

# South Valley

## Personalities shine in 'Gypsy'

June 18, 2019 Susan Rife



Photo by Elizabeth Mandel

Let's be clear: There's one star, and one star only, in that classic tale of show-business mothers and daughters, *Gypsy*. And it's not the legendary strip-tease artist Gypsy Rose Lee. It's her bulldozer of a stage mother, Mama Rose.

South Valley Civic Theatre sticks to the tried and true formula of the Jule Styne-Stephen Sondheim musical that opened on Broadway in 1959, centering the production on the vocal strength and acting chops of Ingrid Rottman as Rose, who takes her two young daughters, June and Louise, on the vaudeville circuit in the 1920s. When June elopes as a teenager, Rose focuses her dreams of stardom on her shyer daughter Louise, who reluctantly takes on the mantle until she tastes the elixir of fame and bursts out of her chrysalis to become one of the world's most famous burlesque dancers and singers.

Adrienne Wilkinson directs the SVCT production with a light hand, letting Rottman dominate nearly every scene she's in, from her family's rough start in Seattle to Gypsy's star turns at Minsky's in New York. Rottman has a huge voice and an onstage personality to match; she is as comfortable in her own skin onstage as any actor I've seen in community theater productions lately.

From "Some People" early in the first act to "Everything's Coming Up Roses" to close that act, Rottman displays a mastery of the songs and the character. Her relationship with Herbie (Scott Lynch), the talent manager who falls for Rose but can never get past her single-minded determination to make her kids into stars, is beautifully handled in "Small World."

The most charming early scenes focus on Baby June, played with a great deal of poise by 9-year-old Saidee Avila, a first-timer at SVCT with a huge smile and a big voice. Like most child stars of the era, Baby June was channeling Shirley Temple, and Saidee rocks the blonde ringlets, dual batons and splits in "Baby June and Her Newsboys" and "Let Me Entertain You."

The grown-up versions of June and Louise, played by Lindsay Sommers and Chloe Angst, showcase their mutual affection in "If Mama Was Married;" another bright spot comes from Nick Beddard as Tulsa, who sweeps June off her feet and out of show business. "All I Need is the Girl" gives him a chance to recreate original director and choreographer Jerome Robbins' work.

Which brings me to Angst, whose metamorphosis from shy, anxious, overlooked sister-to-the-star to superstar herself is remarkable. Angst has a big voice that is underused until very late in the show, which is a shame. She works the strip-tease scenes like a pro, and her curves bring Wilkinson's costume designs to va-va-voom life.

Music director Carol Harris leads a large and at times on opening night rough-edged orchestra in support of the performers.

*South Valley Civic Theatre performs "Gypsy" through July 6 at the Morgan Hill Community Playhouse, 17090 Monterey Road. Admission is \$16-\$25. For tickets and information, visit [www.svct.org](http://www.svct.org) or call 408.842.7469.*

## South Valley Civic Theatre's "Gypsy" is a poignant and funny tale of show biz family

By Camille Bounds | June 18th, 2019

Ingrid Rottman brings dynamic talent to larger-than-life character of Rose

<https://morganhilllife.com/2019/06/18/camille-bounds-review-south-valley-civic-theatres-gypsy-is-a-poignant-and-funny-tale-of-show-biz-family/?fbclid=IwAR11-R7AyPBVAS8kkZM286e3Stp9LcZNUFo7kQjfBgmo-ggARpOc2EZQemU>



Photo courtesy Elizabeth Mandel

The South Valley Civic Theatre's production of "Gypsy, A Musical Fable" brings to the Morgan Hill Playhouse a Broadway stage classic about an overbearing stage mother who stops at nothing to further her two daughters' careers. The result is the talented daughter, June, flees the family and shy Louise transforms into a burlesque stripper.

The musical is based on the 1957 memoirs of TV Gypsy Rose Lee. Authur Laurents took the material and in 1959 turned it into a smash hit on Broadway with music and lyrics by Jule Styne and Stephen Sondheim. The incomparable Ethel Merman starred as the stage mom Rose. In 1962 the show was made into a movie with Roseland Russell.

Rose is one tough role to perform and Ingrid Rottman brings dynamic talent to this larger-than-life character. She is on stage for just about every scene and has more songs to belt out than any other character in the show. I have seen "Gypsy" four times, once on Broadway with Merman and three other different productions throughout the years. Rottman's Rose in this SVCT's production is well developed. She hits her marks and belts out the Styne/Sondheim songs with the authority of a magnificently trained voice .

Chloe Angst as Louise sheds her dumpy awkward persona by accident with a push from Rose to become the sleek, clever, grand Gypsy Rose Lee. With this new persona, Louise finds herself for the first time in control of her life, and Angst delivers the role believably with a terrific set of pipes

**Show Dates: June 14 - July 6, 2019**

Friday	Saturday	Sunday
8:00 pm	8:00 pm	2:30 pm
June 14	June 15	
June 21	June 22	June 23
June 28	June 29	June 30
July 05	July 06	



Photo courtesy Elizabeth Mandel

Scott Lynch plays the reliable stage manager Herbie with sensitivity and talented understatement. Tessie Tura, (Megan Griffin), Electra, (Betsy Molchan) and Mazeppa, (Kris Heiser) as the three "You Gotta Get A Gimmick" strippers steal the scene.

