

SVCT produces 'High School Musical on Stage!

Show comes to community playhouse starting Feb. 20

By Calvin Nuttall, February 12, 2026



Pictured are "High School Musical On Stage!" cast members Oliver Olson, Lillian Asclipiadis, Kaileya de la Serna, Matthew Horta, Dara Hargreaves and Jude Lee. Photo: Omar de la Serna

South Valley Civic Theatre brings the full-length version of Disney's "High School Musical On Stage!" to the Morgan Hill Community Playhouse this month, featuring 40 local teens in a story about breaking free from social expectations.

The production opens Feb. 20 and runs through March 14 at the Morgan Hill Community Playhouse.

"The moral of the story is that there's room for everything and everyone," said producer Tressa Bender. "And I think that that's so important."



Matthew Horta plays Troy Bolton, and Kaileya de la Serna plays Gabriella Montez in South Valley Civic Theatre's upcoming production of "High School Musical On Stage!" Photo: Omar de la Serna

The musical follows math genius transfer student Gabriella Montez and basketball star Troy Bolton, two teens who couldn't be more different, but join forces when they audition for the school musical. When the unlikely duo enter the theater scene, however, they quickly disrupt the status quo.

"It's about being yourself and not living up to other people's expectations," said Kaileya de la Serna, 13, who plays Gabriella. "And when you stop judging people by labels, you realize that we're all in this together."

Theater royalty siblings Ryan and Sharpay Evans provide the central conflict, feeling threatened when outsiders audition for what they consider their show. Dara Hargreaves, 15, who plays Sharpay, says her character is ambitious but not cruel.

"They're not maliciously villainous," she said. "They just don't know anything different than being dramatic theater children who always get the part they want."

Matthew Horta, 13, plays Troy, a character caught between his basketball coach father's expectations and his newfound passion for theater. The tension mirrors real-life pressures many teens face.

“He kind of puts the basketball game first, but then at the very end, their friend helps them get to the callback,” Matthew said.

Producer Michael Horta sees the 2006 Disney Channel film as a transformative moment for youth theater. When it premiered, he said, it showed young people that anyone could perform.

“We have so many different diverse teens in our show that do so many outside-of-theater different extracurricular activities,” he said. “When you see them on their own campuses, people may not even know that they do theater.”

The full-length production presents new challenges for the young cast. Director Horta notes the show is vocally harder than most children’s theater productions and runs up to two hours, significantly longer than what many cast members are accustomed to performing in shows tuned for younger casts.

For several performers, this marks their first teen show at SVCT, requiring new levels of independence.

“You have to be a lot more independent in teen shows because kids’ shows, they help you out a lot,” Dara says. “But with teen shows, you have to rehearse on your own time too.”

Kaileya appreciates working with peers her own age: “It just makes the experience better with people who get you and understand you a lot more.”

Bender, who met many cast members when they were young children, says watching them mature has been emotional.

“To see them take the stage now as mature teens, it’s a little emotional watching them grow into this new phase of their theater life,” she said.

The show appeals to multiple generations. Parents who watched the original film are excited to see it staged, Horta said, while the message about authenticity remains relevant for today’s teens.

“I feel like it will touch a lot of the older audiences’ hearts, because it’s such a classic,” he said.

“Disney’s High School Musical On Stage!” runs Feb. 20-March 14 at the Morgan Hill Community Playhouse. For tickets and information, visit svct.org/2026_highschool.