

SVCT presents ‘Guys and Dolls’

Morgan Hill Times

Posted: Friday, May 7, 2004 12:00 am

Colleen Valles



Larry Tom, left, Greg Casper and James Chpman sing.

“Wait ‘til the hookers leave!” director Kathy Tom called as a newsboy started moving across the stage.

This was the dress rehearsal for South Valley Civic Theater’s production of “Guys and Dolls,” a show about gambling and love.

Actors and musicians alike were putting the final touches on the production in anticipation of its opening tonight. Performers and crew members hurried around the theater while snippets of the score drifted from the orchestra pit.

And there were a lot of people moving around – about 45 cast members, not to mention another 15 to 20 crew members and musicians working behind the scenes.

“It’s a challenge, but I enjoy a large cast,” said Tom, who has also directed “How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying” for the theater.

Part of the reason for the large group of people working on the show is that the theater likes to find a spot for anyone who wants to be a part of the show.

The musical takes place in post-war New York, where gambler Sky Masterson, bets Nathan Detroit, the organizer of “the oldest established permanent floating crap game in New York” that he can woo any woman he chooses and take her on a romantic getaway to Havana.

The woman Masterson chooses is Sarah Brown, a Salvation Army reformer who preaches on the street against vice and iniquity. Should Masterson win, Detroit’s end of the bargain is that he must marry Adelaide, his fiancée of 14 years.

Tom said while the show is written for adults only, she included children to make it more true-to-life.

“I used to go to New York all the time, and there wasn’t any hour of the day when you didn’t see children on the street,” she said.

“There’s gamblers, hotbox dancers, New York City streets; there’s song and dance, lots of comedy, lots of characters,” said producer Frank McGill.

Peter Mandel, who plays Detroit, echoed previous assertions that the play is one of the greatest on Broadway.

“The music is wonderful,” he said. “The lyrics are funny, and they move the plot along really well.”

Masterson is played by Lane Grover; Colleen Chipman plays Sarah; and the long-suffering Adelaide is played by Joy Reynolds – her first time in a lead part.

“I’m so nervous,” she said right before her first appearance on-stage for the rehearsal.

Tom continued to call directions from the fifth row, fine-tuning timing and actors’ positions.

“It always comes together,” she said.

“Everybody loves a winner” - so I’d like to add my voice to chorus of praise currently being heaped on the SVCT presentation of “Guys and Dolls.” What a delight!

My wife and I were pleasantly surprised at how much this group has grown and developed over the last few years. This is not an easy play to do. It calls for a huge cast as the curtain call will attest and a lot of people have to be move on and off the stage. I marveled at how well and effortlessly this was done and how interesting bits of action were added while stagehands were busy backstage with the sets. You just never had a chance to get bored.

One has to marvel at the tremendous amount of planning and rehearsal all this must have taken. The result is an excellent performance of the Loesser-Burrows classic based on a Damon Runyon tale about a more innocent New York long before drugs, drive by shootings and 9-11. A time when the major crimes were gambling speak-easies. You almost expect James Cagney to make an entrance in black and white.

The strongest number in any production has to be ‘Sit down, you’re rocking the boat’ and I have to admit that once I heard Greg Casper and crew pull off the ‘Fugue for Tinhorns’ in grand style I knew we were in for a treat. Their performance of ‘Boat’ did not disappoint as Mr. Casper commanded center stage and the whole house rocked into a foot stomping triumph. It alone was worth the price of admission.

Highest praise goes to all concerned. They got it right.

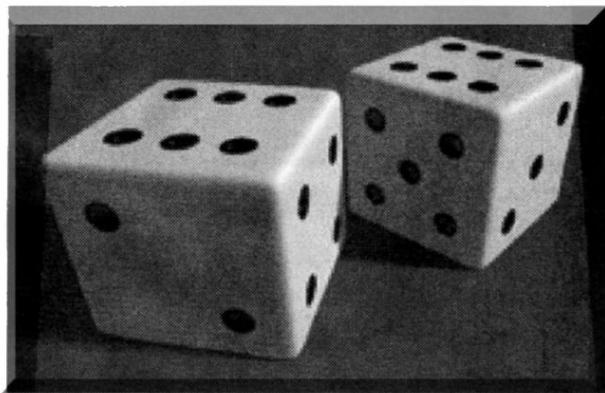
Howard Reda, Morgan Hill

EDITOR'S NOTE: "Guys and Dolls" will be on stage Fridays and Saturdays, through May 28 at 8 p.m. and Sunday, May 23 at 2 p.m., at the Community Playhouse, 17000 Monterey Road at East Fifth Street. Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$12 for students/seniors. Tickets are available at the Morgan Hill Community Center, BookSmart, 17415 Monterey Road, 778-6467, and California Music in Gilroy. Details: www.svct.org or 842-SHOW

Guys and Dolls — SVCT Honors a Classic

Hearing the wonderful music and lyrics of the great Frank Loesser (*The Most Happy Fella*, *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* and over 50 films) on the opening night of South Valley Civic Theatre's production of *Guys and Dolls*, one of the most quintessentially American musicals of the American musical theatre was such a pleasure. The able cast, crew and musicians honored this classic with genuine dedication, huge amounts of talent and best of all, a real, clearly visible joy in the performance from the principles to chorus to scenery crew.

