

by Paul Myrvold

I dropped by the final dress rehearsal of **South Valley Civic Theatre's** young performers production of *Treasure Island* to get a feel for how the show was shaping up just as director **Whitney Pintello** was giving notes. I could see the kids decked out in tri-corner hats, pirate do-rags and costumes that reminded me more of Captain Jack Sparrow and the *Pirates of the Caribbean* than the old Disney movie and TV series starring Robert Newton as the definitive Long John Silver – a sign of the times.

I had a feeling the show was in good shape when Whitney growled, "Are you rrrrready kids," and the cast snapped back with an enthusiastic, "Aye, aye, Cap'n." After a very clever and amusing pre-show announcement regarding cell phones, photographs and exits recorded by **Steve Spencer** in his finest impression of a salt-voiced tar, the show kicks off with a big whole-cast number lead by **Dominick Lucido** as Tom Morgan called

"Pieces of Eight." There was a very engaging young performer (couldn't tell if boy or girl, but who had an orangish head scarf and a drawn-on mustache) in the front row that caught my eye with the total, delighted commitment to the moment displayed. Wish I could tell you the name.

I had to leave after the first scene so I didn't get to see or hear many of the principal players such as **Matt Alpert** as Long John Silver and **Matthew Cummings** as Capt. Smollett and others, but the cast I did see sings out with gusto and confidence especially **Michael McGill** as Jim Hawkins in "Away to Sea" and **Callie Camacho-Light** as drunken Billy Bones in "Fifteen Men (on a Dad Man's Chest)" who showed a power and musicality that can only get better as she matures in the craft.

If the rest of the show is as impressive as the snippet I saw, SVCT should have a hit on their hands. *Treasure Island* runs through December 3 at the Morgan Hill Community Playhouse.

Avast! 'Treas AAAAAR Island!'

Gilroy Dispatch

Posted: Thursday, November 16, 2006 12:00 am

Pirate mania is coming to the South Valley with not one, but two productions based on Robert Louis Stevenson's classic novel, "Treasure Island." Yo-ho your way to a swashbuckling musical version at South Valley Civic Theatre or get a quick 50-minute fix of treasure and the high seas at Gavilan College Theatre.

"I think it's great that there are two productions (of "Treasure Island") going on," said director and Gavilan College theater teacher John Lawton-Haehl, who is also playing Black Dog in the show. "I think it's great for audiences to see what one group did as opposed to the other. And, they're two very different shows. Our show is a 50-minute original adaptation and the other is a musical."

"Treasure Island" is the tale of young Jim Hawkins who discovers a treasure map and finds himself caught up in pirate mischief and mutiny lead by the notorious one-legged pirate, Long John Silver.

In the Gavilan production, theater student Katrina Sherwood, 18, plays 11-year-old Jim Hawkins.

"The show is kind of our own idea of what the story is, and that's what makes it special," said Sherwood, who explained how the script was adapted from classroom improvisation. "We don't have the constraints of someone else's script. We've made it really easy to understand, so it's a great family show and the sets are really amazing."

The musical production at South Valley Civic Theatre also promises a great family show. Director Loritta Johnson said the pirate costumes were appropriately "raunchy" and the children starring in the show have perfected their pirate accents.

"I've been practicing my accent a lot; I got a lot of inspiration from the Disney film version of the book," said Matt Alpert, 14, who plays Long John Silver in the Civic Theatre production. "I also walk on a peg leg with a crutch. They strap my leg backwards and connect the peg to my knee. It's pretty complicated and not very easy, but it's fun. My character is so great because he's kind of evil but he's also a nice guy you'd want to be friends with, too. I'm having a lot of fun."

The South Valley Civic Theatre show stars children ages 7 to 14. Many costumes came from San Benito Stage Company and the songs add a dash of comedy to the pirate adventure. Johnson said audiences should pay particular attention to hilarious "cheese song."

"I think the songs and the choreography are pretty cool and the story is awesome," said Marcus Pereira, 12, who plays the nasty blind pirate Pew in the show. "This is my first play at SVCT, and I'm really excited about it. My costume is great – it's got this old, raggedy appearance that makes it look like I've been wandering for a long time."

So, grab your gold earring and parrot and experience the pirate's life at a "Treasure Island" production.

Just remember: Beware the one-legged pirate.