

MorningStar, the Play

ALVA SOUND ART STUDIO

MorningStar

Nicholas and Tanya Alva

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March 17th, 2008

For Immediate Release

Contact: Tanya Boone-Alva or Nick Alva, (707) 795-3545

For more information, go to www.morningstarplay.com

Bass player Lou Gottlieb from *The Limelighters* buys his 30+ acre retreat north of San Francisco intending to develop it into high-end suburbia in the '60's. However, it seems the land has ideas of its own and when the hippies show up, some neighbors and Sonoma County officials get in the way of their ecotopia when Spreckels Performing Arts Center in Rohnert Park presents *MorningStar*, an original play with music and dance, May 3rd – May 18th.

Pam, a woman seeking an alternative to today's lifestyle, visits Morning Star and meets Lou Gottlieb, owner and caretaker. Lou takes her back in time on his journey through those tumultuous times, when his conscience directed him to go against the Law of the Land, and how his decisions affected him and the greater community. Based upon the true story of Morning Star Ranch, the unintentional commune growing on a piece of land open to all by Lou Gottlieb, *MorningStar* is a story of people who are attempting to at least raise the question of how human beings should live with the earth and how society at large reacts to them. A local event which took place at a specific time (Occidental, California from the mid 1960s to the early 1970s), *MorningStar* is also a universal story that occurs both constantly and cyclically throughout eternity.

MorningStar is a large scale play - elaborate, involved, and dynamic. It is a symphony of many voices; an easily accessible story involving humor and beauty. The subject matter is historical, metaphysical, aesthetic, political, ethical and psychological, but it is also simply about nature. With the 40th anniversary of the Summer of Love celebrated by a free concert

at Golden Gate Park last summer 2007, and with the 2008 elections quickly approaching, MorningStar is a significant and timely performance.

Directed by Michael Fontaine, the production is written by Nicholas Alva. *Home Free Home, The Morning Star Scrapbook, Being of the Sun* and *Some of Those Who Were There* provided valuable source material. Lyrics and music written by Nicholas Alva, Ramon Sender, Alicia Bay Laurel, Joe Dolce, Brian Skinner, Mira Alfasa, Tanya Boone-Alva, Kelly Ann Walton, Wilder Bentley and Lou Gottlieb. The cast features Dave Struffles as Lou, Jonathan Van Nuys as Ramon, Claudia Larson as Divine Mother, Gloria Strasburg as Gina, and a wide array of ensemble members. Performances are scheduled for Fridays and Saturdays at 8 PM, Sundays at 2:30 PM. Tickets are \$16 general. Tickets may be purchased by phoning the Spreckels Box Office at (707) 588-3400, in person during the Box Office hours of noon to 5 PM Tuesday-Saturday, or at the door the day of performance one hour before curtain. Reservations/advance sale are recommended as seating is limited. Student, senior, and group rates available. Spreckels Performing Arts Center is located at 5409 Snyder Lane, Rohnert Park. Go to www.morningstarplay.com for more information.

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CALENDAR LISTING

Who: Alva Sound Art Studio presents

What: *MorningStar*, a play by Nicholas Alva, with original music by Nicholas Alva, Ramon Sender, Alicia Bay Laurel, Joe Dolce, Brian Skinner, Mira Alfasa, Tanya Boone-Alva, Kelly Ann Walton, Wilder Bentley and Lou Gottlieb.

Where: at Spreckels Performing Arts Center in Rohnert Park, 5409 Snyder Lane, Rohnert Park, CA 94931, phone: (707) 588-3400, www.morningstarplay.com

When: May 3rd – May 18th, 2008 • Fridays, May 9th and 16th at 8PM
Saturdays, May 3rd, 10th, and 17th at 8PM
Sundays, May 4th, 11th, and 18th at 2:30PM

Tickets: \$16 general admission. Student and group rates available. Visa and MasterCard accepted. Tickets may be purchased by phoning the Spreckels Box Office at (707) 588-3400, in person during the Box Office hours of noon to 5 PM Tuesday-Saturday, or at the door the day of performance one hour before curtain. Reservations/advance sale are recommended as seating is limited.

Synopsis: Pam, a woman seeking an alternative to today's lifestyle, visits Morning Star and meets Lou Gottlieb, owner and caretaker. Lou takes her back in time on his journey through those tumultuous times, when his conscience directed him to go against the Law of the Land, and how his decisions affected him and the greater community. Based upon the true story of Morning Star Ranch, the unintentional commune growing on a piece of land opened to all by Lou Gottlieb, *MorningStar* is a story of people who are attempting to at least raise the question of how human beings should live with the earth and how society at large reacts to them. A local event which took place at a specific time (Occidental, California from the mid 1960s to the early 1970s), *MorningStar* is also a universal story that occurs both constantly and cyclically throughout eternity.

