

## LIVEN UP

# Saguaro City brings Seuss' quirky world to the stage

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Through Dr. Seuss stories, many children feel like they are transported to another world filled with intriguing creatures and important life lessons.

The musical, "Seussical," brings together Dr. Seuss' stories and characters into one show, which stresses inclusiveness and acceptance.

Saguaro City Studio Arts, the educational branch of Saguaro City Musical Theatre, will put on the show Friday, June 23, to Sunday, June 25.

The show will be the culmination of a tuition-free, three-week summer camp. This is the company's follow-up production to December's "It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play;" "Little Shop of Horrors" hits their stage from Oct. 13 to Oct. 29.

Director Drew Humphrey, who is also Saguaro City's artistic director, said his organization is trying to reach different audiences.

"Seussical" is meant to appeal to families, although its themes of inclusiveness, community, loyalty and friendship are relatable to people of all ages.

"This is a good opportunity for grandparents to bring their grandkids for a fun afternoon adventure and for parents looking for something to do with their children on a hot summer day," Humphrey said.

The show allows the organization to combine its professional and educational arms.

Dena DiGiacinto — Saguaro City's director of outreach and education and the "Seussical" choreographer — said the company takes the audiences to a special place filled with colorful characters, each of whom have a place in this world.

"There's an overarching message that 'a person's a person, no matter how small.' We should all feel included and all of us feel equal. There is also a fun whimsical, fantastical quality to the show," DiGiacinto said.

Lynn Ahrens' and Stephen Flaherty's musical draws from Dr. Seuss' stories, including "Horton Hears a Who!" and "Horton Hatches the Egg."

The show features characters such as the



Saguaro City Studio Arts required kids to audition for summer camp. (Ray Frieders/Contributor)

Cat in the Hat, Horton, Gertrude McFuzz, the Whos, the Grinch, the Wickershams and Mayzie La Bird.

Costume designer Nina Christenson worked closely with the campers and creative staff to bring the show's imaginative characters to life.

Created by Kyle Dixon, the set uses familiar shapes from Dr. Seuss, including Truffula Trees.

Humphrey said the set had to present scenes such as Horton sitting on a nest which goes on an adventure.

Humphrey and DiGiacinto feel nostalgic about the show. Humphrey has fond memories of reading Dr. Seuss books such as "Oh, the Places You'll Go!" DiGiacinto remembers reading Dr. Seuss stories to the children she babysat as a young adult.

The show will have seven professional adult actors and the 35 youth summer campers. Some of them were in the company's first show.

"That's a major goal of ours is to create this wonderful theatrical community of

people who are excited to be part of our story and be a part of a community where everybody has a place and fits in," DiGiacinto said.

Campers will portray characters such as the Wickershams, the Bird Girls and others like a auctioneer and a circus barker.

Youth actor Dylan Pan will play JoJo, a young Who Boy who gets in trouble because he has too many "Thinks."

"It really is celebrating one's imagination, how JoJo imagines the world, along with how Horton the elephant imagines the world," Humphrey said.

The adult actors will play main roles in the show and coach the kids during camp. The cast will feature Samantha Beemer as Mrs. Mayor, Camille Beeson as Mr. Mayor, James Kelley Carroll as Horton, Lillie Langston as Gertrude McFuzz, Brach Drew as Sour Kangaroo, Lydia Schmidt as Mayzie La Bird and Zach Wetzel as the Cat in the Hat.

Four of these actors are from the University of Arizona School of Theatre, Film and

Television.

To participate in the summer camp, young people were required to audition.

"Part of the educational experience is the audition process," Humphrey said.

"That was a really useful tool for us to get to know the kids better and to know how to make a successful pathway for them through camp, to utilize their talents the most."

During camp, students could develop their acting, singing and dancing skills and go through a professional-level rehearsal process.

DiGiacinto said, through the production, young people are exposed various levels of the acting process, as well as the technicalities of it.

"This gives our students and campers a great example of what it's like to have a life in the theater, to be a professional actor or a professional theatrical designer and that there is a pathway. If it's something that

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