

MORGAN HILL
THE TIMES

\$1 • Friday, September 20, 2024 • Vol. 130, No. 38 • morganhilltimes.com • Serving Morgan Hill since 1894



Chris Foster

ALL YOUTH CAST Dara Hargreaves (Dory), Sienna Avila (Nemo) and Matthew Horta (Marlin) are among the cast of 66 youth who will perform in the South Valley Civic Theatre's production of "Finding Nemo Jr."

Finding family

Finding family

LOCAL THEATER GROUP PRODUCES DISNEY SHOW STARTING SEPT. 27

COURTESY OF SOUTH VALLEY
CIVIC THEATRE

South Valley Civic Theatre continues its new season with "Finding Nemo Jr.," a coming-of-age story featuring an all-youth cast that finds the value of taking risks and trusting in yourself, your family and your friends.

Disney's "Finding Nemo Jr." is the musical adaptation of the beloved 2003 Pixar movie "Finding Nemo." The show brings a vibrant underwater world to life on stage in a story full of family, friendship and adventure.

In addition to an all-youth cast, this performance includes fantastic songs which will be new for moviegoers.

The show opens Sept. 27 and runs through Oct. 12 at the Morgan Hill Community Playhouse. Longtime SVCT crew and first time Director Christine Carrillo said the cast of 66 range in age from 6 to 14 years old.

"Everyone is excited to be a part of such a vibrant production and I'm glad to work with so many talented actors," Carrillo said. "Also Finding Nemo Jr., highlights the dynamics of family. The family you are born within and the family you find along the way."

The show's producer, Michael Horta, is really excited about producing another children's show with SVCT.

"One of the messages of the show is about the love a father has for his child and I can relate this because I get to work with my son on it," Horta said. "Also, the music is great and people of all ages will love this show."

Assistant Producer, Ken Christopher, stated, "I'm thrilled to work with such an amazing production team to bring 'Finding Nemo Jr.' to life. With nearly 70 kids in our production, it has meant the world to all of us to be able to work with youth from our community and to continue to build our local theater arts. "There's really nothing better than a Disney musical, and audiences are sure to agree."

Sienna Avila, 8, plays Nemo. This is Avila's first time in a leading role. "Nemo is such a fun character to play because he takes

'Nemo' runs through Oct. 12

→ SVCT, 1

risks," she said. "I'm not as brave as Nemo in real life, so it is fun to be able to act that way."

Matthew Horta, 12, plays the anxious and overprotective clownfish Marlin. Horta is a veteran actor and "Finding Nemo Jr." will be his sixth time gracing SVCT's stage. "This is different from the movie because it has lots of fun songs," Horta said. "I think audiences are going to love to see all the kids in costumes, singing and dancing."

Being one of the older cast members in the show comes with its own set of

responsibilities, he noted, as he serves as a role model for the younger children and teaches them to follow directions.

"I like playing Dory because she is such a bubbly character who is driven by good vibes," said Dara Hargreaves, 14, who portrays the forgetful, friendly and adventure loving Dory.

Michael Horta praised the cast members' parents for the time they've spent helping with the show, from building and painting sets to dropping off their children at rehearsals.

"This has become a

great community where kids and adults can find friendship and belonging," he said. "You don't want to miss these kids taking you on an adventure into the big blue world. We hope you find your tickets soon!"

"Finding Nemo Jr." runs Sept. 27 through Oct. 12 at the Morgan Hill Community Playhouse, 17090 Monterey Road. Showtimes are 7pm on Fridays and Saturdays, with 2pm times on Saturdays and Sundays.

For information and tickets, visit www.svct.org/2024_nemo.



ON STAGE Sienna Avila will play Nemo in her first lead role for South Valley Civic Theatre.

