Intimate Theatre At Its Best

***"Crimes of The Heart"* cast members Charly Bushauer and Linda Fusano.**

The six members of the cast of South Valley Civic Theatre's production of *"Crimes of the Heart"* agree that acting in an intimate theatre is an enjoyable experience in some ways preferable to performing in a large auditorium. The play will open on Friday, Nov. 6, in the old Flying Lady Restaurant, which owner Irv Perch has converted into a Theatre planned to hold approximately 150 people.

Rosalind Farotte, who plays the youngest sister, Babe, admits to having been nervous the first time she acted in a small theatre. "I found it distracting to have the audience so close," she says, "but now I like it. It's easy to tell how they feel about what you're doing."

Tom Hepner, who plays the attorney, agrees. "The small theatre gives the actors a chance to be emotionally connected to the audience," he says. "I feel much more detached on a big stage."

The cast is also in agreement that *"Crimes of the Heart"* is a fascinating play. Written by Beth Henley, who won a Pulitzer prize for it, the story is about the interaction of three neurotic, Southern sisters. Marion Pintello, director of the local production, describes the play as being beautifully written. "The bonding of these women is something we would expect to have happen in Mississippi, but probably not in California," She says.

Charly Bashauer, who plays the part of Lennie, first saw the play at the Oregon Shakespearean Festival in Ashland. When she heard that the SVCT was producing it, she rushed over to auditions though she hadn't been in a play for ten years. She's glad she did.

Andy Donlon, who plays Meg's ex-boyfriend, Doc, says he likes the intensity of the play and the opportunity to express a variety of emotions.

Tickets are $20, which includes a Chicken Cordon Bleu dinner to be served at 6:30 in the present restaurant, next door to the theatre. A bar will be open at the theatre before the play starts at 8p.m. and during intermissions. *"Crimes of the Heart"* runs for three week-ends, closing on Nov. 21. Tickets and information are available by calling the box office, 842-SHOW, or 637-3214. The Flying Lady is located in Morgan Hill at 15060 Hill Rd., between San Martin and Tennant Avenues.

S.V.C.T.'s *"Crimes"* Top of the Class—A +

By Jim Maya
Miracle Miles Corespondent

Without reservation, without qualification, I give the new South Valley Civic Theatre's production of *"Crimes of the Heart"* an A+...(School teachers like myself, and the kids have grades on their minds this week.).

As we sat through opening night performance last Friday night, we laughed, thought of times past, empathizeed and sympathized with the characters, and never once felt ill at ease with the performances of the actors, the blocking, the pace, the set, the lights, the costumes or anything else about the staging...And most certainly not the marvelous script...

My wife leaned over to me at the end of the play, as we waited for the throngs of well-wishers and other assorted groupies and kin to finish their after-the-performance compliments, and spoke the following never-before-heard words.

"It is going to be so nice to be able to go up to the cast and tell them that they were all great, not just part of the cast."

We all know what she means, right?

"Crimes" first of all is a beautifully directed play. Director Marion Pintello has fashioned a tightly paced, well blocked show, that has a unity of spirit and constant focus. She has provoked performances from her cast that are simply top quality...And worthy of any Bay Area stage.

Of course she didn't have a bad cast to start with. Because *"Crimes"* is so much a woman's show, I'll discuss the ladies first...And if you don't think this critic is picking his words carefully right now you're mistaken.

The four actresses in *"Crimes"* are all wonderful! Newcomers Carly Bushauer (who you have seen recently in half page ads for Monte Villa and O'Connor Hospitals) and Lenoir Kieve play two of the three Megrath sisters. Nothing against local veterans, but it was great to see such fine performances from new personalities. Both of their characters, Lenny and Meg, were appealing and yet frustrating to the aduiences. What fine artists both of them are!

But no finer than Rosalind Farotte and Linda Fusano. Having acted with Rosalind, there is no one who appreciates her talent more than myself. Her gifts are in full force with her rendering of the youngest sister, Babe. Babe is the one who has just shot her husband, then went to the kitchen to make a pitcher of lemonade and asks her bleeding hubby if he wants a glass. The role is obviously demanding. Babe is a "little" strange, and yet we must love her in spite of her bizarre behavior...And she has to be funny!