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MorningStar – the play about Lou Gottlieb and the hippie commune of the 1960's opens May 3rd through 18th at Spreckels in Rohnert Park. Contact (707) 588-3400, or morningstarplay.com.

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What do a bunch of back-to-the-land hippies, Lou Gottlieb, God, and the Sonoma County court system have in common? Find out for yourself when Spreckels Performing Arts Center in Rohnert Park premieres the play *MorningStar* by Nicholas Alva, May 3rd through 18th. For more info contact (707) 588-3400. That's (707) 588-3400. Also visit morningstarplay.com

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[30 seconds]

What do a bunch of back-to-the-land hippies, Lou Gottlieb, Divine Mother, God, and the Sonoma County court system have in common? *MorningStar* – an original drama with music and dance by Nicholas Alva and directed by Michael Fontaine – premiering Saturday, May 3rd through Sunday, May 18th 2008 at Spreckels Performing Arts Center in Rohnert Park. For tickets and information phone (707) 588-3400. That's (707) 588-3400. Also visit morningstarplay.com.

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SYNOPSIS

Pam, a woman seeking an alternative to today's lifestyle, visits Morning Star and meets Lou Gottlieb, owner and caretaker. Lou takes her back in time on his journey through those tumultuous times, when his conscience directed him to go against the Law of the Land, and how his decisions affected him and the greater community. Based upon the true story of Morning Star Ranch, the unintentional commune growing on a piece of land open to all by Lou Gottlieb, *MorningStar* is a story of people who are attempting to at least raise the question of how human beings should live with the earth and how society at large reacts to them. A local event which took place at a specific time (Occidental, California from the mid 1960s to the early 1970s), *MorningStar* is also a universal story that occurs both constantly and cyclically throughout eternity.

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History of Morning Star Ranch

What has come to be known as Morning Star Ranch is a thirty acre tract of land on a hillside slope about two miles north east of the small town of Occidental in western Sonoma County, California. Much of the land is rough and naturally forested with redwood, oak and bay laurel trees. Historically, the region has been primarily an agricultural area which has included cattle and sheep ranches, poultry farms and large orchards originally planted with plum and apple trees, but now cultivated with wine grapes.

The property has had various owners over the years, but few historical records regarding ownership exist. Of these, some refer to the land possessing a spiritual ‘energy’ that many felt was associated with a divine presence. In fact, the property was almost dedicated to the Virgin Mary and the Catholic Church by John Beecher (Harriet Beecher Stowe's grand-nephew), who has been one of the previous owners.

Morning Star Ranch became famous when Lou Gottlieb, a member of the popular Limelites music trio, purchased the property in the early 1960s. From 1966 through 1972 - with Lou's declaration of “open land: access to which is denied no one” – the Ranch became an unintended commune, generating a great deal of media coverage and public interest. Unfortunately, it also became a target of intense scrutiny by various Sonoma County regulatory agencies: including Public Health, the Building Permits Department and the Sonoma County Municipal Courts. Conflicts with these agencies and other entities eventually resulted in the closure of the Morning Star Ranch community.

After Lou Gottlieb’s death in 1996, ownership of the land transferred to his heirs. Today, many feel that Morning Star Ranch remains an historically significant spot: one that should be preserved as a uniquely American shrine.

Nick Alva, Playwright



Having lived in the Bay Area all of his life (born in Castro Valley in 1963 – a true child of the sixties – and living in Sonoma County since 1974), Nicholas Alva has been afforded the perfect perspective for the subject matter of MorningStar.

A graduate of Sonoma State University in History and a self-taught musician/composer, Nicholas has had tons of experience composing and performing, chiefly as co-founder of the music group, The Round, which performed and received radio play throughout Northern California in the 1990's. Nicholas then moved into composing and recording for theatre: musicals, soundscapes and dance pieces – collaboration being the key. Using these experiences, Nicholas wrote this living history play with music and dance, which he actually did not intend to do. The subject floated into his hands and, due to certain events and conditions he ended up writing MorningStar, with the help of many of the original participants. But it all makes sense as the play is metaphysical, timeless, and open, with a life of its own. An archetypal manifestation of a true event, an echo which intends to vibrate anew, that is MorningStar.