The journey is hilarious and, at times, poignant. The music and lyrics are standard. It is hard to get “Let Me Entertain You” out of your head. Showtunes including “If Momma Were Married,” “Small World,” and “Little Lamb” set the perfect mood to taking us through the tale of transformation. “Everything is Coming Up Roses and “Roses Turn” belongs Rottman.

Director Adrienne Wilkinson delivers a slick, fast-moving production. The cast is primed with adorable kids showcasing their singing, acting and dancing talents. Saidee Avila as Baby June and Ronni Hinch as Young Louise carry the first act with solid performances and more than hold their own with their adult counterparts.

Excellent choreography by Valerie Valenzuela and delightful costumes by Adrienne Wilkinson and her assistants add to the visual fun of the show. The orchestra with a heavy score conducted by Carol Harris moves the orchestra with a zestful baton.

SVCT’s “Gypsy” is wonderful entertainment putting a spotlight on the darker side of the show biz world. Enjoy an evening with friends and family discovering how a shy girl became a brazen burlesque stripper named Gypsy Rose Lee.

Camille Bounds is the theatre and arts columnist for Morgan Hill and Gilroy Life.

THE LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE OF MORGAN HILL, GILROY & SAN MARTIN

JUNE 7, 2019

# South Valley

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# Lust for Stardom

South Valley Civic Theatre's 50th  
season comes to a close P6

**KEEPING WATCH** Ingrid Rottman as Mama Rose and Chloe Angst as Gypsy Rose Lee star in South Valley Civic Theatre's production of *Gypsy*.



# Mama knows best

South Valley Civic Theatre closes out 50th season with Tony Award-winning musical **BY SUSAN L. RIFE**

**T**here never was a stage mother before or since who was as horrifying as Rose Horvick, the tyrant at the heart of *Gypsy*, the Tony Award-winning 1959 musical that will bring South Valley Civic Theatre's 50th anniversary season to a close.

*Gypsy*, loosely based on the memoirs of strip-tease artist Gypsy Rose Lee, made famous such tunes as "Let Me Entertain You," "Small World" and "Everything's Coming Up Roses," with music by Jule Styne and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim. Mama Rose has been played by Broadway powerhouses from Ethel Merman to Bernadette Peters and Patti Lupone. Although it won no Tony Awards in its initial Broadway run, subsequent revivals have yielded trophies.

In Morgan Hill, Ingrid Rottman will play Mama Rose, with Chloe Angst in the title role and Lindsay Summers as her more-talented sister June.

The story begins on the vaudeville circuit in Seattle, as Rose powers ahead with the budding careers of her two daughters, June and Louise. Louise is the shy one; June is more suited to the stage. But when June elopes, Mama Rose's attention turns to Louise, who becomes Gypsy Rose.

The SVCT pairing of Rottman with Angst seemed preordained.

"When I read with her, she gave me everything I needed," Rottman said of her audition with Angst.

Both women have strong vocal backgrounds—Rottman is a professional singer; Angst studied vocal performance at Sacramento State—and bear enough •10



CHUCK FORAN

**SISTER ACT** Chloe Angst (left) and Lindsay Summers perform as Mama Rose's daughters in *Gypsy*.

physical resemblance to make a mother-daughter relationship plausible.

Angst, who commutes from Fremont to Morgan Hill for the show, said *Gypsy* is a show she's wanted to be in since she was a little girl, and Louise a role she's wanted to play for years.

"When I was young, what drew me to the show was it had kids in it," she said. "As I got older, I realized how perfect the story is. It's a lot deeper than it was when I was a kid. And my mother was never a Mama Rose."

With her opera background, she said, the role vocally "hasn't been too much of a challenge. It's definitely more of an acting role than a singing role."

Angst relates well to Louise before her transformation into Gypsy Rose Lee.

"I'm very much like Louise. I'm quiet and awkward," she said. "I'm

a tomboy, mostly like Louise before she became a stripper."

But, she said before donning glittery high-heeled shoes for rehearsal, "I'm excited to be sparkly."

Mama Rose provides her own challenges to the actor portraying her.

"Rose is all over the place," Rottman said. "She's multifaceted, manipulative. ... What I really like about her is she'll do just about anything for her kids. I'm a lot like Mama Rose—I'll tell my kids, 'You are good, but there will always be somebody better.'"

Adrienne Wilkinson, who appeared in SVCT's 2017 production of *Vanya, Sonia, Sasha and Spike*, and was producer for the 2018 production of *Gyps and Dolls*, this time is wearing hats as director, costume designer and set designer. She sees directing as "a chance to help others find

something within themselves that they didn't know they had."

*Gypsy* is a directing challenge, she said, because "it's almost too big; you've got to tone it down a little."