Roslind's characterization, timing and intensity really brings us what we need to see in order for the play to work...

The last time I saw Linda Fusano on stage was in California Suite. In *"Crimes"* she does a 180 in terms of her characterization, and adds to her laurels with anther super performance. Being believable while playing different types is one of the marks of a gifted actor. Her last two performances Linda has proved herself to be just that.

Her role of Chick, the sister's snobbish cousin, is a plum of a role, and Linda really pulls it off, while pulling her stockings on...You'll understand that line after you see the show...

Tom Hepner and Andy Donlin have the unenviable task of rounding out the talented cast. Hepner, a Southern Lawyer defending Babe, is very smooth. Andy Donlin's Doc seemed a tad weak in character, especially along side the powerful Meg...This is not to fault the actor, but perhaps the character definition between he and his director. Both do fine jobs.

The Beth Henley play, set in a small Mississippi town, continues through Nov. 21 at the if-you-have-never-been-there-you-have-to-go-at-least-once Flying Lady Restaurant in Morgan Hill. (The meal was above average for dinner theatre.) Call 842-SHOW, for reservations.

"Crimes of the Heart" is the best production of it's type South County has seen in a long time. It's not to be missed!

LIFESTYLES

Popular play to open in new dinner theater

MORGAN HILL — Three Southern sisters, whose bizarre behavior turns crime into comedy, will be on stage this month when *Crimes of the Heart* is presented on a small stage in the Flying Lady Restaurant on Foothill Avenue.

First produced on Broadway in 1980, *Crimes of the Heart* won the Pullitzer Prize for drama and was later made into a movie. The South Valley Civic Theater production opening Friday stars veterans as well as newcomers to the local stage.

Rosalind Farotte, Charly Bushauer and Lenoir Kiev play the sisters, whose activities range from shooting to mental mayhem. Linda Fusano plays the cousin, Tom Hepner, the attorney, and Andy Donlon, Meg's ex-boyfriend.

The adult fare will be dished up in the old Flying Lady Restaurant, which owner Irv Perlich has converted into a theater holding around 150 people.

Director Marion Pintello, who has also acted and produced local plays, said of the "beautifully-written play, the bonding of these women is something we would expect to have happened in Mississippi, but probably not in California."

Playing the three sisters, from left, Lenoir Kieve, Charly Bushauer and Rosalind Farotte.

Before the play, theater-goers will dine on cordon bleu next door at the large restaurant, and a bar will be open at the playhouse until the curtain goes up at 8 p.m. It will also be open during intermissions. Tickets for both the dinner and play are $20. Call 842-SHOW

A veteran performer, Farotte said she was initially nervous about performing in a small theater, but has changed her attitude.

"I found it distracting to have an audience so close, but now I like it," said Farotte who plays Meg. "It's easy to feel how they feel about what you are doing."

Hepner agreed, saying, "The small theater gives the actors a chance to be emotionally connected to the audience. I feel much more detached on a big stage.

Bushauer, who plays Lennie , and Kieve, her sister Meg, are newcomers to SVCT productions, although they have had experience elsewhere. Bushhauer said she saw the play at the Shakespearian Festival in Ashland, Ore., and when she heard it was to be produced locally, rushed to the auditions.

Kieve, who played the role of Meg at the Lamplighter Theater in San Diego, said she tried out again because "I like the play, because it is a comedy with an underlying seriousness. While the audience is laughing on the outside, they may be crying a little on the inside."

Crimes of the Heart will run Friday and Saturday of this week, and Nov. 13, 14, 20 and 21.

A crime to miss this heartfelt play

Trivia quiz for the day: How many locations has South Valley Civic Theater used for its annual dinner show in the last ten years?

While you're thinking about that one, make your reservations for this year's dinner show. The play is *Crimes of the Heart,* and the location is the Flying Lady Restaurant east of Morgan Hill.

I can't get over how good it feels to be totally entranced by a SCVT production in which the faces on stage are new ones. Lenoir Kieve (Meg) and Charly Bushauer (Lenny) join the company for the first time with a dramatic impact that registers on the Richter scale.

