MORGAN HILL THE TIMES

‘Kimberly Akimbo’ opens on stage at new venue

Dark comedy explores the value of living life to its fullest

By Calvin Nuttall August 25, 2025

https://morganhilltimes.com/kimberly-akimbo-opens-on-stage-at-new-venue/



From left, Soozee Shireman (Kimberly) and Alexander Grimm (Jeff) in Limelight Theater’s production of Kimberly Akimbo. Photo by Chris Foster; Graphics by Jason Leong

Opening Friday, Aug. 29, Limelight Theater presents “Kimberly Akimbo,” a darkly comedic drama that explores what it means to live life to its fullest when time is running out.

The play centers on not-quite-16-year-old “Kimberly,” who suffers from a genetic condition that makes her appear four and a half times her true age, truncating her average expected lifespan to 16 years. As she prepares to celebrate what may be her final birthday, the production examines family dysfunction, coming-of-age struggles and the universal question of how to make the most of limited time.

“It’s about living your life to the fullest, because you never know how much time you have left,” said director Allie Bailey. “A lot of times, we procrastinate as humans, thinking we have all the time in the world. But if you know you only have a limited amount of time, what are you going to do with that time?”

Soozee Shireman takes on the challenging role of Kimberly, embodying a teenager trapped in an elderly body. Despite her extensive musical theater background, Shireman said the straight dramatic role has been uniquely fulfilling.

“The show is written so well, it’s just so much fun, and the dialogue is just so rich and funny that it’s super easy to feel 16 even though I am not,” she said. “All of us that are older than 16 have been 16, so it’s right there, it’s very accessible to me as an actor. It’s a lot of fun to relive all of the emotions that are swimming around in the head and body at that time of life.”

Compounding the impacts of her genetic affliction, Kimberly is also plagued with a fraught family life and undependable parents, who are constantly forgetting birthdays, breaking promises and failing to provide emotional support. When Kimberly befriends Jeff, a “normal” 16-year-old who sees past her appearance, she begins making decisions about how to spend her remaining time.

Sindu Singh portrays Pattie, Kimberly’s pregnant mother who appears narcissistic and crude on the surface but represents something deeper. Singh, a mother herself, found empathy for a character facing every parent’s worst nightmare.

“She is dealing with the loss, or soon-to-be loss of her child, which for any mother — I am a mother myself — it’s unimaginable,” Singh said. “If we look beyond the funny lines and the obnoxiousness of the character on the surface, you really see so much of what’s happening underneath.”

Singh noted that the play is set in a time before widespread awareness and support for young people with special needs existed, particularly for those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds like Kimberly and her family.

“The wealthy and affluent are able to throw a lot of resources, whereas those that can’t cope with it the best that they can,” she said.

Keith Larson rounds out the core family as Buddy, Kimberly's "well-intentioned but deeply flawed" father battling alcoholism and unfulfilled dreams. Despite his failures, Larson said Buddy retains hope and genuine desire to do better.

"He is somebody who wants to persevere," Larson said. "He wants to be a good guy."

The cast also includes Andy Kline as "Aunt Debra," whose presence creates family tension by offering Kimberly attention her parents struggle to provide.

"I think Pattie doesn't like Debra's presence in their lives, because to her, that represents someone who is getting in between her and her child," Singh said. "If you're a parent, you'll get it, because sometimes it seems like no matter what you do or how much you do, it will never be enough."

Bailey praised her actors' ability to find truth in flawed characters, saying they portray real people rather than caricatures. The intimate cast size has created particularly strong ensemble work.

"I think this is one of the smallest casts I've ever been in, and pound-for-pound the most talented," Larson said.

The production examines family dynamics through its specific circumstances. Characters represent recognizable family roles, from the overwhelmed parent, to the unreliable father figure, to the interfering relative, allowing audiences to see themselves reflected in the dysfunction.

"These characters are flawed, but aren't we all?" Bailey said. "I can see parts of myself, parts of my childhood and my interactions with my family in each of these characters."

The creative team promises audiences will experience both laughter and emotional depth. Singh predicts viewers will "laugh their heads off" while also "leave feeling so much."

Larson expects recognition from family-oriented audiences: "People are going to look at all of these scenes that are around the dinner table, and they're going to say, 'That's my family, warts and all.'"

Ultimately, Bailey hopes audiences leave with a renewed perspective on making the most of their lives, whatever challenges they face.

"I think you leave with a sense of hope, to live your best life while you can," she said.

"Kimberly Akimbo" opens Friday, Aug. 29 at Limelight Theater's new venue at 16300 Condit Road. For showtimes and ticket information, visit svct.org/2025_kimberly.

Calvin Nuttall is a Morgan Hill-based freelance reporter.