

Bright performances; fading memory

I hate to see the memory go. My dad used to say, "Son Jimmy, growing old is very overrated." My mother-in-law says, "The golden years — poop on 'em!"

My apologies to young Dixon Broadbank for ignoring him twice in my column. He played the part of Frank Butler in San Benito High's recent production of "Annie Get Your Gun," and did a heck of a job. He is one of those wonderful graduating seniors who will be missed.

Sorry, Dixon. Did I tell you my memory is going?

*Jim
Maya*



"My, how time flies. It seems only yesterday Filice and Bundros were acting for me in their senior plays at Gilroy High School."

The big news locally is that the delightful English comedy, "Noises Off!" opens Friday night at the South Valley Civic Playhouse in Morgan Hill.

The plot revolves around the old "play within a play" concept. A group of slightly off-beat actors are trying to put on a play, and like the rest of us, have a difficult time. When we have a hard time, however, it isn't so funny.

Directed by one of the grand old men of local theater, Russ Hendrickson, and produced by Debi Pfeffer and Shirley McGee, the play has an all-star cast of veteran local actors. Marion, Rod and Whitney Pintello, the famous Gilroy Pintellos, have been joined by Steve Filice, Charles Keith-Stanley, Steve Spenser, Rosemary Benevento, Daphne Bundros and Peter Mandel to make up the excellent cast.

(My, how time flies. It seems only yesterday Filice and Bundros were acting for me in their senior plays at Gilroy High School.)

The award-winning farce will be performed as "dessert theater" at the South Valley Playhouse.

I stopped in at the Playhouse the other night to sneak a peak at the proceedings, and was mightily impressed with the set. Designed by

Hendrickson, who learned his craft at the knee of one of the masters, George Costa, and Bob McGee. The set was being constructed by some of the cast under the watchful eye of master set carpenter McGee, husband of producer Shirley.

If you're ever going to produce a play, make sure you marry a Bob McGee. The guy is a skilled and tireless worker who owns every tool in the book. He should have his own TV show.

Bob has built many of the sets that you have seen over the past several years in local community and school theater. The one set that comes to mind was his magnificent effort on "South Pacific."

He also manufactured the guns for GHS's "Sugar" and the sewing machines for SVCT's "Pajama Game," and built the sets for SVCT's recent "Death Trap," "The 1940's Radio Hour," and "Pardon Me, Is This Planet Taken?" in addition to helping with several GHS sets.

Right after he is through with the "Noises Off!" set, he'll be packing the tools and giving us a little help on our "A Midsummer Night's Dream" set. His granddaughter, Taniesa Dedrick, plays the role of Titania.

When ever you decide to produce a show, make sure that you cast someone with a grandfather like Bob.

He is one of those countless number of volunteers that make the local art scene so vibrant and resilient.

And one of the very best

Curtain rises on 'Noises Off!' Friday

South Valley Civic Theater celebrates its 100th performance Friday with the opening of "Noises Off!"

The opening night performance is at the South Valley Playhouse in Morgan Hill. Tickets are \$15, which includes dessert.

The fast-paced, adult comedy is co-produced by Shirley McGee and Debi Pfeffer. Russ Hendrickson directs.

Derived from an English comedy by Micheal Frayn, "it's a play about a play," Pfeffer said. "Everything goes wrong for this group of actors and they're ready to kill themselves."

The revolving set helps support the fast pacing.

Started in 1969 as the Gilroy Community Theater, the SVCT now attracts a wide audience from South Santa Clara and San Benito counties.

"To have this strong a community theater in this population base is excellent," said former SVCT board member and local theater buff Chuck Myer. "We have a talented crop of people here locally."

Myer, involved with the group since the late 1970s, counted the shows since Al and Pinky Bloom produced "Come Blow Your Horn" in 1969.

"About a year ago I noticed 'Noises Off!' was going to be number 100," Myer said. "It's quite a tradition."

For ticket information: 842-SHOW.



Portraits by Rebecca/Special to Let's Go!

Whitney Pintello portrays Brooke in South Valley Civic's "Noises Off!"

Noises of delight for 'Noises Off!'

After about 10 minutes, my face was hurting. That's what a constant big-time grin will do to you. By the end of the show last Saturday night, my sides were hurting as well.

"Noises Off!" the current South Valley Civic Theater offering is a classic bit of farce in the best sense of the term, and the hard working SVCT cast and crew do the hysterically ingenious script justice, great justice.

