

Blithe Spirit, Charlie Brown open

By Jim Maya
Miracle Miles correspondent

There are times during the year when there are almost too many things going on...like right now!

Next Friday, which happens appropriately to be the 13th, South Valley Civic Theatre opens "Blithe Spirit", the last (Sorry about last week) show of their triumphant 20th Anniversary Season. The Ruth E. Mullins directed, Russ Brawn produced, Noel Coward comedy stars Bill Corneth, Marion Pintello, Rosalind Farotte, Carol Harris, Lynn (Yes, Lynn!) Lawrence, Matt's dad, Andrew Tidwell and Cindy Howell. (Joyce Pagan, Assistant to the Director, has just been cast in Center Stages upcoming farce, "Key For Two.")

I know you remember the story...How Charles (Bill) Condomine's wife, Elvira (Rosalind), dies and how he goes on to marry Ruth (Marion), and how Madame Arcati (Carol) conjures up Elvira in a seance and how she wants Charles back and how vulgar all those nasturtiums are. It's all very English, very witty and very, very funny.

My most indelible memory of the last Gilroy production of "Blithe Spirit" was my running the lights for director George Costa, with George at my side in the light booth. No pressure there!

"Blithe Spirit" continues for three weekends on the Gilroy High School stage. Call 842-SHOW for

reservations and more info.

And last Friday, Center Stage opened their latest production, "Early One Evening at the Rainbow Bar and Grill," starring Michael O'Connor, Whitney Pintello, Chuck Gilmore, Len Overholser, Rod Murchison, Hal Burton, and Kim Spendlove Saulan.

I know that the fathers of Kim and Whitney, Bill and Rod, loved it. Marion, Whitney's mother, and a much more objective critic, also recommends it highly. I know they do because they told me so at the closing night of "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat." And Bill Corneth, one of the most objective minds in local theatre, thought it was great, as well! And he didn't have a kid in the show!

I don't know how well "Joseph" did at the box office, but it did break all records for closing night curtain-call flowers.

I was really glad to hear about Michael and Kim's return to local stages. Memories of Kim go back to her freshman year at GHS when she was the star of the first GHS production of "Anything Goes." That was in the early Seventies? And Micheal O'Connor is one of the two finest comedic actors to have ever worked local stages.

This latest Center Stage production is a departure from Russ Hendrickson's usual British farces.

It is about the last day on Earth. And I was just asking about where have all the serious plays gone. As usual, call 84-STAGE for more info.

Last night the GHS Drama Department opened their latest student directed production, the musical, "You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown." The delightful show, directed by Matt Tidwell, continues tonight, with two performances tomorrow, Saturday, at 2:00 and at 8:00pm. Tonight's show is also at 8:00. The show's musical director is Mike Montez, and the accompanist is Marilyn Guerin.

The show stars Darroll Young as the little kid with the round head, and Michelle Luna as the infamous Lucy. Other characters like Snoopy, and Schroeder, and Linus, and Peppermint Patty and the little red headed girl, are played by Simon Pintello, Bruce Landry, Scott Bell, Sonia Gari-aeff, and Christine Amos. The chorus includes David Lorber, Jeremy Petereau, Lori Pederson, Annie Deetz, Paul DeRouen, Matt Hepner, and Daniel Abruzzini as Woodstock.

And the Gilroy gas revolt continues to grow!

Jim Maya is a drama teacher at Gilroy High School, and writes for *Miracle Miles* about theatre, the media, film, education, travel, and other current topics.

SVCT play has lots of 'spirit'

By JILL MAXWELL
Staff Writer



LISA BROWN/Staff Photographer

Director Ruth Mullins applies makeup to actress Lynn Lawrence, who portrays Mrs. Bradman.

'Blithe Spirit'

Presented by: South Valley Civic Theatre

Featuring: Bill Corneth as Charles Condomine; Marion Pintello as Condomine's present wife Ruth; Rosalind Farotte as Condomine's late wife Elvira; Carol Harris as the Madam Arcati the medium; Andrew Tidwell as Condomine's guest Dr. Bradman; Lynn Lawrence as Mrs. Bradman and Cindy Howell as Edith the maid.