Although the manners, style, language and milieu of Damon Runyon's New York with its checker suited gamblers, shills, newsies, drunks and gum snapping prostitutes may have vanished as thoroughly as the Roaring Twenties, *Guys and Dolls* is no museum piece. The rich characters and sweet melodies make the unlikely love story of handsome, crap-shooting Sky Masterson and beautiful, ingenuous Salvation Army Sergeant Sarah Brown eternally fresh.



Lane Grover, tall and handsome, brings an appealing bravado to his portrayal of Sky Masterson and, as Sarah Brown, **Colleen Chipman's** considerable gifts of voice, beauty and charisma have brought her to a new, noticeably more mature level of performance. **Peter Mandel** creates a desperately lovable Nathan Detroit whose inability to commit after a 14-year engagement drives to comic despair his nightclub doll Adelaide (**Joy Reynolds** in a superbly confident performance that delightfully captures the look and feel of the era reminding me strongly of a young, gorgeous Doris Day).

Heading up a vigorous ensemble colorful gamblers, **Greg Casper** as Nicely-Nicely Johnson, with his large comic presence and clarion tenor voice stops the show with the sure-fire, money-in-the-bank crowd-pleaser "Sit Down You're Rockin' the Boat." And **Jesse Sinohui** gives boundless energy and a pleasing snap to his Harry the Horse.

The most touching moment in the show belongs to **Jon Reed** as the grandfatherly mission worker Arvide Abernathy who encourages Sarah Brown in "More I cannot Wish You."

The orchestra under the direction of **Jay Jacobs** delivered sound much bigger than its eight pieces. And kudos to **Mark Fedalizo** and crew — the smooth set changes kept the whole thing rolling. ~PM

Family affair on stage

Special to The Dispatch Posted: Tuesday, May 25, 2004 12:00 am
By Dorie S. Sandow



Frank McGill took a huge risk.

Years ago he gambled the opportunity to fly jumbo jets for much higher pay for another pilot position that paid less but allowed him to spend much more time with his family.

Now the entire Gilroy family is involved with South Valley Civic Theatre in Morgan Hill.

Frank McGill started with SVCT five years ago. The first three years were spent on the board of directors. Two years ago he started producing plays, the first of which was "Gypsy."

Now his wife, Del, and their three children, Deanna, 12, Michael, 10, and Kathryn, 9, all participate. They first joined for the "Gypsy" production and all have supporting roles in the play "Guys and Dolls," as well.

McGill got into the theater first, and his oldest child Deanna followed suit. Michael and Kathryn saw that "Deanna was having too much fun," so they joined in.

Recently, his wife, a flight attendant, took a leave of absence to join the rest of her family.

"The rewards, in so many ways, far outweigh what you put in," Frank McGill said. "I grew up in community theater thinking I was just having fun, not realizing I was learning about life."

Did the kids really sign up on their own? Deanna said that she loves it so much she will be taking further studies in theatre. Yes, the kids definitely signed up for this project.

To say these risks paid off is an understatement. Deanna, at 12 years old, is delightful. She is pretty, confident, smart and mature. Comfortable with her age, Deanna is not in a hurry to grow up.

"There's plenty of time to grow up, I want to enjoy myself before life gets tough," she said.

An honor student at St. Mary School, Deanna loves to dance, act, sing and play the trumpet. Her advice for young people who want to get into theater: "Audition if you like theater. You have to like it to enjoy it. Be energetic. If you are not chosen, keep trying."

Michael, at 10 years old, has a charming smile, and said he likes to act, play guitar and sports.

His favorite activity, however, is "eating." Also an honor student at St. Mary's, Michael enjoys the opportunity to meet a lot of people and taking the role of different characters. Does he know yet what he wants to be?

"I'll wait 'til 7th grade", he said confidently. "There's plenty of time."

Nine-year-old Kathryn sat on a stool, her feet going through dance steps as she ate her lunch. She appeared very comfortable, natural and confident. The third honor student at St. Mary School, she loves to dance, act, play softball and read. Her advice to other young actors: "Listen to the director and have fun. You just really need to have fun", she said emphatically, as if she has lived 90 years instead of nine.

When Frank McGill first started with SVCT, he worked as a technician and was involved in 12 plays, "Snow White," "Follow That Rabbit," "Sugar," "Peter Pan" and "Charlotte's Web" to name just a few.

He co-produced "Guys and Dolls" because board members are encouraged to produce and the play was the first play he got involved in as a technician, when he was in high school.

He loves this play, and hopes to run into another play that moves him to co-produce.

"When this opportunity came up, all of us were excited because doing 'Gypsy' was so much fun and we got a lot out of it," he said.

Simply watching "Guys and Dolls" makes it easy to see why the McGills made a decision to dedicate so much time and energy into the play.

Among the audience was Linn Kovach, who has known the McGills for 12 years. She said the McGills are for real.

"They are very close, they do a lot together," she said. "Frank and Del have totally focused on what is best for the kids and it has worked."

Deanna's comment said it all.

"It's nice to know you are loved."

'Guys and Dolls'

When: 8 p.m., Friday and Saturday, May 28 and 29.

Where: Morgan Hill Community Playhouse, 17090 Monterey Road.

Cost: \$15 for adults, \$12 for students and seniors.