their hands would not have done justice to this complex, emotional rollercoaster of a play.

Although the late shift to a full production caused some difficulties, GCT's *Lion in Winter* is a strong play that ranges from agony to ecstasy and more often to the devilishly humorous. Mary Ann Breugmann and Chuck Gilmore perform excellently.

The situation — an aging king trying to choose one of his three sons to succeed him while family and enemies plot for their favorites — sounds less like a comedy and more like a set-up for a tragedy along the lines of *Lear* and *MacBeth*. Indeed there are some moving moments, but the zingers thrown throughout the play keep the atmosphere light. In fact, if the play suffers a problem, it is that the tragic betrayals of mother, sons and father are hard to appreciate when sandwiched by humorous comments about "bags of bile" and the "role of sex in history."

Mary Ann Breugmann, as King

Henry's imprisoned wife, gives the most powerful performance. One can almost envision Katherine Hepburn who played the part in the movie as she philosophizes about her captivity, her sons and her great desire to foil her husband's plans. Whether avoiding the unflattering mirror in her bedroom or telling her husband she realizes her sons are creeps, she is the wisest, most commanding presence on the stage.

Chuck Gilmore, on the other hand, presents the wimpy character of John to perfection. The youngest, spoiled son whines when he loses, gloats when he wins, and hides behind coattails when he is in danger.

Jim Maya delivers a solid performance as King Henry. Chris Osterholt is a mature 17-year-old

King of France who looks like he stepped out of the pages of *Gentleman's Quarterly*. Bill Corneth, unfortunately, lacks the power of the "constant warrior and sometime poet" later known as Richard the Lionhearted.

Opening night started a little too quickly, and it was apparent at times that cast members were delivering memorized lines rather than playing parts. That can probably be attributed to the late decision to produce a full play.

The actors soon warmed up to their parts, however.

James Goldman's original play is excellent. He combines humor, tragedy, intrigue and family squabbles in an entertaining script. Director George Costa and the Gilroy Community Theater cast present an enjoyable version.

'Lion' started small; grew to full-blown production

By Billy Allstetter
Staff Writer

King Henry has a problem. He has such a complicated problem that Gilroy Community Theater had to expand its original production of the play *Lion in Winter* to adequately portray his situation.

The play opens Friday at the Gilroy High School theater.

Henry is an aging king — not unlike Shakespeare's Lear — who has three sons who all want to replace him on the throne. His wife wants the eldest to become king, and he wants the youngest.

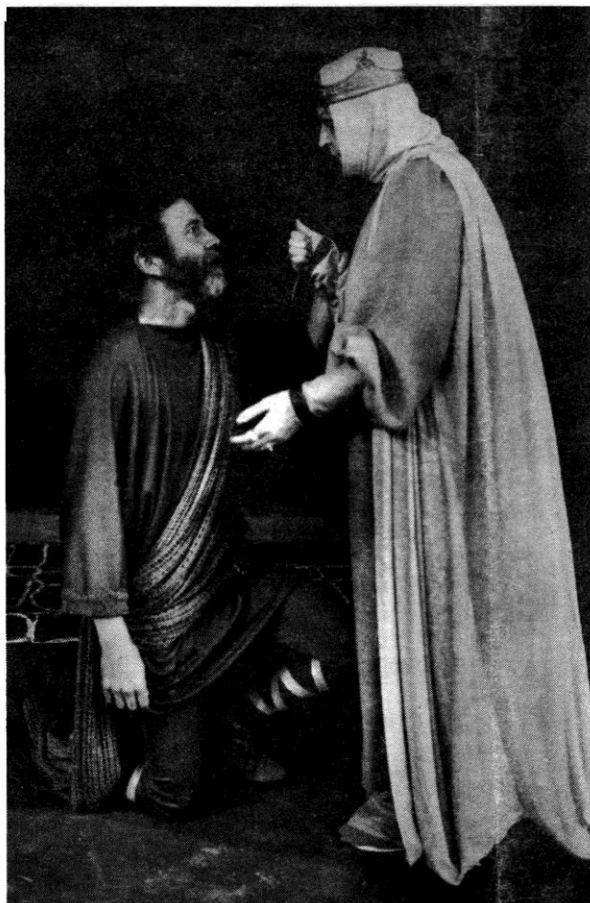
He's thrown his wife in prison so he can more peacefully enjoy his mistress. But his mistress is supposed to marry one of his sons to fulfill a treaty signed with the king of France 16 years earlier. Now the 17-year-old king of France is threatening war if the terms of the agreement are not met immediately. The mistress, Alais, doesn't want to marry any of Henry's sons and says she will do anything in her power to remain his mistress.