Nicholas is also the founder of Alva Sound Art Studio, a collaborative group and the umbrella for Community Theatre At Large, which is producing the show.

Alicia Bay Laurel, Composer



Born May 14, 1949 in Hollywood, California, to sculptor Verna Lebow, MFA, and surgeon Paul Kaufman, MD, Alicia grew up in a bi-lingual, intellectual, artistic, musical and politically active household. At nineteen Alicia moved to the Wheeler Ranch Commune in Sonoma County, California and began writing, illustrating and designing Living On The Earth, a handwritten guide to bohemian country living illustrated with line drawings, initially as an informational pamphlet for fellow commune dwellers. Published in 1970 by The Bookworks in Berkeley, the book sold out its first edition of 10,000 copies in two weeks. Bennett Cerf, then president of Random House, purchased the rights to publish it for Random House.

The 1971 Random House Vintage Books edition sold over 350,000 copies, becoming the first paperback book ever on the New York Times Bestseller List. It was favorably reviewed in Time, New York Times Review of Books, Publishers Weekly, the Whole Earth Catalog, Library Journal, Christian Science Monitor, Look, and dozens of other publications, and Alicia was recognized as a Woman of the Year in 1971 by Mademoiselle Magazine. Over the next three years she created seven other illustrated books, five of which were published by Soshisha, Ltd. in Japan. (Living on the Earth has remained in print continuously in Japanese since 1972, and Being of the Sun was re-released by Soshisha in March 2007.)

In 1974, Alicia went on a book tour to Japan, stopped on the way back in Maui, and stayed to learn traditional Hawaiian slack key guitar.

Over her long residence in Maui, Alicia studied Hawaiian music, worked as an underwater photographer, taught yoga, performed extensively as a vocalist/guitarist, had several one-woman art shows, taught art, music, writing and dance at two alternative schools, and illustrated books. Over eleven years she produced 3000 weddings as the owner of a legendary Maui wedding company. In 1999 she sold the company, produced a CD of her original folk songs, Music From Living on the Earth, and toured the USA for eight months telling original comedy stories, singing original songs and promoting the 30th Anniversary Edition of Living on the Earth. Alicia is currently based in Los Angeles, writing and illustrating a treatment for a children's animated television series and creating a new CD of songs for the show.

Tanya Boone-Alva, Choral Director



Tanya Boone-Alva is a songwriter and self-taught musician. Songs from her band, The Round (Kelly Walton and Nicholas Alva are also members of The Round), received local radio play and recognition from Ian Anderson, flautist and lead vocalist for the band, Jethro Tull. She was choral director for the musical, A Wrinkle in Time, produced by the Santa Rosa Performing Arts Center in 1997, and MorningStar Idyll, a pastorelle version of MorningStar which played in fall 2006. She is currently assisting in the choral direction of MorningStar. Tanya is a credentialed teacher with seven years experience teaching singing in the public schools. She directed the holiday program at

Liberty Elementary School in Petaluma for three years and Harmony Elementary School in Occidental for one year. Her first official chorus class is with the sixth grade at Venetia Valley Middle School, under the guidance of Jan Pederson-Schiff.

Curtis Cooper, Music Director

Musical Director Curtis Cooper received a BA in Music Education in 2005 from Sonoma State followed by his teaching credential in 2007. Since moving to Sonoma County in 2001 he has been working as a percussionist, playing operas and musicals in local theaters. Curtis began performing as a musician almost forty years ago while touring the west coast with Drum and Bugle Corps at age 11. He became a professional drummer at age 15, and remained a very busy drummer and percussionist for 31 years, living in the south bay area, when he wasn't on the road. He began conducting in 1984 at Cupertino High School, where he acted as musical director and resident composer for the percussion ensemble and the CHS marching band. Curtis conducted his first opera last summer with the Raven Player's highly successful production of Evita.

He remains active as an educator, directing percussion ensembles at SRJC, SSU and Cazadero Music Camp, as well as conducting school bands in Healdsburg, Petaluma, and Windsor. He was Choir Director for three years at The Church of Divine Man in Santa Rosa and Berkeley, and is also the author of several music books published by BMP.

Joe Dolce, Composer



Joe Dolce is an internationally known musician who is still actively touring. His contribution to MorningStar is the upbeat "Hey Lou Gottlieb" which tells the story Lou's invitation for anyone to come to Morning Star Ranch. Joe also wrote, produced and performed, 'Shaddap You Face,' Number One Hit in 15 countries, which holds the record for the most successful single in Australian music history for over 27 years straight, (breaking Slim Dusty's legendary 22 year longevity record for 'The Pub With No Beer!') Over 40 international cover versions in 12 languages including an aboriginal dialect and Papua New Guinean 'pidgin'.

