



## Young love redeems in SVCT's 'Disney's Descendants' on stage

Civic Theatre's latest teen show features its largest cast yet

<https://morganhilltimes.com/young-love-redeems-in-svcts-disneys-descendants-on-stage/>

By [Calvin Nuttall](#) September 26, 2025



Pictured is the "Wicked" cast of "Disney's Descendants, The Musical," opening Oct. 3 at the Morgan Hill Community Playhouse. Photo: Chris Foster/graphics by Jason Leong

When the children of Disney's most notorious villains get a chance at redemption, romance blooms between sworn enemies in South Valley Civic Theatre's production of "Disney's Descendants, The Musical," opening Oct. 3 at the Morgan Hill Community Playhouse.

The ambitious production features a "record" 120 young performers across two casts in a story that examines the choice between following your parents' plans for you and forging your own destiny.

In this joint continuation of many of Disney's classic tales, evil has been banished from the land of Auradon, where Beast and Belle of "Beauty and the Beast" reign as king and queen. The villains of Disney's many fairy tales have all been banished to the "Isle of the Lost," where they and their descendants must live apart from society.



Ethan Hecht plays Carlos as part of the Wicked cast of South Valley Civic Theatre's upcoming production of "Disney's Descendants, The Musical." Photo: Chris Foster/graphics by Jason Leong

The story centers on Ben, son of Beast and Belle, who makes his first royal proclamation as future king of Auradon by inviting villain children from the Isle of the Lost to attend school in the kingdom of Auradon in a sort of rehabilitation program, removing them from the evil influence of their villainous parents. Not all have good intentions, however.

This magnanimous gesture is opposed by Maleficent, originally the villain of Disney's "Sleeping Beauty," who sends her daughter Mal to Auradon as part of this program with instructions to undermine and sabotage it.

"It's about four villains' kids that come to Auradon, and they kind of discover what it's like to be good," said Danee Harer, who plays Mal. "They try to decide: should I follow my parents' orders and be bad, or should I be good like what my heart wants?"

The decision sets up a Romeo and Juliet-style romance between Ben and Mal, who initially plans to take advantage of the future king but gradually falls in love with him as the tale unfolds.

"She wants to be good for him, but she also wants to be bad for her mother," Harer said. "So she changes her ways for Ben."

The moral complexity drives the musical's themes about breaking cycles and choosing one's own path.

"You don't have to follow your parents' footsteps," Andrade said. "You can choose your own journey and be your own person. You can be good or evil, no matter where you come from."

Producer Ashley Bortolussi said the production represents uncharted territory for SVCT with its massive scale and double-cast structure, necessitating creative stagecraft to accommodate the huge cast.

"We have 65 in each cast, and it's double cast," Bortolussi said. "That is not something that we've seen at SVCT. It really is insanity. We have extensions on the stage, we have stairs so that we can utilize the floor space and go up into the audience. It's really out of necessity, but also it feels kind of cool."

"Descendants" will have 10 performances split evenly between the "Wicked" and "Rotten" casts, with five shows each. The arrangement allows cast members to support each other by watching the alternate cast perform, offering notes based on their own experiences in the role.

"What we love most about that is that they're talking about supporting the other cast," Bortolussi said. "It's been such a great group of kids and they're so excited."

For the young performers, many of whom grew up watching the "Descendants" movies, the production represents a dream role.



Davi Miller plays Carlos as part of the Rotten cast of South Valley Civic Theatre's upcoming production of "Disney's Descendants, The Musical." Photo: Chris Foster/graphics by Jason Leong

"As someone who watched 'Descendants' when I was young, it's definitely a dream come true to be Mal," Harer said. "I really want to make younger me proud in this role."

The production's scope extends beyond typical children's theater with its sophisticated themes and challenging vocal demands, Bortolussi said.



“For a kids’ musical, this has so much music, so much dancing—more than we’re used to,” she said. “Thematically, it’s really kind of edgy and makes you think.”

The cast age ranges from elementary through high school students, with the oldest performers being seniors. The production has drawn families from as far as San Jose and Hollister.

“It just shows how much our area is in the market for theater and how desired it is,” Bortolussi said. “It’s been a real privilege to be able to offer it.”

Both young leads encouraged audiences to experience the emotional journey.

“It’s an emotional rollercoaster,” Harer said. “I think no matter what age you are, everyone’s going to have fun watching it.”

*“Disney’s Descendants, The Musical” runs Oct. 3-18 at the Morgan Hill Community Playhouse. Tickets are available on the theater’s website, with separate links for Wicked and Rotten cast performances to help families choose the correct show featuring their young performer.*



Pictured is the “Rotten” cast of “Disney’s Descendants, The Musical,” opening Oct. 3 at the Morgan Hill Community Playhouse. Photo: Chris Foster/graphics by Jason Leong