It promises to be an entertaining family gathering when this group gets together over the Christmas Holiday in the year 1183 to lie, laugh, beg, manipulate and threaten each other. Emotions run from seething hatred to deep love and humorous slapstick.

"It's a wonderfully-written, funny play," says Jim Maya, who will be playing King Henry.

It is such a powerful play that director George Costa decided to change original plans to present it as a dramatic reading to a full-scale production.

"Originally, I was going to keep it simple," said Costa, who acknowledged that GCT's recent financial difficulties prompted the



Richard (Corneth) and Eleanor (Mary Ann Bruegmann).

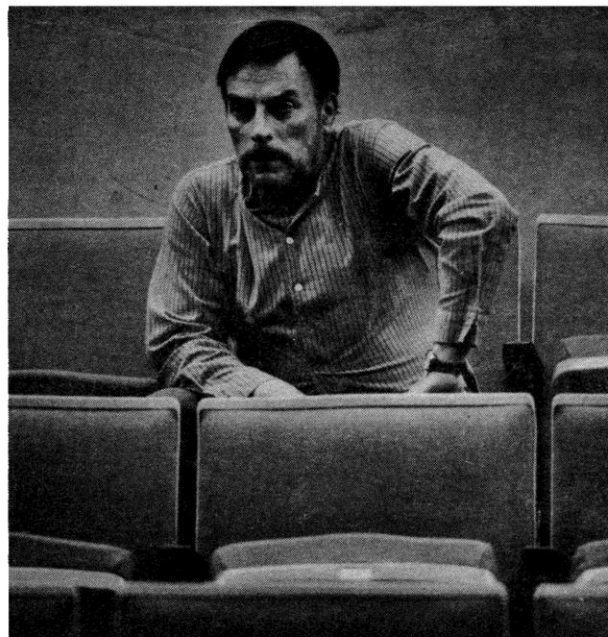
limited production plans. "But it just kept getting more involved."

The scenes became more elaborate. The costumes became more detailed. Costa began to realize that actors and audiences alike would enjoy the play more if play-

books were abandoned and it was presented as a full play.

"It just sort of evolved," said Costa. "It's a whole different situation now. The physical limitations are just not there."

Audiences will have a chance



Evan Yee/Viva

Director George Costa watches the action during rehearsal.

eavesdrop on this enlarged family soap opera when Gilroy Community Theater presents James Goldman's play *Lion in Winter* this weekend and next at the Gilroy High School theater.

The play begins at 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday nights and at 2 p.m. Sundays on both weekends at the Gilroy High School theater.

Maya, a veteran of GCT productions, will play the troubled king trying to outwit his family members and overcome their devious plots and shifting alliances to make sure he determines the future king of England.

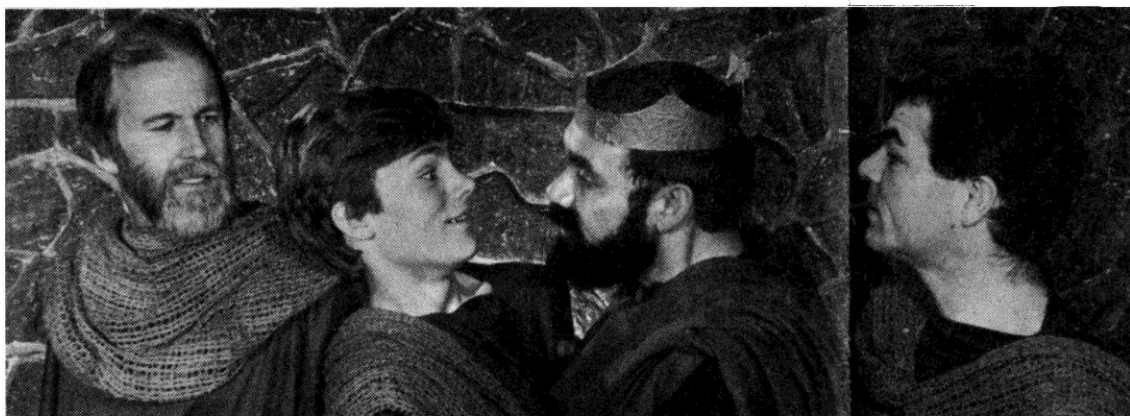
Mary Ann Bruegmann, a GCT founding member, plays Eleanor of Aquitaine, Henry's brilliant, beautiful wife and prisoner. She has acted in and directed several GCT productions and is probably best known locally for her humorous roles in musicals like *Cabaret*.