Wilkinson loves shows with historical underpinnings. For *Gypsy*, she said, "I made our Rose read the biography of Gypsy Rose Lee's mother," part of a background study to make characters real on the stage. And she can relate to Mama Rose's singleness of purpose.

"I think the real thing is Rose's love of stardom," she said. "Mama Rose is addicted to getting her kids to be stars."

The production also stars Scott Lynch as Mama Rose's love interest Herbie, Nick Bedford as Tulsa, Saidee Avila as Baby June and Veronica Hinch as Young Louise. Carol Harris is music and vocal director, and Valerie Valenzuela is choreographing the show.

The director said *Gypsy* closes

SVCT's season with a show that "is a tribute to relationships, and a tribute to theater and to passion. It's a show all about theater. To have this as our final show is, I think, pretty great."

And, she notes, it's nice to wrap up the season with a female-centric show. The company's shows this year have been more male-focused—*Aladdin Jr.*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, *Godspell* and *1776*.

"It's nice for the girls to have their turn," she said.

The 2019-2020 season will tilt toward the girls, with *Cinderella*, *Steel Magnolias*, *Heathers*, *Cabaret* and *Beauty and the Beast*.

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## **SVCT's production of 'Gypsy' sure to entertain with catchy show tunes**

By Marty Cheek, June 1st, 2019

### **Play deals with dysfunctional family as sisters find it hard to be friends**



Photo by Marty Cheek

The South Valley Civic Theatre's musical "Gypsy" opens June 14 to tell the story of "the ultimate show business mother" as she struggles with her two daughters to create a career for them onstage.

The show is loosely based on the 1957 memoirs of the famous striptease artist Gypsy Rose Lee. It focuses on her mother, Rose, played by Ingrid Rottman, who favors her daughter June, played by Lindsay Sommers, over the shy Louise, played by Chloe Angst. Louise eventually remakes herself as the enticing performer "Gypsy."

Tracy Van Gundy and Greg Colbert are producing the show and Adrienne Wilkinson is directing. "Gypsy" is the last show for SVCT's special 50th anniversary season, which offered a set of musicals and dramas performed by SVCT more than a decade ago. Originally performed in 1959 on Broadway, "Gypsy" was first produced by SVCT in 2003 and performed outside on a stage at the Pumpkin Patch's barn in San Martin. It's full of show tunes including "Let Me Entertain You," "Everything's Coming Up Roses," and "You Gotta Get a Gimmick."

"There's a lot of growth in the characters, especially Louise," Van Gundy said. "She comes into herself and becomes Gypsy. Mama Rose is the epitome of the stage mom. She's living vicariously through her daughters."

Wilkinson directs the three lead actors in the show with heart-felt emotions showing the pains that come when parents impose their own personal dreams on their children who might not wish to follow that path.

"I'm really trying to be authentic and tell the story as much as possible because when you get down to it, it's really about relationships between a mother and her daughters, and also a mother for her love for theater," she said.

## Details

**What:** South Valley Civic Theatre's production of "Gypsy"

**When:** 8 p.m. June 14, 15, 21, 22, 28, 29, and July 5 & 6; and 2:30 p.m. June 23 and 30

**Where:** Morgan Hill Community Playhouse, 17090 Monterey Road

**Tickets:** \$16 to \$25 and available at [www.svct.org](http://www.svct.org)



Photo courtesy Chris Foster.

Van Gundy said this toxic parenting style is seen in many families in modern America.

“Anyone can relate to the relationships between mother and child, and also the parent’s dreams for their children, sometimes how those get projected on their children,” she said. “We see that a lot of that today with sports dads and stage moms.”

As Louise, Angst sees a character who goes through an extreme character arc as the timid girl emerges out of her cocoon to become the seducing performer “Gypsy.” This is the first show the Fremont resident has done with SVCT, and she’s impressed by the quality of the cast.

“Louise is a difficult character because she’s extremely dynamic. She starts out being incredibly reserved and shy and a little bit awkward,” Angst said. “She’s the daughter that doesn’t get as much attention because she’s not as talented as Baby June. And then as the show goes on, she gets stronger and stronger until the end when she’s able to stand up to her mother.”

Sommers first appeared with SVCT in 2016 in “The 1940s Radio Hour.” She compares “Gypsy” with the television show “Toddlers & Tiaras,” about beauty pageants for very young girls.

“On stage, June is a different girl than who she is internally,” she said of the character she plays in “Gypsy.” “Her mother just constantly forces her to be this eight-year-old little super star who’s really peppy, and that’s not really who she is in real life. She wants to be taken seriously. She’s kind of like two different people in this production. But internally she’s a fireball. She’s fun.”

The drama of the show deals with a dysfunctional family where the two daughters find it hard to be true friends because of Rose’s manipulation of their lives, Sommers said.

“June never sees Louise as a rival,” she said. “They’re just never close at all because their mother, Rose, is the person who gives June attention all the time so she never gets the chance to bond with Louise, which is very sad. They do end up bonding over their hatred for their mother before I (June) run away. That’s fun.”