Directed by: Ruth E. Mullins

Produced by: Russ Brawn

When: Fridays and Saturdays, April 13-28

Times: 8 p.m.

Where: Gilroy High School Theatre

Tickets: \$10 for adults, \$6 for students and seniors. Group rates of \$8 per person for groups of more than 20 are available.

Information: 842-SHOW



Mullins, left, with stars Bill Corneth and Cindy Howell.

By JILL MAXWELL

Staff Writer

High spirits and ghostly spirits will share the stage in South Valley Civic Theater's upcoming production of "Blithe Spirit," a comedy by playwright Noel Coward.

Gilroyan Ruth E. Mullins who will be making her directorial debut will literally raise the dead to make the performance a success.

Directing spirits undoubtedly presents some interesting challenges, but Mullins seems to be doing well.

"It's really very funny," assistant director — and theater board member — Joyce Pagan said with conviction.

She will, however, go only so far in describing exactly how funny the play is. The play begins with writer Charles Condomine doing research for a mystery story he's working on. He needs to find a model for a character of a crazed medium.

So, Condomine and his current wife, Ruth, invite an English medium into their living room to conduct a seance. During the seance Condomine's late wife is called back from the dead. And, the medium and the Condomines don't know how to get rid of her.

And that is as much of the story as Pagan will tell.

Directing was something Mullins felt she had to try and "Blithe Spirit" came along at the right time.

"The timing was right," she said. "This had a small enough cast (of seven) so I thought it would be manageable."

Trying her hand as a director was something she had been contemplating for a long time. "I wanted to put my big toe in the water and see how I could do," she said.

"It's very exciting. I didn't think I'd enjoy it as much as being on stage. But I am enjoying it."

Mullins, who works as a financial services specialist at Coast Savings in San Jose, thinks that the skills she gained while working as an assistant manager at Alpha Beta have helped her as a director. "I think I'm a people person — I think that makes it easier because you have to be able to hone in on people's particular talents.

"You have to look at each person and say 'this is what I can see. How do I get it out of that person?' You have to use different management techniques for each person."

Mullins, 38, just graduated from Gavilan College with a degree in fine arts. She has done some directing for productions at the Gilroy Presbyterian Church and some children's plays, including "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat," but says those efforts are nothing compared to attempting a full-length play.

It may be her first solo try at directing, but Mullins is no stranger to local theater. Since moving to the area in 1979, she has participated in numerous local productions by Gavilan College and the South Valley Theater. For a time she said she was doing three or four shows a year.

Among others she has starred in "Musicman" and "Annie Get Your Gun." In the "The Sound of Music" she played the baroness and in "Annie" she played Miss Hannigan, the head of the orphanage who is always mean to the kids. She remembers it as one of her favorite roles.

Her involvement with theater began when she was in fifth-grade. The first role she remembers is playing a lady who sits on a hedgehog. "I got to scream and I've been a loudmouth ever since." She did

things all through high school, and says now she will "always" be involved with theater.

"There's some good characters waiting for me in the future."

In addition to acting and directing she has done costume and set designing.

The directing experience has been invaluable. "I think I've learned a lot. What I have done as a director will definitely make me a better performer.

"In the future I'll make sure I learn my lines on time so I'm not holding everybody else up."

She looks forward to a return to acting and is contemplating performing in "Mame" over the summer. Although she believes she will need a rest after directing, she is certain that after two weeks she will be bored and ready to do another play.

She also intends to perfect her directing skills. "I'm finding

that I'm going to have to take classes at San Jose State," she said. "I think I would like to do it again. It's a fun thing to do once in awhile. But my heart is still on the stage."

One added benefit of having Mullins at the helm of the production is gaining the use of husband Will's skills as a sound technician. He will be doing all the sound effects for the play — including ghost voices.

The cast for "Blithe Spirit" is: Bill Corneth as Charles Condomine; Marion Pintello as Condomine's present wife Ruth; Rosalind Farotte as Condomine's late wife Elvira; Carol Harris as the Madam Arcati the medium; Andrew Tidwell as Condomine's guest Dr. Bradman; Lynn Lawrence as Mrs. Bradman and Cindy Howell as Edith the maid.