The cast for this Michael Frayn comedy is outstanding to a person. The Pintellos, Rod, Marion, and Whitney, were right in character and right on time, as usual.

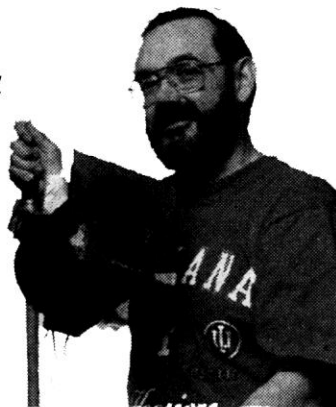
It was fascinating to see Whitney as Vicki/Brooke (Each actor in the show plays two characters in this play within a play.) after her last performance in the brutal San Jose State drama, "The Conduct of Life." She has become an extremely flexible actress, the mark of a real talent. In "Noises" she plays an air-head who spends much of the evening in a revealing "teddy" sort of thing, as you saw on the cover of "Let's Go" a couple of weeks ago. She is most convincing.

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(The "teddy" sort of thing and a couple of naughty words make for a very mildly risqué sort of evening. The teens will love the show if you want to make a family affair of it.)

Whitney's parents, Rod and Marion, are two of the finest character actors working in the area. They continue their record of excellent performances, Rod as the Scotch-loving old actor Selsdon, and Marion as Mrs. Clackett and Dotty.

Jim Maya



Steve Spencer, who plays Lloyd, the director of the play with-in the play, displayed a fine English accent. His first lines are key to the tenor of the show, and he delivered them with perfect timing and great energy.

He and Rosemary Benevento, as Flavia/Belinda, simmered with emotion. Benevento is new to SVCT, and we hope to see more of her work.

Charles Keith-Stanley, and Philip/Frederick, provided a finely droll counter-point to all the frantic goings on in the play.

Daphne Bundros and Peter Mandel round out the cast as the hapless backstage crew and understudies, Poppy and Tim. Both were very effective as forlorn characters who get blow along by the winds.

Oh! I forgot Steve Filice. He's in the show too. Wow, is he in the show too! Filice is a theater major at San Jose State. He fell in love with the stage while acting in his senior play at Gilroy High School, his only performance in high school. (Like Steve, I fell in love with the theater in my senior play back in 1958 as well. Gee.) My has he improved!

Filice plays the protagonist, and we love every bit of his character. He does a wonderful job of under playing the not-too-articulate actor, who is playing a young business man trying to bed the not-too-articulate Vickie's Brook. (I think that's right.)

His Garry Lejeune, the actor, goes through an incredible workout on the set, especially in Act II, when we get to watch the actors make their exits and their entrances from the back of the set. I understand he has bruises all over his body. He goes up and down steep stairways in a single bound, part of the time with his

shoelaces tied.

Bravo, Steve, bravo!

Bravo to all the cast!

And to the production crew.

Producers Shirley McGee and Debbie Pfeffer have put together a winner.

Hiring director Russ Hendrickson wasn't a bad idea, for starters.

He is the local master of the farce, a skill honed during his bygone days as host and director of Center Stage. (Do you miss Center Stage too?) Hendrickson has blocked a tightly knit, frantic, and amazingly smooth piece with more movement than seems possible.

Bob McGee's set is one of the stars of the show as well. We got to see the backstage shenanigans because his entire set revolves a complete 180 degrees. His engineering that permits the set change is a pure case of beautiful form following function.

Bob McGee, like in Shirley McGee? This is a case of nepotism working very well. "Noises" is also a "dessert show," so it is literally a piece of cake, cheese cake in this case. Good cheese cake, as a matter of fact.

OK...There are a few moments when the timing halts a bit, especially at the start of Act II, but that's to be expected on opening weekend of a show with this much "business" going on. It'll smooth out.

If you want a thoroughly pleasant evening of lively, well done theater that doesn't require a great deal of deep thought, get on the phone and call 842-SHOW, and reserve your tickets right now. Two of the performances were sold out by opening weekend, so don't waste time. "Noises Off!" and "Nothing On," the play with in the play, run through May 14.

Bravo, South Valley Civic Theater, on this, your 100th show!

Speaking of the 14th, that second weekend in May marks both the opening of "Merchant of Venice" at San Benito High School, and "A Midsummer Night's Dream," at Gilroy High. The week before, GHS drama students Marissa Mayron and Jon Goulding open their evening of one act's on the GHS stage. More later ...

Jim Maya teaches drama at Gilroy High School. His column appears each week in Let's Go!