Joe was the Executive Producer, co-writer and lead guitarist of the song, 'Intimacy', from the original US film score, THE TERMINATOR. He also composed and orchestrated, 'Joan On Fire', a one hour oratorio for string orchestra, SATB choir, soloists and brass trio. Premiered by the Melbourne Chamber Orchestra, and Choralation Choir. Joe is the principal and founding member, since 1992, of the completely unique and ongoing literary-folk music creation, 'Difficult Women', with appearances at the Vancouver Folk Festival, The Winnepeg Folk Festival, The Harrison Hot Springs Arts Festival, The Woodford Folk Festival (6 Times), and The Edinburgh Festival. His CD, 'The Wind Cries Mary,' was chosen as Album of the Year by 97.1 FM 3MDR Radio Melbourne, December 2007!

Michael Fontaine, Stage Director



Michael is pleased to have the opportunity to work on the premiere production of *MorningStar*. His regional theater directing credits include the musical productions of *Candide*, *Man of La Mancha*, *Sweeney Todd*, *The Fantasticks*, *Hair*, *Tintypes*, *Cinderella*, *I Do! I Do!*, *Predators*, *Tomfoolery*, *Jacques Brel*, *Through Roses*, and *Good* for companies including Cinnabar Opera, Actors Theater, Pacific Alliance Theater Company and Summer Repertory Theatre.

His opera directing credits include the Sonoma City Opera productions of Donizetti's *Elixir of Love* and *Daughter of the Regiment*, as well as Mozart's *Abduction from the Seraglio*.

His non-musical regional directing credits include *Blithe Spirit*, *Bedroom Farce*, *How the Other Half Loves*, *Mother Courage*, *Ghosts*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Tongue of a Bird*, *The Road to Mecca*, *I Hate Hamlet*, *A Perfect Ganesh*, *The Matchmaker*, and many others for professional, community and educational theater organizations.

While Artistic Director for The First Stage Company – in residence at the Cinnabar Theater in Petaluma – he additionally directed productions including *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *Candida*, *We Won't Pay! We Won't Pay!*, *The Winter's Tale*, *The Country Wife*, *Hedda Gabler* and others.

Michael has received American College Theatre Festival recognition in acting and directing categories for productions including three premieres by Emmy winning playwright Carol Flint. He has, in addition: performed in dozens of productions as a singer and actor; received a Dean Goodman Bay Area Theatre Award for acting; and recently served as stage director for a dance production at Lao American College in Vientiane, Laos. Upcoming directing assignments include Donizetti's *Don Pasquale* for Sonoma City Opera.

Rona Hackett, Assistant Stage Manager

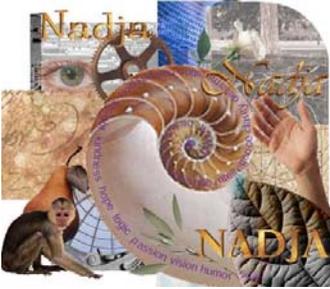
Rona Hackett is delighted to be part of the *MorningStar* team. Originally from New Jersey, she had her first taste of the footlights at age eight when she produced a show of music and skits with a cast of neighborhood kids as a fundraiser for the new wing of her local hospital.

She has a B.A. in Creative Writing from San Francisco State University. She's attended Squaw Valley Writers' Conference and was a finalist in the Pacific Northwest Writers' Association Literary Contest. She is currently writing her first play, a romantic comedy set in Alaska.

Kristy Hotchkiss, Light Design

Kristy Hotchkiss began doing theatre at the advanced age of 38, working backstage with Mendocino Magic Company. She then moved to onstage roles with Mendocino Performing Arts Company. When her kids grew up, she finally went to college. Sonoma State Theatre Department is where she met some lifelong friends, many of whom are involved with the production of *Morningstar*. It's wonderful to be working/playing with some of her theatre family again.

Nadja Masura. Digital Theatre Artist/Actor



Nadja Masura recently received her Ph.D. in Theatre and Performance Studies from the University of Maryland; where she was a Maryland Institute for Technologies Fellow, specializing in Digital Theatre. She holds an MA from the University of Michigan, degrees in Multimedia from the College of Marin, and a BA in Theatre from the University of Puget Sound where she received acting and voice training. She has appeared in such musicals as *Amadeus*, *Chorus Line*, *Grapes of Wrath*, *Peace Child* and *The Fantastics*. Recently, she has been an active collaborator in original multi-site online performances

like *Interplay*, *Elements*, and *Outside/In* with ArtGrid and the Digital Performance Group; including directing, scripting, tech./media production and performance.

