

## AAUW Santa Maria Branch Blog – Summer 2019

### Annual Santa Barbara County InterBranch Council Summer Event

Our annual Santa Barbara County InterBranch Council's (SBC-IBC) Summer Event has become a tradition – a fun filled evening of dinner and theater in Solvang, CA, often attended by 50 people, more or less.

This year 50 people were treated to fine wine, tasty food, lots of laughter with friends, and a special treat in PCPA's production of "MILLION DOLLAR QUARTET". Scott Fuss, PCPA Alum, and Charlotte Campbell, guest actor, stopped by before the show to share their experiences as part of the cast, to answer questions, and to visit with our members and guests.





**The show is quite special (see article below), based on true events, telling the story of one special night, Dec 4, 1956, when 4 legendary performers, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins, and Elvis Presley shared an impromptu jam session at their mutual alma mater, Sun Records, in Memphis, Tenn. The magical evening, in real life, was captured in an audio recording, released in 1981 with more than 17 tracks. PCPA's production was unique in the way it utilized the music, not from a recording or live orchestra, but from the actors themselves!**

**The climax of the evening was when the actors did a couple of "encores", each playing a signature song for their character, at which time our group, as well as many other members of the audience, gave a standing ovation, continued standing, dancing at their seats, and singing along, bringing the evening to its finale.**

## From the Santa Maria Sun, Volume 20, Issue 17

### PCPA presents an electrifying production of *Million Dollar Quartet*

BY CALEB WISEBLOOD

The Pacific Conservatory Theatre's (PCPA) latest production is truly one in a million, and I'm not just saying that because the word *million* is in the title. A big part of what makes *Million Dollar Quartet*, now showing at the Marian Theatre in Santa Maria, so unique is the way it utilizes music—not from a recording or live orchestra, but from the actors themselves.

"It celebrates the making of music. The experience of jamming together, creating something live right there, and sharing it with each other, it's a feeling you'll never find in a recording," the show's director Kitty Balay said in press materials, describing why she wanted to tackle the Tony Award-winning musical.

The entire play takes place in the course of one night, Dec. 4, 1956, when divine happenstance brought four legendary performers together for an impromptu jam session. That was the evening Johnny Cash (Bill Scott Sheets), Jerry Lee Lewis (Billy Rude), Carl Perkins (Christopher Wren), and the King himself, Elvis Presley (Nick Voss), were in the same room together at their mutual alma mater, Sun Records in Memphis, Tennessee—the first label to ever record each artist. As far as history is concerned, it's the only known occurrence of the four superstars ever playing together.



#### REAL WILD CHILD

*Jerry Lee Lewis (Billy Rude) shares his ambitions with singer Dyanne (Charlotte Campbell) and bassist Jay Perkins (James Gallardo).*

PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHAEL COLLINS PHOTOGRAPHY

#### Walk the line

*The Pacific Conservatory Theatre (PCPA) presents its production of Million Dollar Quartet through Saturday, June 29, at the Marian Theatre, located at Allan Hancock College, 800 S. College Dr., Santa Maria. The show moves to the Solvang Festival Theater, located at 420 2nd St., Solvang, starting Friday, July 5 and through Sunday, July 28. Tickets range from \$38 to \$62. Call (805) 922-8313 or visit [pcpa.org](http://pcpa.org) for more info.*

As for the cast, I honestly can't recall a more energetic performance in recent memory than Rude's take on Lewis; it easily steals the show. He doesn't just play the piano, he treats it like a jungle gym; perfectly inhabiting the unpredictability of "rock 'n' roll's first great wildman." Sheets' Cash is also spot-on, and both Voss and Wren are equally as genuine as Presley and Perkins, respectively.

Aside from the titular quartet, the cast also includes Scott Fuss, who gives a beautifully conflicted performance as Samuel Cornelius Phillips, the founder of Sun Records. On one hand he's extremely happy for the four artists' successes, but on the other afraid they'll eventually ditch him for a bigger label.

Charlotte Campbell is also terrific as the musical's only fictional character, a singer named Dyanne. In the play, Dyanne is Presley's girlfriend and accompanies him to the studio that winter evening (although historically, dancer Marilyn Evans was Presley's girlfriend at the time). Taking a creative liberty in this instance allows the character to join the quartet for more than a few numbers, including "Fever" and "I Hear You Knocking"—both of which she provides the lead vocals for.



**MASTERMIND**

*Scott Fuss plays Samuel Cornelius Phillips, the founder of Sun Records—the first label to ever record Presley, Cash, Lewis, and Perkins.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF LUIS ESCOBAR  
REFLECTIONS PHOTOGRAPHY

Hearing and watching the actors sing and perform their own instruments makes for a truly immersive experience; it basically feels more like a real rock concert than a staged musical. There's even an encore scene (sorry, tiny spoiler), where bassist Jay Perkins (James Gallardo) and drummer W.S. "Fluke"

Holland (Robert Brandon) ramp the audience up for the quartet's return to the stage to perform a few more hits, including "Hound Dog" and "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On".

It's just a rockin' good time. Voss even gives away one of his Elvis scarves to a lucky member in the audience. I'm definitely gonna try

nabbing that seat the second time I see it.

*Arts Editor Caleb Wiseblood is still tapping his feet. Contact him at [cwiseblood@santamariasun.com](mailto:cwiseblood@santamariasun.com).*



**THE KING**

*Nick Voss plays rock legend Elvis Presley in PCPA's Million Dollar Quartet.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHAEL  
COLLINS PHOTOGRAPHY