

William T. Leaf
(bow tie) and Rob
Thompson



Setting the Stage

Inside Main Street School of Performing Arts' new Eden Prairie facility.

» **STUDENTS AT THE MAIN STREET SCHOOL OF PERFORMING ARTS** in Hopkins have a lot to look forward to for the 2017-18 school year. For the last 13 years, the red brick building on Main Street has offered high school students courses rich in academics, as well as theater, art, music and dance. For its 300 students dedicated to the performing arts, a four-mile relocation will make a big impact.

The school is moving into the old Eagle Ridge Academy building at 7255 Flying Cloud Drive in Eden Prairie. The new building will give the performing arts school 77,500 square feet of space to work with, allowing the school to expand and develop its arts-focused program with additional enrichment classes. The former elementary wing of Eagle Ridge will be converted into an area for dance studios, music theater studios, recording studios and additional music rooms.

"This is definitely preparing me for what I want to do, which is get more acting gigs and maybe get into some directing and writing," says Christian Tesch of Chaska.

Tesch is a junior at the performing arts school and a musical theater major who started at the school as a freshman.

During his high school years, Tesch has participated in the school's rigorous performance schedule, which includes an impressive 70 shows throughout the year. The school, along with the Children's Theater Company, has already built Tesch's resume with roles in productions like *The Three Musketeers*, *The Wedding Singer*, *12 Angry Jurors*, *Anything Goes*, *Peter Pan* and *Cinderella*.

A wall-breaking last October designated the beginning of the three-phase renovation project. Phase I included the purchase of the building and renovation for the arts-

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WILLIAM LEAF

BY ASHLEY
GAUGHAN

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BY EMILY J.
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related studios. The second phase will feature implementing the new auditorium within the school. The final renovations will be completed in Phase III, finishing the exterior of the building.

The new building will give students additional amenities and resources to dive even deeper into what they love to do. "The space is great," says theater teacher William Leaf. "This is a 300-seat auditorium in-house, so rehearsals can take place on site. We get to be in the space the opening week."

Leaf has been with the school since it opened in 2002, and he loves what the school culture does for students. "Kids are incredibly accepting of each other and incredibly supportive of one another," Leaf says. "And I know that's because everybody's got a [common] goal in the fact that we're all here for the arts, whether it be music, dance, musical theater, etc."

Not only will the new school enrich academic and arts-related studies for the students, but it will also serve as a venue for arts appreciation for the southwest metro. "We are going to create an amphitheater and sculpture garden and have sort of an area that's open to the public all year round," says Rob Thompson, director of Outreach and Development. There are also plans to offer theater and arts courses to the public after school hours.

The move will take place in June, and classes will begin the following August. Enrollment will increase up to 450 to 500 students for the upcoming school year.

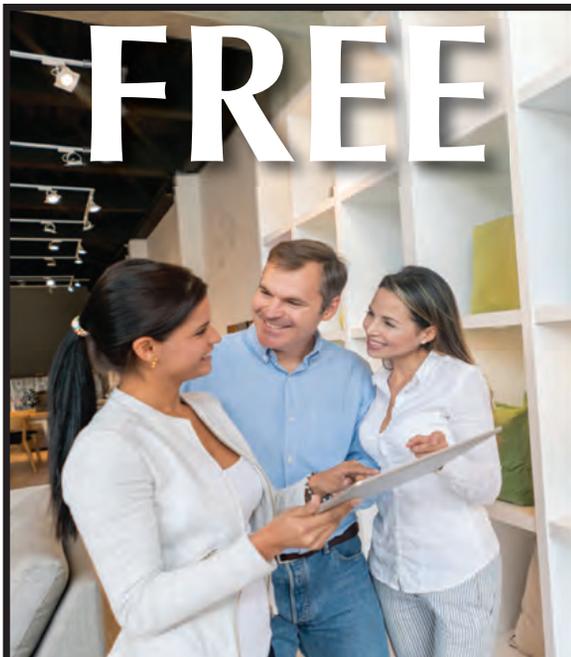
Although the school has big plans for growth, its core mission won't change. "The arts appreciation and excellence that we strive for isn't going to change just because we're moving four miles away," Thompson says. "We are going to keep that same dynamic and that same community that we have worked so hard over 13 years to create." **SWM**



ENROLLING AT MAIN STREET SCHOOL OF PERFORMING ARTS

Complete an enrollment form online at msspahs.org/prospective/enrollment. Incoming freshman attend a placement and registration workshop day in March or April. If enrollment is full, the next available opening will be filled based on a lottery system.

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