“Blithe Spirit” opens at SVCT

By Jim Maya
Miracle Miles correspondent

South Valley Civic Theatre opened their final show of their 20th Anniversary Season last night with a promising production of Noel Coward's classic English comedy, “Blithe Spirit.” A modest opening night crowd enjoyed the beautifully staged Russ Brawn produced/Ruth E. Mullins directed production, despite some opening night jitters by some of the cast.

Central to the question of whether you should go see this show is not the question of the performances, or the direction, lighting, costuming, or any other aspect of this well produced show. I feel, as always, that community theatre reasonably well done, should be supported and can be enjoyed at all levels. This production is more than “reasonably well done”! It is a very well done production of a fine, but very long and difficult play, that reflects a pre-television historical era of theatre. In that era, the theatre going public wouldn't think twice about attending a play where the language was as important as the action. I don't know if that is true today.

That central question (Remember...Should you go see this show?) therefore revolves around is the play's script and author, Noel Coward. Do you like those wordy, Noel Coward-ish, pre-WWII English plays? Are you ready to listen to bright, witty language that often doesn't further the plot? Are you the type that will see a classic again and again for the love it? Are you able to sit through a 2 1/2 hour plus performance? If so, then don't miss this show. If not, go anyway, but be prepared.

I do like the classics, and did like this production, with some reservations.

Yes, it is long. By the time we left the GHS Theatre it was close to 11:00pm, though that did include some time with the cast and friends discussing the show. Most of the time, this script is edited to bring the performance time down to a more accepted length. You understand, of course, what with American sit-coms being thirty minutes, and major dramas running sixty minutes, minus commercials, we must compromise, yes we must!

Miss Mullins has chosen to tackle the whole script, but with a couple of performances I think the time will be more acceptable for most people. And it is such good language that one would have to cut.

Yes, there were opening night jitters! The first act contained one of the longest moments of pure silence ever seen on local stages. And there were several unmotivated crosses, that I understand were related to re-arranged lines.

Yes, there were some uneven performances...And some excellent ones! Bill Corneth, usually Mr. Solid, floated in and out of his lead character, Charles Condomine. He seldom showed the extreme frustration that must come from a man trying to communicate at the same time, in the same room, with his dead wife and his live wife who can't see his dead one. And we seldom saw him thinking or trying to reach his character's objectives. But knowing Bill, as he masters the long, long, difficult script, that will change.

The three wives, however, are absolutely on target! Marrion Pintello, as his present, domineering wife, Ruth, was great! She masters all those delightful, pre-Rosanne Barr, English barbs. She understands Ruth, and projects that understanding in a most believable manner.

She was matched by by Rosalind Farrotte's Elvira, the flitty, formerly unfaithful dead wife of poor Charles. (Elvira is conjured up in a seance by Madame Arcati while Charles is doing research for a new novel.) Miss Farrotte has looked forward to this role for a long time and makes the best of it. Her timing and mastery of the character were wonderful to watch. Ever her Bacall-ish voice lent itself to the character.

The other wife in the play, Mrs. Bradman, was played by Lynn (Yes...Lynn!) Lawrence, in her first appearance on local stages. She was a delight as the daffy wife to Andrew Tidwell's stern Dr. Bradman. It was so nice to see on stage the mother who has fostered so many other performances by her children.

Carol Harris's Madame Arcati, fill the stage with the energy that is her trademark, for which she received a lion's share of the applause.

Mr. Tidwell and Cindy Howell, as the maid Edith, filled out the cast. Cindy, a GHS grad, brought a lot of cute intermission business to her role, a nice directorial touch.

This was Miss Mullin's first attempt at directing. It is difficult to think of a more challenging script to attempt as one's first effort. She did a fine job and I certainly hope she continues.

“Blithe Spirit” continues through the 28th. Reservations are made by calling 842-SHOW.

And don't forget that Center Stage continues with their latest, “Early One Evening at the Rainbow Bar and Grill,” which everyone tells me is great. Their number is 84-STAGE.

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