



Photo by Gary Luttringer

The Santa Cruz Follies return Sept. 10-13.

^{Events} Santa Cruz Follies return for 59th year ^{RP 9.6.14}

By ERIK CHALHOUB

OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

SANTA CRUZ— Even after 59 years, the Santa Cruz Follies are still the “best kept secret in Santa Cruz,” said Kris Wheeler, who is directing this year’s performance, “Moments in Time.”

Even so, the Follies have a large loyal following.

“If they come once, they come back every year,” Wheeler said.

The 55-and-over theater group will perform at the Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium, 307 Church St. in Santa Cruz, at 1 p.m. from Sept. 10-13 with an added evening performance at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 12.

The Santa Cruz Follies were formed 59 years ago as “Seniorama.” The Follies are a spinoff of vaudeville, a popular form of theater in the United States during the early 20th century.

While there is no dialogue, the nearly two-hour performance is filled with high-energy singing and dancing.

“It’s a very, very upbeat, lovely, happy show,” Wheeler said. “(The audience) is going to be extremely surprised at the caliber of the show.”

This year’s show covers about nine decades of music, so every age group in the audience can find something to relate to, she said. The familiar songs, from artists such as Al Jolson and Barbra Streisand, are meant to take the audiences back to the time when they first heard them.

For Wheeler, this is the first time she has directed a show for the Follies. First joining the group in 1993 as a singer and tap dancer, Wheeler then became costume director and music director for 14 years.

All that experience Wheeler has with costumes is expected to shine this year, said performer Dee Sargent, a Watsonville resident, who is among a cast of 32.

“Her shows have really got elegant, wonderful costumes,” she said.

Sargent, now in her sixth year with the Follies, comes from a musical family, and has sung throughout her life. But it wasn’t until she turned 66 when she added tap dancing to her repertoire, and now 82, being with the Follies has shown her that she can indeed perform on stage in front of a large audience.

“In the beginning I didn’t think I could ever do that,” she said.

Being a part of the Follies’ nurturing community helped her overcome that fear.

“There’s no competition,” Sargent said. “Everyone encourages everyone else.”

This year, each show will feature a pre-show performance at 12:45 p.m. On Wednesday, Coastal Blend will perform, followed by Three in a Chord on Thursday, Jay DeVore on Friday and Coastal Blend on Saturday. Also on Friday for the Follies’ added evening show, Swift Street Brass will perform at 6:45 p.m.

Tickets are \$22 for adults, \$20 for seniors and students and \$5 for children under 10 and are available pre-show at Senior Citizen’s Opportunities, 222 Market St. in Santa Cruz or at the box office.

For information, call 423-6640 or visit www.santacruzfollies.net.