



Terry Peterson, right, joins Joanne Keener and Pat Dodson in a rehearsal for the Santa Cruz Follies at Senior Citizens Opportunities.

Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel photos

# Not Just Your Grandma



Cece Dettle portrays Christine opposite Jim Idleman's Phantom during a Santa Cruz Follies vignette of 'Phantom of the Opera.'

## 'Let Yourself Go' at Santa Cruz Follies

By JUSTINE DaCOSTA  
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**T**he SCO's Market Street Players is inviting the public to ease on down the road to the Santa Cruz Follies 51st annual extravaganza, "Let Yourself Go."

The production, which opens Sept. 20 at the Civic Auditorium, features music from "The Wiz," "The Wizard of Oz" and "Phantom of the Opera," as well as classics from the 1920s through 1940s, said director Jo Luttringer.

"There's a lot of variety, more so than in past years, perhaps," she said. "It's just good live theater."

Luttringer, 62, has been a part of the production for the past five years, but this year marks her first as director. She said that while she's directed community theater productions, she's never undertaken a project quite like this. With more than 30 cast members performing the five-act show, Luttringer has her hands full, she said. More than 3,000 people from across California and parts of Nevada attended last year's show, according to the Market Street Senior Center.

"This is the biggest thing I've done," said the Scotts Valley resident, adding that the dozens of volunteers behind the scenes help

keep the show running.

Some of the show's highlights include a speakeasy portion and a USO section, as well as a performance by Carmen Miranda, complete with a fruit-filled headpiece.

Luttringer, who also did much of the show's choreography, said that while performers range in age from 50 to older than 80, talent is ageless.

"We are fun, we are exciting," she said. "It's not just your old grandma up there anymore."

Barbara Wright, who's new to the show this year, grew up in a family of singers. Wright, 55, said she enjoyed participating in community productions as a child and young woman, but stopped performing once she got married.

About four years ago, Wright's husband of 20 years died. She said joining the Follies has opened up a new world to her, and that the group has become like a family.

"I'm just kind of coming out of my cocoon," she said. "There was always music in my heart and in my life, and now I'm back in it."

Wright, who sings and dances in several scenes, said it feels good to be surrounded by others who appreciate music like she does, and that the cast's love of performing shines

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### If You Go

**WHAT:** 'Let Yourself Go.'

**WHEN:** 1 p.m. daily and 7:30 p.m. Friday, beginning Wednesday and running through Saturday.

**WHERE:** Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium, 307 Church St., Santa Cruz.

**COST:** \$15 for adults, \$3 for children 12 and under.

**DETAILS:** 423-6640.

**'I'm just kind of coming out of my cocoon. There was always music in my heart and in my life, and now I'm back in it.'**

BARBARA WRIGHT, 55



Bari Miller and her co-stars bring a lifetime of talent to the revue, showcasing dance and song from Broadway and movie musicals.

Shmuel Thaler/  
Sentinel

# Follies

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through on stage.

"Their talent comes from the heart," she said. "I'm sure they'll be in my life forever."

For Kris Wheeler, who this year celebrates 14 years with the Follies, serving as musical director allows her to do what she loves with the people she cares about.

"We have quite a deep connection," she said. "It's a wonderful thing to have in your life at this time in our lives."

Wheeler, 65, sits on the board of directors for the Market Street Senior Center and is also in charge of costumes. She said she and her team of designers relied on creativity to produce the wardrobe

this year.

The group scoured local thrift stores to find items that could be reincarnated as costumes, she said. The designers modeled some of their pieces from the original costumes using photographs, and were able to transform, among other things, a second-hand dress into Glenda's gown, and a hula skirt into part of Scarecrow's upper half.

"We have to be very clever," she said. "They look very authentic."

For Luttringer, the Santa Cruz Follies is still showing the community that age is meaningless when it comes to friendship as well as talent, Luttringer said.

"It's still going on and still full of a lot of vibrant people," she said. "Sixty is now the new 40."

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