Kieve's haughty Meg and Bushauer's neurotic Lenny are power-packed, and the interplay between them is explosive. Add to that mixture the honed skills of the actress with the most SVCT dramas to her credit, Rosalind Farotte (Babe), and you have the dynamic sibling triangle this script demands.

You may recall the recent film version starred no less than Diane Keaton, Jessica Lange, and Sissy Spacek, with Spacek and supporting actress Tess Harper getting Oscar nominations.

I was a bit surprised by the casting, though these three actresses are so strong that they probably could have drawn straws for the parts and still done well. (I understand Kieve did the role of Babe in San Diego.)

SVCT adds three of its pros, Linda Fusano (Chick), Andy Donlon (Doc), and Tom Hepner (Barnette) to round out the cast. All six do well with their accents, and the Southern believability, so often elusive, is right there.

Crimes of the Heart is the directorial debut of former SVCT president Marion Pintello. Producer Anne Hepner took quite a gamble with a rookie director, two newcomers in the leads, and a new location (with rehearsal access problems).

But the long shot came through as a winner: and the new record hits the charts at No. 1. If you miss this show, that will be the real crime of the heart.

I haven't always been overwhelmingly ecstatic about the Flying Lady as a destination. But it's a good spot for dinner theater, since it is known more for its dramatic impact than for food. The SVCT dinner, chicken cordon bleu, is served in the regular dining room in a section reserved for theater patrons.

Chuck Myer

After dessert, a host couple escorts ticket holders to the stage area in the adjoining building through a long corridor which seems to be a cross between the Winchester House, the Mystery Spot, and the human causeway at LAX.

The thrust stage and comfortable seating is set up in the original Flying Lady. This is the first local play I recall with balcony seats. It all works well, except for a couple of pillars which can play havoc with sight lines (a problem that has haunted past dinner shows).

Trivia answer: Ten! Past dinner show locations: Gilroy Community Center, *I Do, I Do!,* 1978; Gilroy Presbyterian Church hall, *An Evening with Rodgers and Hart,* 1979; Painted Wagon Restaurant, *Two by Two,* 1980, St. Mary's Church parish hall, *Man of La Mancha,* 1981; Old Gilroy Hotel, *Side by Side by Sondheim,* 1983; Le Grand Etage, *Company,* 1984; Gilroy Elks Lodge, *Same Time Next Year,* 1985; Morgan Hill's Good Food Co., *Same Time Next Year,* 1985, and *Cole!,* 1986; Hollister Elks Lodge, *California Suite,* 1987; Flying Lady, *Crimes of the Heart,* 1987.

And speaking of SVCT talent, did you recognize "Margo" on Sunday's episode of the television show *Our House*? Yep, Gilroy's own Erica Rizzi ...

Chuck Myer, a Gilroy city planner who also serves on the Santa Clara County Arts Council, is a free-lance writer and patron of the arts.

'Crimes of the Heart'

By Jim Maya
Miracle Miles Correspondent

How does one become a director? I always tell people who ask me the following...If you have a healthy enough ego, are strong willed, naturally opinionated, bossy, and are a good actor yourself and don't mind breaking the hearts of the many fine actors who audition and don't get cast, go ahead, be a director.

Marion Pintello will be a great director! And she has picked a wonderful script for her first effort, "Crimes of the Heart."

Marion's first time effort for the South Valley Civic Theatre opens November 6 as this year's SVCT dinner show at the Flying Lady restaurant in Morgan Hill.

Having been on her audition board along with producer Anne Hepner, I know what a fine cast she has assembled for the Beth Henley play. The three sisters are played by Charly Bushauer, Lenoir Kieve, and Rosalind Farotte as Lennie, Meg and Babe. Linda Fusano plays the cousin, Beth, while Tom Hepner and Andy Donlon round out the cast as Barnett, Babe's lawyer, and Doc, Meg's old friend.

The play is very similar to the recently acclaimed film of the same title. If you saw the film, you're aware that the play revolves around several womans issues.

It's very appropriate that the play be directed by a woman, especially one like Marion Pintello. She has the respect and admiration of the local theatre community, both for her acting and her organizational skills. She is also a warm and faithful friend.