Julianne Odell, Photographer



Julianne Odell was born August 16th, 1963 in Fort Carson, Colorado, yet raised in Sacramento, California in a very typical 60's neighborhood suburb. She was not yet aware of the 60's movement until, inevitably, the Vietnam War clips on the news, as well as, the protests. Upon living in San Francisco, in the Haight-Ashbury, in the early part of the 80's did the desire to understand what actually took place in the 60's get somewhat revealed. After spending many years in the City, Julianne felt it was time to move on to the land of trees, first Colorado in the Rocky Mountains, and then Alaska.

This was a time for her to be "On the Road", and a "Dharma Bum", which has only gifted her with the ability to enjoy life as it is, in the moment. This is where her love for photography stems from, capturing life in the moment. Currently she is working as a Freelance Photographer for the Community Voice newspaper, and operates her own photography business.

Ramon Sender, Composer



Ramon Sender is a composer, writer and the co-founder, with Morton Subotnick, of the San Francisco Tape Music Center in 1961. He studied with George Copeland, Elliott Carter, and Robert Erickson.

At the Center Sender worked with composers Subotnick, Pauline Oliveros, Tony Martin, Joseph Byrd, and Terry Riley. Later Sender was involved with Lou Gottlieb's Morning Star/Wheeler (Ahimsa) Ranch communes and later the Peregrine Foundation (for people "living in or exiting from experimental social groups").

His writings include a novel, "Zero Weather", and short stories available on his web site. In 1989, Sender published "Death in Zamora", a book investigating the execution of his mother by Franco's forces during the Spanish Civil War. For "Death in Zamora", Sender used the pen name "Ramón Sender Barayón" both to differentiate himself from prior works by his novelist father, Ramón Sender, and to honor Amparo Barayón, his mother.

His albums include Worldfood (2004, Locust 55) & "Desert Ambulance" (2005, Locust 70).

Brian Skinner, Composer / Actor



Brian Skinner has been involved in music performances and recordings for 15 years. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree in music from Sonoma State University in 1996. Since that time, he has had an international music program on the campus radio station, has been part of various theatrical productions including *Macbeth*, and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, performed with his own group **The Round**, as well as with such groups as **Hook Boog** and **Maribou**, and has published music columns in the SSU campus newspaper as well as Sonoma County's own music magazine, Section M.

Katrina Van Winkle, Light Design

Katrina Van Winkle is a resident of San Francisco and an alumni of SSU. Morning Star has been a magical time of reuniting with old friends and working with new ones. Katrina has worked around the Monterey Bay and Bay Area creating lights for various theatres and other venues. She spent a couple of years working on the MS Wind and the SS Norway as the lighting director for Jean Ann Ryan Productions.

Joshua Walton, Properties Master



Joshua has a background in sculpture, fine food, and sustainable design. Special skills include reuse materials and thrift purchasing. He is a Northern California native and holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Sculpture and Printmaking, and a Bachelor of Arts in Creative Writing, from Sonoma State University.

Kelly Walton, Choreographer/Stage Manager



A life long love of movement and the expressive arts has led Kelly to search for the improvisational inspiration in every day. She is excited to be working with Nick and Tanya again, and is very proud of what her old Round buddies have cooked up this time. MorningStar promises to be a project that gives a whole new meaning to the word historical. It doesn't seem that long ago, holding hands in the circle dance with Deborah Hay, or watching Twyla Tharp do Dancing in the Streets of...at the Wadsworth. But it's been over thirty years! Crazy. Since then Kelly has studied dance doing tap, jazz and ballet at Pofahl's Dance Studio, modern, contact improv and African Dance at Sonoma State University, Duncan dance, more ballet, more modern and more African at New York University, Samba and the dances of the Orixás with Leah Weiss of EGAP at Templo Guaracy, and many other moving experiences along the way. She studied choreography with Renata Celichowska, Douglas Dunn, and Anne Woodhead, and did the choreography for the MorningStar Idyll, as well as numerous original works in various styles and movement modalities.

