



[Home Delivery](#) [RSS](#)

[Home](#) [News](#) [My Town](#) [Sports](#) [Business](#) [Entertainment](#) [Life](#) [Columns](#) [Opinion](#) [Help](#)

[Jobs](#) [Cars](#) [Homes](#) [Classifieds](#) [Shop](#) [Place An Ad](#)

NewsLibrary

Thank you for using NewsLibrary

Contra Costa Times (Walnut Creek, CA){PUBLICATION2}



Curtain rises on Northgate's Little Theatre

November 25, 2006

Section: News

Edition: FINAL

Page: a3

Elisabeth Nardi

Times Staff Writer

Caption: PHOTO: GUITARIST ADAM JESIONEK entertains his fellow students as they wait for a stage light test during a rehearsal in the newly refurbished Little Theatre at Northgate High School in Walnut Creek on Monday. (Bob Pepping/ Times)

For the last year Ed Meehan, Northgate High School drama teacher, has used the dance room to teach while he waited for the school's theater to be renovated. Poor lighting, no stage and mirrors everywhere made the classroom a challenge.

"It has been a roller coaster," Meehan said. "But we knew we were getting a wonderful space."

Meehan's was not the only class affected. The school band couldn't practice in the theater and both choir and dance have had recitals at other locations. There was no fall play this year. Instead, Meehan decided to wait.

Now the wait is over.

The Little Theatre at Northgate High School in Walnut Creek is finally finished. After a year of construction, four months behind schedule, the \$2.2 million renovation has been completed. The black box-style theater, with 278 crimson seats, new state-of-the-art lighting and sound equipment, is very professional, Meehan said.

Students "are going to have exposure to the real deal, to a theater you can usually only find at professional companies," he said.

Students have already been using the theater for the last few weeks but the introduction to the public happens Tuesday during an open house from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. A celebration for donors, by invitation only, will be held Wednesday at 7 p.m., with performances by the dance, choir, band and drama groups.

For those who are seeing the theater after the renovation the difference is amazing, Meehan said. The stage is three times bigger than it was and there is an additional 20 seats.

This is the only theater in the entire Mt. Diablo Unified School District, said Lee Oller, project leader for The Northgate Community Pride Foundation, which helped raise \$800,000 for the project. This is the second project for which the foundation has helped raise money at the school. The first was a gym renovation completed in 1999. The district gave \$1.4 million, with most of the money coming from the state and Measure A funding.

Because the theater is so professional, district officials and foundation leaders are looking at how it could be used by the community and not just the school and district, Oller said.

Nothing has been decided, such as rental costs, but there are plans to rent the theater out starting in May, Oller said. She thinks the theater is especially marketable to smaller groups that don't need the room and can't afford the space at places such as the Dean Leshner Regional Center for the Arts in Walnut Creek or some of Acalanes Union High School District's theaters.

"It's part of our whole identity to try and get the whole neighborhood involved," Oller said. "We want this to be the neighborhood family room. We know we are a good size for those smaller groups."

The details have not been worked out but Oller hopes that a portion of any money earned would go to upkeep of the theater.

The theater also gives the school an opportunity for at least one new class, Oller said. Meehan wants to start a class that would center around the new lighting and sound equipment in the theater.

"The potential this place has for students is amazing; they were always making do and jury-rigging things — now they have the stuff and they can let their creativity just fly," Oller said.

Reach Elisabeth Nardi at 952-2617 or enardi@cctimes.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS

The Little Theatre at Northgate High School, 425 Castlerock Road, Walnut Creek. 925-938-0900. No ticket necessary; first come, first served.

7: 30 p.m. Dec. 5, Little Theatre — Winter Concert I, performance by the school's Concert Band & Symphonic Band

7 p.m. Dec. 7, Little Theatre — Northgate Jazz Band and special guests, the Las Lomas High School Jazz Ensemble

7:30 p.m. Dec. 12, Little Theatre — Winter Concert II, performance by the school's Wind Ensemble & Orchestra

7:30 p.m. Dec. 14, Little Theatre — Choral Music Winter Concert

All content © 2006- Contra Costa Times (Walnut Creek, CA){PUBLICATION2} and may not be republished without permission.



[Shop Local](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Cars](#) | [Homes](#)
[About The Contra Costa Times](#) | [Help](#) | [Terms of Use & Privacy Statement](#) | [Copyright](#) | [Site Map](#) | [About MediaNews Group](#) | [RSS Feeds](#)