Because of Pintello's special characteristics and because of the strong cast and the special qualities that this play possesses, I am really looking forward to the production.

Put the dates down on your calender right now. And work the price of the tickets into your budget right now. The tickets are $20 for both the dinner and the play, which is a deal, but takes a bit of planning for most of us.

"Crimes of the Heart" runs November 6, 7, 13, 14, 20, and the 21st.

Don't forget that the SVCT children's production, "Aladdin McFadden" opens for two weekends on Oct. 16.

One final tidbit of information. Erica Rizzi, who will have a bit part on "My Two Dads," said the episode which was scheduled for Oct. 4, will be rescheduled later this fall.

South County Theatre Scene

By Jim Maya
Miracle Miles Correspondent

Then next weekend, the SVCT production of *"Crimes of the Heart"* opens for three weekends of dinner theatre at the Flying Lady, in Morgan Hill. Everyone who has seen any of the rehearsals has come away raing with compliments.

Most of the cast is well known to local theatre goers, with the exception of lenior Kieve and Charly Bushauer.

Charly is, however, well known to may South Bay/South County folk as the Family Co-ordinator at Monte Villa Hospital, She has become a much loved legend in that capacity, and is now broadening her horizons by getting back to one of her basic loves, the theatre. She has been away from the stage for several years, and everyone I have talked to is very glad she is back. Lenoir Kieve, the other "newcomer", gave a stunning audition to get into *"Crimes"*, and has only gotten better. She is a San Jose resident, who was drawn to South County by the reputation of the masterfully written play. Lenoir is now taking classes at the American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco, and was most recently in a little ditty at the Manhattan Playhouse called *"Agnes of God"*, where she played the lead.

Charly and Lenoir play Lenny and Meg. Others in the cast include Rosalind Farotte, Tom Hepner, Andy Donlon and Linda Fusano (as Cousin Chick, not Meg... Sorry, Linda.)

The tickets are $20, which at first glance might seem a lot, but are really a deal when you consider the quality of the director, Marion Pintello, the quality of the restaurant, and the quality of the producer, Anne Hepner.

"Crimes of the Heart" runs November 6, 7, 13, 14, 20 and 21. Call 842-SHOW for more info and reservations. See you opening night!

If you're a fan of fine choral music, don't miss the Third Annual GHS Fall Concert at the GHS Theatre on Nov. 5th. All five of Phil Robb's vocal groups will be performing. They include the 80 voice Concert Choir, the Chamber Singers, the new Mens Barbershop group, the Womans Chorus and the SVJH Choir, which includes two Maya kids.

'Crimes of the Heart' good theatrical fare

By Garth Catterall

South Valley Civic Theatre's production of "Crimes of the Heart" opened this weekend to a very appreciative audience. It is being produced in the old Flying Lady Restaurant in Morgan Hill, which has been turned into a very intimate setting for small performances such as this.

The show is preceded by a Chicken Cordon Bleu dinner at the new Flying Lady Restaurant. The dinner was only surpassed by the festive atmosphere.

"Crimes of the Heart," written by Beth Henley, is a drama about three sisters who live in a small southern town. Lenny, played by Charly Bushauer, is a lonely lady trying to celebrate her 30th birthday despite an ailing grandfather, her horse being struck by lightning, and her sister Babe, played by Rosalind Farotte, attempting the murder of her husband.

Meg, played by Lenoir Kieve, whom Lenny has summoned from Hollywood, renews an old friendship with Doc, played by Andy Donlon, while Babe tries to establish some sort of defense with her lawyer Barnette, played by Tom Hepner. Lenny's next door neighbor Chick, played by Linda Fusano, also provides some very humorous moments.

Director Marion Pintello, a Hollister resident, has done a fine job of creating a quaint production in an intimate setting. Tom Hepner's set design is excellent as are the performances by all of the cast.

The play will continue Friday and Saturday evenings, November 13 14, 20, and 21. Tickets are $20 for both the dinner and show, and reservations can be made by calling 637-3214 or 842-SHOW.

The Flying Lady is located on Foothill Road, between San Martin and Tennant avenues, in Morgan Hill.