Erin Anderson, Actor



Erin Lee Anderson was born in Berkeley, California, but was raised mainly in Sonoma County, where she witnessed the Cotati hippy era in the 70's (Erin could tell you some stories!). Her mother took her to Morningstar to visit because she was thinking of moving to a commune. Erin obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree in Theatre Arts at Sonoma State University (where she was also a music major and classical voice scholarship student). She also holds a Masters Degree in Counseling Psychology from University of San Francisco. Some of her roles at SSU include Maria in *Most Happy Fella*, Phobia in *Pizza Con Funghi* (she performed in this opera for the King of the Fig Islands) and Florence Pike, in Benjami Britten's *Albert Herring*; along with numerous classical recitals, chamber music and cabaret shows. She also played Buttercup, in the *HMS Pinafore*; and Juno, in *Orpheus and the Underworld* and sang in numerous Cabaret shows at Redwood Empire Lyric Theatre. After a long hiatus, she recently has been singing with the Cinnabar chamber singers and has an occasional church or wedding gig. She is currently a Cotatian (again), works full-time as a mental health case manager in Marin and is, happily, mother to 7-year-old, Sophia.

Cristian Caetano, Actor



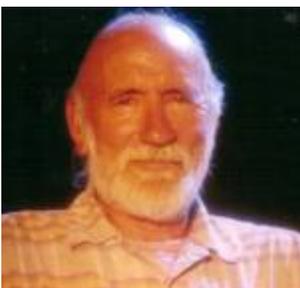
Cristian has been on stage since he was a tot. He began tap dancing, which lead to acting and singing in his first musical, *Oliver*, in which he played the lead. Since then, he has performed in Santa Rosa at Sonoma State, Santa Rosa Jr. College, The Marquee Theater and Santa Rosa Players. He has been on stage at the Melodrama Express and Vaudeville in Bakersfield Ca., and Sonora Rep. During this time he became a licensed cosmetologist, and taught theater exercises in elementary schools in both Sonoma and Marin Counties. He wrote and performed at the Marsh Group in San Francisco performing an original show he co-wrote. Cristian is delighted to be back performing in Sonoma County.

Dan Delgado, Actor



Dan Delgado was born on August 20th, 1985 and has been in several student and independent films including *Gin Fire On Tuesday*, *The Waking*, *Plunge* and most recently *The Life Of Exciting Moments*. Stage credits include a student production of *The Nutcracker*.

Steve Fowler, Actor



Steve Fowler was one of Morning Star's friendly neighbors, starting in 1968 when he bought a home just up the road, where he still lives. Lou, Ramon, "Near" and "Gina" became his close friends, and Lou used Steve's house as an office the last years of his life. After a year of graduate work in dramatic arts (1962-62) at U.C. Berkeley, Steve helped to start "Open Theater" with a couple who were among the first visitors to what was to become Morning Star Ranch, Roland Jacopetti and Alexandra Hart. After a long hiatus from the stage Steve joined Pegasus Theater Company ten years ago with his partner, Andrea Van Dyke. They have collaborated on many projects since, playing Chasuble and

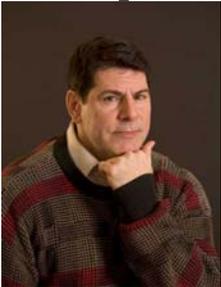
Prism in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Regina and Horace in *The Little Foxes*, and staging the annual *Hour Day Show* at Pegasus.

“Getting back to an intimate relationship with nature, voluntary simplicity, dropping out of the war-addicted economy – these were some of the best and most enduring motives of the 60’s counterculture; all were beautifully exemplified, for all too brief a time, at Morning Star.”

Dana Hawke, Actor

Dana has never before graced the stage until now but has always felt inspired and invigorated by live theatre. She grew up in the still hippy-like culture of Marin in the 70’s and felt a familiarity with the Morning Star story as well as recognition as to why this story is important to tell in our modern times. She is also the proud mother of Jordan Torres and Cole Duncan.

Len Improta, Actor



Lenny has lived in Sonoma County for the past 17 years. He is a veteran of many musicals including *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Evita*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Oklahoma*, *Hair* and *The Mikado*. He has also been active in numerous dramas, most recently *After the Fall*, *Othello* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. Having done three small parts in movies last summer, Lenny would like to continue to alternate between the stage and screen.

Arthur Kopecky, Actor



In the late '60's, like some of the characters in the play, Art Kopecky became immersed in the counter-culture. Originally from NYC, these adventures led him from California to New Mexico where he worked for the New Buffalo Commune for eight years. His books "New Buffalo: Journals from a Taos Commune" and "Leaving New Buffalo Commune" (UNM Press), chronicle the happenings and ideas of the era.