"I think she is really going to surprise people," said Costa. "It's a totally different thing for her to do."

Chuck Gilmore Jr. plays the youngest son John, a whining "pimpley boy" and supposed favorite of King Henry. Bill Corneth plays the eldest son and great warrior Richard. The middle son Geoffrey, played by Michael O'Connor, is the favorite of none, but a constant plotter, calculator and manipulator.

Rosalind Farotte plays Alais, the adamant mistress and unwilling wife. Chris Osterholt plays the young French king who proves to be a better bargainer than King Richard ever expected.

The Sunday performances of the play will begin at 2 p.m. with all others beginning at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$7.50 for adults and \$5 for children and seniors. Seating will be general admission. Tickets can be reserved by calling 842-SHOW. Tickets can also be purchased at the Gilroy Community Theater Box Office, 140 W. Fifth Street, Monday through Friday 1 to 5 p.m. Group rates are available.



Special to Viva

Maya, second from right, and "sons" Bill Corneth, Chuck Gilmore, Michael O'Connor.

'Lion's' lead actor eats, drinks and breathes theater

By Billy Allstetter
Staff Writer

"The more theater the better," says Jim Maya. Whether its helping high school students escape their shyness, directing a student play, or acting in one himself, Maya's life revolves around drama.

"It's very enjoyable," said Maya during a recent rehearsal of Gilroy Community Theater's production of *Lion in Winter*. "But you can really add up the hours."

After teaching acting classes at Gilroy High School during the day and directing a student play after school, he has come back to the school theater to practice his lead role as King Henry Plantagenet. It's been a long day of drama, but he still has enthusiasm.

"I am very much looking forward to playing Henry. It is one of the truly great roles in theater," said Maya. "He's an incredibly complex character."

Maya, 45, plays an aging king who must select one of his three sons as heir. Unfortunately, his sons, his wife, his mistress and the king of France all have different ideas about the next king.

King Henry must scheme, beg, cajole and threaten his way through their devious plans and shifting alliances to assure that the right heir is chosen and his empire remains intact. Within the two-hour span of the play, he must play the tender lover, triumphant king, foolish jester and near murderer of his sons.

"The most difficult thing is that it runs the gamut of emotions. How do you make these emotions realistic?" Maya asks.

His mellow voice offstage belies the great booming power he can generate as an angry king. His thick black beard looks regal enough, but will have to be grayed for him to look the aging ruler.

Maya directed the same play for GCT 10 years ago and believes that experience helps him understand Henry and his relationships

more thoroughly. He said his own life experiences serve as a sort of emotional library from which to draw. Remembering painful or happy times help him portray those emotions.

Maya said he also looks to the play's director, George Costa, to draw out some of the necessary emotions.

What could be a tension-filled relationship between the former director and the current one appears **to be working smoothly — in part** because he can remember very little of his specific directions 10 years ago, Maya says.

"He's a brilliant director," said Maya of Costa. "A director is a teacher. George is teaching me."

Maya will also teach his own students about the play. He plans to show them scenes from the movie, starring Peter O'Toole and Katherine Hepburn. They will also act some of the scenes themselves.

Maya clearly enjoys teaching. He sees it as an artistic endeavor as well as rewarding experience.

"Teachers are the greatest artists of all because their medium is the human," said Maya, quoting author John Steinbeck.

He mentioned the "new self-esteem" he can help instill in students and remembers one teen-ager thanking him after performing in a play.

"I thought I would never never be able to do this. It's so much fun," Maya quotes the student.

In addition to teaching drama classes, Maya is now directing the student production *Cheaper by the Dozen*, acting as co-sponsor of the Students Against Drunk Driving Club and as director of the Gilroy High School Mime Troupe.

"You get to be a positive force. You get to see the kids grow," said Maya.

After he has completed his portrayal of King Henry, he and his wife Carolee will play clandestine lovers in *Same Time Next Year*.

Maya is clearly doing his part to bring theater to South County.