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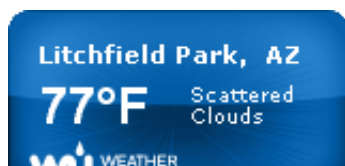
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EMCC dance program taking a

'Journey'

Submitted by Glenn Gullickson on Wed, 04/27/2016 - 12:00am

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DANCESTRELLA DANCERS Shaggy McCloud, front, Antonette Fleming and Nichole Olmstead practice for the upcoming production of "Journeys" April 11 at the Estrella Mountain Community College Performing Arts Center in Avondale. The free show will run Friday and Saturday. View photo by Jordan Christopher

Theme of spring show reflects on life's transitions

The Estrella Mountain Community College dance program's process of settling into the campus' new Performing Arts Center this year suggested the theme for its spring recital.

The show titled "Journeys" will be presented at 3 and 7 p.m. Friday

and Saturday at the EMCC Performing Arts Center, 3000 N. Dysart Road, Avondale.

“We want the entire production to feel like a journey,” said Janaea Lyn McAlee, DancEstrella’s artistic director.

Since January, McAlee has been working with 18 dancers who will perform 14 solo and group dances that address a theme familiar to students undergoing their own life transitions.

“The making of a dance is a metaphor for the theme,” McAlee said.

Among those taking the journey is Taylor Peck, who will present her graduation project, a performance she choreographed titled “Finish Line.”

Peck, 20, a graduate of Verrado High School who lives in Litchfield Park, said her four-and-a-half-minute piece was inspired by going through the obstacles of her own life.

“Life comes at you unexpectedly,” Peck said.

In the story the dance tells, dancers Shaggy McCloud, Antonette Fleming and Nichole Olmstead — who worked with Peck in two-and-a-half-hour weekly sessions — represent emotions as they support one another in life’s race.

Set to “Time” by Hans Zimmer, music featured in the movie *Inception*, the freestyle and modern movements of the dance include a runner’s stance in a piece that starts delicately and becomes more aggressive.

Peck will also dance a solo and perform with a group in addition to acting as the show’s assistant artistic director.

Peck, who started dance at age 9 at a neighborhood studio, will complete her associate’s degree in the fall and plans to continue dance studies at Arizona State University or the University of Arizona.

WHAT: DancEstrella presents “Journeys”.

WHEN: 3 and 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday

WHERE: EMCC Performing Arts Center, 3000 N. Dysart Road, Avondale

COST: Free

Like all of the student-produced work, Peck's dance developed from a process that started with McAlee asking for inspirational quotes and images and a sample movement.

Students with similar ideas worked together to develop their dances.

For example, three students inspired by roller coasters collaborated to create a dance they call "Carnivale."

McAlee contributed two pieces to the show, including the opening dance, a ballet titled "Tipping Point."

"Every journey has a tipping point," she said.

The finale choreographed by McAlee, a six-minute modern dance titled "Riptide," which features the full cast, was inspired by the cycles of life, friendship and relationships, she said.

McAlee said the dance includes a forward movement toward the audience that suggests a wave "so you feel like you're part of the dance."

For the dance featuring an original score, McAlee collaborated with composer David Anderson, who will play the guitar for the performance.

Also presenting a graduation project will be Dazzmin Brown, who will stage her dance, "Breaking Free."

Instead of an intermission, the show will feature a Power Point presentation that McAlee said will cover "the journey of the program ... from there to here" as it's taken up residence in the Performing Arts Center, which opened last fall.

"It's starting to take wings," McAlee said of the program she has led for three years.

The recital will be followed by a talk back between dancers and members of the audience.

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

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