Presently a contractor and finish carpenter he lives with his family amidst many gardens in Sebastopol. Active with the current communities movement he is a great believer in the importance of our society learning to share property.

Claudia Larson, Actor



It was her Dad’s incredible tenor voice, his tuneful whistling and the meadowlarks on the family’s North Dakota farm that inspired Claudia Larson’s singing. Whether it was sitting at the family upright piano playing songs from the 30s and 40s or singing in the Christmas programs at the country school and church, music was every day present.

Life moved on and Claudia continued to sing and perform, taking up the guitar and folk songs in her hippie days. Opera, musical theatre, jazz, country and even rock found their way into her repertoire. Teaching singing became a way to share the mystery of singing, a way to let folks know that singing is inherent in everyone. She graduated with a degree in music from Sonoma State University after leaving Concordia Lutheran College in Minnesota.

Today she sings with her three grandchildren and keeps the piano open for them. Her three grown children and two sons in law all live in the area for which she’s every day grateful.

Michelle Randall, Actor/Costume Coordinator



My involvement with singing and dramatic endeavors began back in high school. I was in the Cupertino High School choir for four years with Rocco DiStasio as the Choral director, and dabbled in the high school drama productions as well. In college, I joined the Foothill Madrigal Chorus and the San Jose Symphony Chorus. Later on I became involved with local community theater in San Jose and performed in *Hello Dolly* as Ernestina Money and the ensemble singing cast, I performed as Rose Seller in *Oliver*, and as part of the supporting cast for *South Pacific*. Through the years I have been involved with a number of vocal choral groups, including an all female group of six called the Mamatones.

I've spent the past 18 years living in Sebastopol, CA, and have kept myself involved with a local church choral group. Two years ago, I reentered the world of dramatics and auditioned for the American Dream Theatre and landed a singing role in *All Hallows*. I performed with the Pegasus Theatre's production of *Holly Days* last fall, and am currently in production in the American Dream Theatre's *Warp 60's*. I have recently joined the River Choir under the expert guidance of Sonia Trubidy.

When I saw audition notices for *Morning Star*, I was very excited as it sounded like a wonderful opportunity to work with the best. I auditioned and voila!

Gloria Strasburg, Actor



I have been singing and acting since I was a small child and I am keenly aware of what music and theater mean to me. Music is part of my soul. Actually, to be correct, music is my soul. It is the very essence of me. My heart beats in time with the universal language known as music. There is no other language that can be understood by all persons across the world regardless of the tongue in which it is sung. All the world coexists with rhythm, the underlying back beat known as our life. Music has been and will always be here throughout existence. It was in the beginning and it will be in the end.

From this, my life springs forward and directs my actions. With music to guide me, I am compelled to follow the magic of theater. What is that one pivotal moment when the stage lights go up revealing another reality, that before was once only in the imagination of the play right? The audience members, quietly watching from their carefully chosen seat, wait in anticipation for the story to begin. The characters become alive as the actors effortlessly deliver their well rehearsed lines, all the while weaving plots and subplots to delight the many pairs of watchful eyes. This is acting, an art as old as mankind itself.

I am delighted to be a part of *Morningstar*. This is a creative innovative look at the life of an enlightened man who generosity of spirit touched many lives, whilst in the flesh and long after his passing.

Dave 'Diz' Struffles, Actor



Diz grew up in the Bay Area, and has toured with several award winning bands including - **Whisper, Snapp, Hank Williams, Lost Highway, The Marshall Tucker Band, John Legend**, and **INXS**. After winning the San Francisco Battle of the Bands with Tesla drummer Troy Luccketta, he became a weekly performer on NYC's Seaport Line of ships. His previous musical "Frankenstein", is based on the music of Edgar & Johnny Winters. Theatre audiences and concert goers in the U.S. will have seen him on stage in more than 200 productions as an actor, singer, harmonica player, and orchestral & electric bassist.

He recently finished scoring and recording his [Rockin' Blues musical, Smokehouse...](#) in Nashville with Broadway's own performer/ composer Brent Moyer, Matthew Klindedinst, Jeff "Skye" Moore (George Jones Nephew), and Porter Wagner produced Curtis Alan. Diz toured 131 cities in 2006 including The CMA FEST in Nashville, Van's Warped Tour, The Marshall Tucker Band, Wyoming's' Frontier Days (opening for Dierks Bentley), the Southeastern premiere of "Hank Williams, Lost Highway", "The Guys", at The Federal Building, and the Bailey's World Tour with John Legend. "Musical Theatre is my passion. Folk, Old Country, Blues, & Rock keep me breathing.

