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[Raue Center stresses variety in new season](#)

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The Raue Center for the Arts in Crystal Lake has announced its upcoming slate, and it is loaded with a healthy balance of family-friendly and popular material.

The season kicks off with a rousing performance by Tito Puente, Jr.

“We’re excited about that for a few reasons,” said Amy Malpica, director of marketing. “He is very high-energy, mambo-style music, but he is also a part of a new initiative we have this year, which is a celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month. We’re excited about this because the Hispanic population is obviously a big part of our community that we want to celebrate and make sure we are fulfilling our mission, which is to provide the arts to all.”

The celebration continues on Sept. 25 with Agua Dolce, a hands-on food-and-drink event that will feature unique flavors of Latin America.

“You can make your own cocktail and sample some dishes as well,” she said.

October gets muy caliente with “The Passionate Frida” on Oct. 1, presented by Crystal Lake’s Judith Svalander Dance Theater; and Uniendo Fronteras on Oct. 15, presented by Ballet Folklorico Huehucoyotl, Elgin Community College’s in-residence dance ensemble.

“You will see the culture and beauty of Mexico through folkloric dance,” she said. “Another great initiative we have this year is the Williams Street Repertory, which is an in-house production company that is in-residence at the Raue Center for Performing Arts. They will develop, create and perform the shows.”

Their season kicks off with “The Rocky Horror Picture Show” on Oct. 21 and includes David Sedaris’ “Santaland Diaries” Dec. 1-3.

“That will be a lot of fun. It’s a very witty story about the desperation of someone who takes on the job of an elf at a department store and what they go through,” she said.

Other shows include the classic, “I Love You, You’re Perfect, Now Change” on Feb. 10-11, and “Run to the Capulets, Raise up the Montagues” on April 21.

“Of course, we have other great acts, like Bob Saget coming on Nov. 5,” Malpica said.

Speaking of laughter, Lucy’s Comedy Café returns every month with a night of stand-up comedy. Look

also for Lucy's Music Café, featuring local musicians.

"Cocktails with Larry Miller" featuring the actor from "Seinfeld" and "The Late Show" is a night of stand-up comedy on Nov. 26. Mike Toomey's TV and Me, on Jan. 14, takes the audience back in time to television of the 1960s and '70s.

"He related his childhood television watching, and how that shaped his adult life," she said. "It's really, really funny. He's got dead-on impersonations of TV celebrities and little sound bites. It's a great, funny show."

Finally, 3 Blonde Moms are back by popular demand on May 12, with their semi-scripted stories of motherhood in suburbia.

Holiday magic

"We have a great holiday lineup with Voices in Harmony Dec. 11 and the Lakeside Singers Dec. 4," she said.

There is also the Northwest Indiana Symphony Orchestra Holiday Pops concert on Dec. 9, and two performances of "The Nutcracker" Dec. 17 and 18, performed by the Berkshire Ballet Theater of McHenry County.

"It's an ongoing holiday classic," she said. "It's a lot of fun to see all the kids get involved."

Speaking of children, the Raue has plenty of family-friendly programming this season, beginning with "SkippyJon Jones" on Nov. 5. Then there's Clifford the Big Red Dog Live on March 16, just in time for Clifford's 50th anniversary.

"Freedom Bound" on Feb. 3 talks about the Underground Railroad; and finally, look for fairy-tale mash-ups with "Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales" on March 23.

Music

"Ricky Nelson Remembered" opens the new year on Jan. 13, 2012, when Matthew and Gunnar Nelson honor their father, the late pop singer Ricky Nelson, by performing his hit classics.

Beatles tribute band American English performs March 3. Eagles tribute act Heartache Tonight performs Oct. 8, and One Night of Queen returns March 17.

Tartan Terrors bring a bit of bawdy, Celtic rock to the Raue on March 10. "They do a little bit of music, comedy and dance. They are phenomenal."

Fundraisers

There are several fundraisers throughout the year, beginning with the Center's biggest annual fundraiser, the Stargazer's Ball on Sept. 23. It's a night of music, dancing, cocktails, a tasting station and silent and live auctions, she said.

Actor Clay Jenkinson performs two shows: the first one out of character on Nov. 18, and the second as Teddy Roosevelt titled "What Would Teddy Do?" on Nov. 19.

A Hold 'em tournament is planned for January, and An Evening of Percussion featuring performances by the Crystal Lake Strikers' All Star Drumline will be on Feb. 25.

There's also the 10th annual Nothin' Up My Sleeve night of magic on April 14, and the Bob Blazier Run for the Arts on May 6.

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