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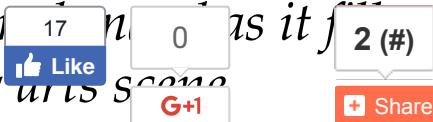
## On stage at EMCC

Submitted by Glenn Gullickson on Wed, 09/28/2016 - 12:00am

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# PAC is in its first year as it fills void in West Valley arts scene



As the Performing Arts Center at Estrella Mountain Community College marks its first year of operation, the man in charge of the building is turning to a new challenge.

“Last year, the focus was getting things on stage,” said Timothy Butterfield, coordinator of fine arts facilities at the college in Avondale. “The focus this year is more front of the house.”

That means promoting what’s happening in the building that’s filling a void in the West Valley with a main stage that offers a performance space for college and community events as well as a black box theater, dance studio and other instructional spaces.

“Last year was a whirlwind. It was an amazing challenge to get everything on stage,” Butterfield said. “Our next big challenge is to get butts in the seats.”

The goal is to bring awareness about the center to people who discover it with the reaction, “I didn’t know this was here,” Butterfield said.

Last November, audiences went to the theater for the official grand opening of the 30,000-square-foot building that cost \$12.4 million.

In its first year, the building also served as the stage for two college theater productions, two dance shows, a movie

## EMCC Performing Arts Center fall tentative schedule

**Oct. 4:** Storytelling concert

**Oct. 13-15:**  
TheatrEstrella  
production of  
Undercurrents

**Oct. 18-22:** Noises Off  
presented by  
PebbleCreek Players  
and EMCC

**Nov. 10:** Shakespeare  
Festival Recruitment  
Event presented by  
EMCC and Southwest  
Shakespeare

**Nov. 15:** Storytelling  
concert

**Nov. 17-19:**  
TheatrEstrella  
production of The Last  
Two Boxes

**Dec. 2-3:** DancEstrella  
production

**Dec. 5:** Storytelling  
concert

**Dec. 6:** Community  
choir performance

**Dec. 7:** Piano class  
recital

**Dec. 8-10:**  
TheatrEstrella  
production of  
Interviewing Miss Daisy

**Dec. 16-18:** The  
Nutcracker presented



night, commencement ceremonies, voice recitals and a community band and choir concert.

by Southwest Ballet  
Theatre and EMCC

There was also a comedy showcase sponsored by the city of Avondale that packed the 297-seat theater, Butterfield said.

Southwest Ballet Theatre staged its production of *The Nutcracker* at the theater during the holidays and *The Wizard of Oz* in the spring.

An arrangement that is the first of its kind for a Maricopa Community College made the Southwest Ballet shows “more of a co-production” with the college, which waived some fees and offered students free admission, Butterfield said.

Students were also cast in the shows and helped build sets, giving them opportunities that aren’t “academically based,” Butterfield said.

He said last year’s *Nutcracker* was so well attended that there may be additional performances when the holiday classic is staged at the theater again this year.

“It’s going to be quite a production,” Butterfield said.

In the spring, Southwest Ballet will stage *Tarzan* at the theater.

Another community collaboration this year involves the PebbleCreek Players, which will mount the British farce *Noises Off* at the college while the PebbleCreek stage is undergoing renovations.

The fall’s student productions will involve staging three one-act plays with themes of new beginnings.

The first of the one-acts, *Undercurrents*, will have its Arizona premiere when it is staged at 7 p.m. Oct. 13 and 3 and 7 p.m. Oct. 14 and 15 in the black box theater.

The play by Elaine Romero follows Adela, who has lost her beloved grandmother and recently become blind, as she negotiates a future that honors her ancestors and herself.

The one acts will be balanced by a spring production of what Butterfield called a “big name show” directed by theater faculty member George Lopericio.



Also on the schedule are dance productions developed from a program led by DancEstrella's Janaea Lyn McAlee that includes ballet, Latin, ballroom, jazz, hip-hop and modern dance instruction.

The campus storytelling program has a home in the building's black box theater, where storytelling events are done in a space that has flexible seating for up to 90.

Butterfield said among the "tweaks" still being done to the building is installing black box theater risers, a project made possible by a donation from a local Kiwanis Club.

Butterfield said the center's music room was recently outfitted with 16 digital pianos, which have been used by a piano class for children.

Piano classes will be offered to college students for the first time this fall, he said.

The music room also provides space for voice and guitar lessons and community choir rehearsals.

The building also includes two recording rooms.

It took more than 10 years for the Performing Arts Center to become a reality on the campus, which opened in 1992 and serves about 15,000 students as one of the 11 colleges in the Maricopa Community College system.

Even better than expected, the building has served as a recruitment tool to attract students interested in the arts, Butterfield said.

"We opened, and we shot straight up" in enrollments, Butterfield said.

Two theater classes offered in the fall had waiting lists of students wanting to get in, he said.

Looking ahead, Butterfield would like to find more uses for the building during the summer and eventually see the establishment of a film program, he said.

"As the theater program grows, there's more interest in film," he said.

Butterfield has had help from part-time student workers, but to keep up with the demands for using the facility, a second full-time staffer was added this spring.



That will allow Butterfield more time to work on marketing the center by launching a new website, email lists and social media campaigns.

A campus entrepreneurial group will help with box office functions, he said.

Butterfield indicated that students of the arts aren't the only ones who are being provided an education by the new center.

Butterfield said there are lessons to be learned about the demands on the building and what's involved in staging a show.

"It's a learning process for all of us involved," he said. "We have to grow incrementally. We can't do everything."

*Glenn Gullickson can be reached at [ggullickson@westvalleyview.com](mailto:ggullickson@westvalleyview.com) (<mailto:ggullickson@westvalleyview.com>).*



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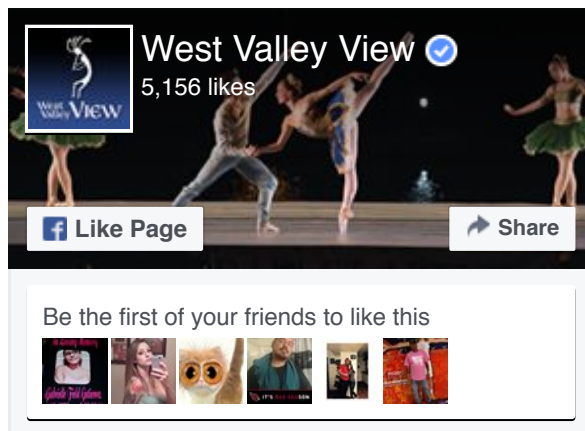
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