Rusty Thompson, Actor



Rusty Thompson has been acting ever since he realized that it was the only way to be a fireman, an astronaut, and a brain surgeon all in one lifetime. He has been seen all over the North Bay area, having played such memorable roles as the Mad Hatter in Napa's production of *Alice in Wonderland*, Lord Burleigh in Santa Rosa's *The Beard of Avon*, Levi Straus in Novato's *Ghosts of Olompali*, and most recently as Gabe in Dandy Rascal's production of *Outcast State*. Rusty wishes to thank his Love for her brilliance and support.

Jonathan Van Nuys, Actor



Jonathan Van Nuys is a Sonoma County native and has recently returned to Sonoma County after a ten year stint in San Francisco. Jonathan caught the acting bug at an early age, watching a play and musical ragtime revue at the wonderful, (now defunct) Marquee Theater in Railroad square, Santa Rosa. After making his stage debut at age 5 as a Jack in the Box he took a long hiatus and returned to the stage in 1993 in SRJC's *school for scandal*. Over the past 15 years, he has enjoyed acting sporadically in mostly stage and a few film projects, in Santa Rosa and San Francisco. Over the years he has played everything from a romantic lead, to a stereotypical nerd, to a teenage hustler, to a flesh eating zombie, to a "rock and roll hootchie," to a suicidal world war 2 refugee, to a homicidal maniac and most recently was seen onstage as an 1800's era pastor in John Shillington's, *Anatomy of Gray*. This will be his first time onstage at the Spreckel's and he is excited to be part of this original work.

Mike Vargas, Actor



Michael-Enrique Vargas is a Senior at Sonoma Academy in Santa Rosa. After being overheard singing in a local shopping centre at the age of seven he joined the Santa Rosa Children's' choir, effectively sealing in stone his interests in music. In elementary and middle school he began to act in school plays such as *The Nutcracker*, and *The 13 Colonies*. He Continued to work in both theatre and choral productions and now has under his belt larger pieces like; *4 Farces and a Funeral*, a piece based off a series of Anton Chekhov's plays and life, as well as The opera *Orpheus and Eurydice*, by Gluck.

Michael currently lives with his father, stepmother, and siblings in Cotati, where they enjoy a cozy family life. Michael will be moving on to college in the fall where he plans to major in music, hoping to one day have a career in Opera performance.

Cyrus Alva, Youth Ensemble

Cyrus Alva is a very caring six year old boy. He likes building with Legos, talking to his "Little One" named Leaf, and giving his parents back massages when they are tired. Cyrus is a naturally graceful boy, and is also a thoughtful big and little brother.

Petri Alva, Youth Ensemble

Petri Alva is three years old and has one of the biggest hearts on the planet. He loves playing with trains, and being with his two big brothers. He gets dressed all by himself. He is already very strong, and will probably grow up to be the biggest of the three.

Zachary Alva, Youth Ensemble

Zachary Alva is a kind and loving nine year old who loves birds and has three ducks he takes care of - Ping, Hacky Sack, and George. His talents include piano, violin and soccer. He is also an amazing big brother.

Sophia Celeste Orlando, Youth Ensemble

Sophia Celeste Orlando (yes, she is Sicilian) is seven years old and lives with her mother, Erin Lee Anderson. Sophia has studied ballet and tap dance and has been in a few dance performances. Currently she is in an internationally acclaimed children's chorus called Voina.

Cole Benjamin Duncan, Youth Ensemble

Cole is a ten year old resident of Petaluma. He has been in various school plays as well as several roles in *Jungle Book* with Live Oakes Theatre.

Jordan Antonio Torres, Youth Ensemble

Jordan is a fifteen year old who loves to act. He has been in school plays such as *Elenore of Aquitaine*, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare Abridged* and *The Fall of Ra*, as well as a role in *Jungle Book* at Live Oakes Theatre.

Zara Amalia Walton, Youth Ensemble

Zara Walton is a brilliant six year old with an incredibly active imagination. She recently made her stage debut at Spreckels as a Party Girl and a Gingerbread Buffoon in Ballet Califia's *Nutcracker*. Zara has studied tap, jazz and ballet at the Dance Center, and is a devoted student of Miss Shelly. She has a lovely singing voice, and enjoys writing and illustrating her own stories. She is doing a great job raising her parents, Kelly and Joshua Walton, as well as her grandmothers Carol Grogan and Sandra Walton, and her great-grandmother Zara Lindquist.