

Theater company CCAE gets a new name

Relaunched Mosaic Theatricals aims for one big musical a year



Members of Mosaic Theatricals creative and management team. Back row, from left, DeAndre Simmons, Patricia Lutz, Julianna Crespo and Tom Abruzzo. Front row, Holly Lapp, Jayden Smith, Valeria Vazquez, Mariana Perezchica and Brenda Vazquez. Stephen Daniels

BY PAM KRAGEN

UNION-TRIBUNE

ESCONDIDO — Almost 2.5 years after the multi-award-winning theater company CCAE Theatricals parted ways with the city of Escondido's performing arts center, company officials today announced a new mission and a new name.

Now titled Mosaic Theatricals, the Escondido-based company is refocusing its efforts on grant-funded theater for young audiences productions, a theater workforce development internship program with Cal State San Marcos and the continuation of its popular spring and summer youth theater workshops and live concerts.

Founded in 2020 as an in-house theater production company at the California Center for the Arts, Escondido, CCAE Theatricals became well-known for producing big-budget and world premiere musicals and plays that won multiple awards from the San Diego Theatre Critics Circle from 2021 to 2023. Among its most-acclaimed productions were “The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time,” “Sunday in the Park with George” and the world premiere musical “Witnesses.”

Following its split with the center in mid-2023, CCAE Theatricals re-established itself as a nonprofit, downsized its staff, restructured its budget and began producing smaller-scale events at different venues.

Now, with its new strategic vision, new partner organizations and five of its seven board member positions filled, company officials have unveiled general plans for their first full season under the Mosaic Theatricals banner.

Mosaic Executive Director Julianna Crespo, who is running the company with Interim Artistic Director Tom Abruzzo, said the “Mosaic” name was inspired by how the company’s new foundation has been assembled from a multitude of partnerships with funding foundations, donors, schools and universities, venue operators, playwrights, performers and more. She said the company’s seasons will evolve as it continues to build its donor base and partnerships.

One thing Crespo said she and Abruzzo plan to carry on in future seasons is a commitment to producing large-scale musicals and plays, though probably only one each year, as budgets allow.

“We’re adjusting our strategic plan on the size and scale of shows and looking at how many of these production it’s reasonable to commit to as we grow,” Crespo said. Chalk Circle Collective (theater company in San Diego) really inspired us. They do one great thing a year and we keep going back to that idea. With our current budget constraints, we can do one real piece of theater a year that lives up to that caliber of work that people have come to expect of us.”

Mosaic’s Workforce Development program, funded through the Dorris Staples Theatrical Conservatory, will fund eight internships at Cal State San Marcos in 2026 in the areas of theater education, professional producing and technical production management in lighting and sound. Negotiations are also under

way to expand the training program with a second local university partner and a local concert/events production company.

Mosaic is also launching the pilot program for Uniendo, an intergenerational storytelling workshop series in partnership with San Diego's TuYo Theatre. Funded by the Prebys Foundation, it will launch in Escondido with a four-week intensive program that will result in a script that will be presented at Mosaic's 2026 staged-readings festival next summer.

The company's ongoing Playdate program will focus on grant-funded Theatre for Young Audiences and audience development programs that will be presented at Oak Hill Elementary School in Escondido, Teri Campus of Life in San Marcos and other venues.

The company's Rising Stars youth performance program will be renamed Mosaic Rising and may be expanded to serve a broader age range of youths.

Details of the 2026 season are still being finalized, but the company will kick off its first school event Dec. 14, "The Girl with the Gold Boots," at Oak Hill Elementary. It's a new theater for young audiences play by San Diego playwright Mabelle Reynoso.

As a season kickoff event, Mosaic will host "Countdown on Grand: Songs of the Rat Pack" event on Dec. 28 at the Ritz Theater in Escondido. The new company logo will be unveiled at the event that will include a cocktail reception and live music by Mel Collins, Michael Washington, Jim Graft, Patrick Barnitt, and the D. Ben-jamin Band.

preview of what's to come in 2026:

February: "Mosaic Rising," a showcase of North County youth talent, will be presented at the Bornemann Theatre at TERI Inc. Campus of Life in San Marcos.

March 14-15: "Motown: A Celebration of Soul," the company's popular annual concerts, return with a large band and multiple singers at the California Center for the Arts, Escondido.

April: "Morris Mickelwhite," a book-based play for young audiences will be presented on a tour at two or three North County locations including the Ritz Theatre in downtown Escondido.

Spring: "Camp ¡Exprésate!" spring camps for 2nd, 3rd and 4th-grade students in the Escondido Union School District's Expanded Learning Program, return, offering inspiration through art in acting, singing, dancing and design.

May: Celebrity Series kickoff. An as-yet unnamed professional theater artist will visit for a short-term residency and performance.

May through September: The company's annual cabaret concert series returns to an undetermined Escondido or San Marcos venue.

July: The company's new Uniendo program will be a four-week summer camp intensive.

August: The third-annual Staged Reading Festival will take place at an as-yet undertermined location.

Fall: A fully-staged musical or play will be presented with one to four performers. Crespo said it will be on the scale of the company's 2024 play "Every Brilliant Thing."

2027: A fully-staged large-cast musical or play will be presented. Title and budget will be determined by future funding.

Mosaic Theatricals presents 'Countdown on Grand: Songs of the Rat Pack'

When: 5:30 p.m. Dec. 28

Where: The Ritz Theater, 301 E. Grand Ave., Escondido

Tickets: \$35-\$75

Online: theatricals.org