

# Reviving the Hormel: Local Artist and Phoenix Theatre Scenic Charge Brings the Outside In

By Shelina Elyse



With all the buzz around the new Dr. Stacie J. and Richard J Stephenson Theatre, The Phoenix Theatre Company was inspired to refresh the Hormel Theatre. Last renovated in 1995 when it was known as “The Mainstage”, we looked to connect past to present.

For our Resident Scenic Paint Charge, Rebekah Unsworth, it was an opportunity to bring her talent and local artist network together in this history-containing space.

After the mural debuted with the opening of the 2025/26 season, we sat down with Rebekah to talk about her work and uplifting local artists.



**Q: What led you to a career as a scenic charge?**

**Unsworth:** Genuinely a love of painting! I love the variety of things I get to paint in theatre and seeing it all come to life under the lights.

**Q: What was your inspiration for the mural?**

**Unsworth:** My favorite part of commuting to work

is seeing the incredible panoramic view of the mountains in Phoenix. I grew up in Louisiana where the highest point in the state is barely 500 feet, so I'll never get tired of the mountain

view. I also wanted to keep the design simple enough as not to compete with the incredible designs and performances happening on the stage.

**Q: How did you recruit your painters?**

**Unsworth:** I've been fortunate enough to get opportunities to work on murals around the Valley and meet some incredible artists who live and work here. One of my priorities for this project was to support local artists and I was so fortunate to have Dariana Trevizo and Nyssa Iniguez come aboard. Not only did they execute the design perfectly, they brought an entire community of artists on board who were excited to bring the mural to life. Their energy was full of joy and enthusiasm throughout.

**Q: What does this opportunity mean to you?**

**Unsworth:** To me it really represents how The Phoenix Theatre Company can support and create opportunities for arts of all kinds. I think it's so important to not just work towards an end product, but to uplift and give opportunities to as many other creators as possible along the way.



**Q: What would be your dream show to design or create?**

**Unsworth:** I would love to work on Sarah Ruhl's *Eurydice*.

**Q: Do you have any advice to give up-and-coming Valley artists?**

**Unsworth:** First, be true to yourself! It can be so tempting to try and follow viral trends, but that will only result in you tiring yourself out and creating art that has no heart. If you're creating what you love and believe in it will give you the energy to keep going. Trust that if you're being authentic to what inspires you, it will inspire those around you. Your people will find you!

Now for some very specific advise: there are a ton of art opportunities in the Valley, but you have to know where to look. It took me several years to figure it out when I first moved here. A great place to start is the Arizona Arts Commission website. Not only do they offer things like grants, they keep a list of dozens of opportunities around the Valley that is frequently updated. Other great places to check are Submittable, CaFE, and Street Art List. And remember, if you are just starting out submitting, you will get rejected. I had 30 rejections this year alone before I had even one acceptance, and I know other amazing and accomplished artists with more rejections than that. Those places just weren't right for your art!

