

The Phoenix Theatre Company Is Building Outdoor Stage to Bring Back Live Productions During Pandemic and Keep Patrons Safe

Reopening plans include live shows, CDC health and safety protocols

(Sept. 25, 2020 — PHOENIX) COVID-19 has impacted nearly all industries, and the Valley's arts community is among the hardest hit. Faced with the question—'to perform or to not perform?', The Phoenix Theatre Company answers the unprecedented situation with a new vision of live theatre. Shows are set to premiere on an outdoor stage in November.

The new outdoor venue is under construction at the Central United Methodist Church, located at 1875 N. Central Ave., in Phoenix. Just one block north of the theatre's three-stage complex, the customized stage will provide an outdoor venue with plenty of room for patrons to enjoy the live performance experience safely socially distanced.

“With the outdoor theatre, every aspect of the patron experience had to be reconsidered and redesigned,” said Karla Frederick, director of production. “It started as a dream and now I'm happy to say it's really happening.”

The new performance space will accommodate approximately 250 attendees, seated in pairs and distanced six feet in all directions. The 32 foot by 24 foot stage has been custom designed and engineered by outdoor event specialists to allow our production team to recreate our high production values without sacrificing safety. A wall of screens will be installed at the back of the stage to increase the flexibility of the space.

Along with the logistical challenges of constructing an outdoor stage, all the work had to comply with local, state and national health mandates. The organization obtained approval from the state and the city to hold outdoor gatherings and continues to work with the city to meet permitting standards.

“This work is six months in the making,” said Vincent VanVleet, managing director, “we had to make absolutely sure that we could present outdoor shows without increasing the risk to public health. It was a tricky needle to thread, but I couldn't be more proud of all we've accomplished. Best of all, we'll be helping put some of the country's finest arts professionals back to work.”

In March, The Phoenix Theatre Company voluntarily suspended performances to help arrest the spread of COVID-19. This break in programming is the first time in its 100-year history.

“More than ever, we need a reason for hope and a path forward,” said Michael Barnard, producing artistic director. “It is our greatest wish to gather and share the experience of live theatre – whatever that looks like. We take our responsibility of keeping our patrons and artists safe seriously. This new outdoor venue will allow us to do just that. We are so grateful that our guests continue to stick with us—they truly lift us up.”

Performances at the outdoor venue are slated to begin Tuesday, Nov. 10, with *Happy Birthday Dionne*, a tribute to Dionne Warwick featuring the celebrated local trio We3. Outdoor

programming will run through May 2021. The theatre is tentatively scheduling the return of live shows for June 2021 and will start with *The Rocky Horror Show* and *Something Rotten!*.

The Phoenix Theatre Company will announce its full lineup of outdoor and virtual programming in early October. Season ticket holders and donors will be notified via email about ticket options. Tickets will be available to the general public starting Oct. 19, 2020. To learn more about upcoming programming and health and safety guidelines visit www.phoenixtheatre.com/alerts.

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ABOUT THE PHOENIX THEATRE COMPANY

The Phoenix Theatre Company is the largest professional regional theatre company in Arizona. As the first arts organization in Arizona and a founding member of the Central Arts District, The Phoenix Theatre Company is committed to advancing performing arts in the Valley with nearly 500 performances each year on multiple stages. Located at 1825 N. Central Ave in Phoenix, The Phoenix Theatre Company's mission is to create exceptional experiences by using the arts to articulate messages that inspire hope and understanding.

To learn more about digital content and outdoor performances, visit www.phoenixtheatre.com and connect on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

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