Morgan Hill
Your Quality-of-Life News Source

LIFE

Small
Business
of the Year
2019

<https://morganhilllife.com/2024/09/20/young-actors-make-a-splash-in-finding-nemo-jr-at-mh-playhouse/>

Young actors make a splash in 'Finding Nemo Jr.' at MH playhouse

SV Civic Theater brings underwater adventure to life, teaches lessons of devotion and perseverance

By Calvin Nuttall



The vibrant underwater world of "Disney's Finding Nemo Jr." is set to make a splash at the Morgan Hill Playhouse, as young performers dive into their roles for the South Valley Civic Theatre's production opening Friday Sept. 27.

"We're super excited to have all of these fine young actors on stage in Finding Nemo Jr.," said producer Michael Horta. "They're working really hard to put on this great show with a great message."

This musical adaptation of the iconic animated film follows the aquatic misadventures of a young clownfish named “Nemo” and his father “Marlin” as they find themselves separated and lost amid the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean, searching for a way to reunite.

“People think it’s just about a fish being lost in the ocean,” Horta said. “It’s really about the bravery and courage of not just his father, but also Nemo, going out and trying to figure out how to get back to his dad but also exploring the big blue world.”

Nemo, played by Sienna Avila, is an only child whose mother “Coral” died before he hatched, killed by a barracuda. In the attack, Nemo’s egg was damaged, causing Nemo to be born with a disability — an undersized pectoral fin. Because of this, he is doted on by his father Marlin, and often treated as if he is not able to do things on his own.

“My favorite thing about playing Nemo is how he is brave,” Avila said. “He doesn’t really know how brave he is, until at one point, he has to be. It’s when he is trying to find his dad.”

With its large cast of 69 youngsters, “Finding Nemo Jr.” has been a challenging production to coordinate and choreograph, said director Christine Carrillo. This musical will be her debut as a solo director, though she has participated in SVCT shows as a choreographer or co-director for more than 15 years.

“I worked on a childrens’ show two years ago, and it was right after COVID, and we only had like 13 kids in that show,” she said. “Things were still opening up, and we were trying to figure out how we were going to do that, so that was a much smaller show, and so I helped out with that one. This one is very drastically different, this is the largest cast I’ve ever worked with. Even in the teen shows, we’ve only had maybe 40 people.”



The kids’ show offers an opportunity for young performers to learn self-confidence and social skills, as well as the trade of theater and stagecraft, Carrillo said.

“It gives them a sense of confidence that they can actually perform and speak in front of people,” she said. “They develop a lot of friendships through here, maybe make friends that they would have maybe normally not been hanging out with. It gives them the confidence to be onstage, and helps those kids who maybe have a little bit of shyness to develop public speaking skills. I think that really has helped them.”

Matthew Horta plays the role of “Marlin.” As the anxious single father embarks on his quest to find his lost son, he encounters an ocean full of colorful characters who engage him in silly scenes and musical numbers.

“My favorite part about rehearsals is probably learning everything and watching everything come together,” Horta said. “As soon as we learn a song, we review it a bunch, and then we go to dance, and then we’re able to sing and dance. It’s kind of like a skill that we need to learn.”

Each of the main cast members agreed that the social aspect of their rehearsals was their favorite element of the theater experience, including Dara Hargreaves, who plays Dory.

“My favorite parts are the behind-the-scenes moments and the funny moments when we’re all just playing around with our characters and finding new things. We’re all one big family, and it’s really cool.”

The size of the show is a testament to the theater’s resurgence since the COVID-19 pandemic, Horta said, after which the participation level in SVCT’s kids’ shows initially underwent a major decline.

“A lot of kids are rejuvenating their love and passion for theater,” he said. “It’s good, especially after COVID when we were taking a little bit of a break, seeing kids especially wanting to come back and be into theater, and figure out their space. We have a lot of new faces.”

Carrillo hopes the show will impart a message of the importance of perseverance to the audience as they watch Nemo and Marlin overcome impossible odds to reunite.

“I think a big message of this show is the devotion to family,” she said. “Marlin has had a very traumatic experience, and though he has a couple of setbacks, he is really willing to push himself to go out there and find Nemo. And Nemo, even though he has been told that he’s special, and has his special fin, he is finding out that he can accomplish things and be strong.”

Calvin Nuttall is a Morgan Hill-based freelance reporter and columnist.