

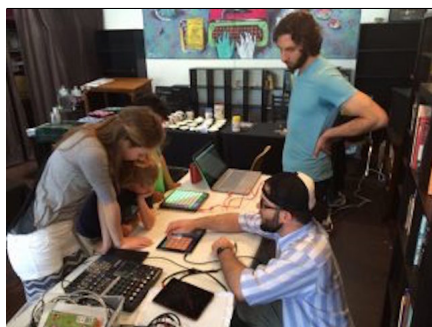
Written by Marcus Tso



Remember creating meaningful art and music projects in school? Those exciting moments during our childhood helped make us who we are today; creative, bold and expressive adults. Now, kids face looming budget cuts, tuition increases and teacher shortages that threaten their very development. Art and music are not only important to children — our entire community benefits everyday from talented people who enjoy playing an instrument or painting a picture. And of course, most of us enjoy simply, “turning on and tuning out” with a great pair of headphones listening to our favorite musician. Fortunately, the arts are still alive and well throughout the Valley of the Sun. From live musical performances to educational opportunities and thought-provoking curriculum, there is something for everyone.

Responsible for hitting all the right notes through a partnership program is Community Music @ the Center ([CM@C](#)). Launched in 2016, the series allows participants to engage in affordable music classes, such as singing, songwriting, creation of beats and learning to play instruments. The Phoenix Center for the Arts (PCA), Arizona State University's (ASU), Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts (HIDA) and School of Community Resources (SCR), came together for this initiative.

Rob Koehler, program director of CM@C, and Roger Mantie, assistant professor of music education at ASU's HIDA, discussed the development of the series with AZ Foothills. The origin of the project started when Dale Larsen, of the School Resources and Development, set up a meeting with me, Joseph Benesh and Leah Roberts. “Joseph and I followed up with a series of discussions, I submitted a Herberger Project Grant, and the rest is history,” says Koehler. “The program started out from a desire on the part of the PCA to expand its music service offerings to the community and a desire on part of ASU to provide instructional expertise aimed at serving the Downtown Phoenix community.”



Now, just how important is this community initiative? As Mantie and Koehler put it “It’s emphasizing the PCA as a center for community music.” Koehler adds, “[Phoenix] changed considerably in recent years, but the legacy of the Downtown core still exists. This is a community that has many established traditions that need to be respected. However, it is also a community in transition that deserves to be served by public institutions.”

Koehler explain that the whole idea behind [CM@C](#) isn’t to “tell people what they should do. It is to serve people’s interests. As we learn more, the program will continue to evolve.” Each of the organizations missions is interconnected to strengthen the artistic and civic lives of those in the community. A vision for [CM@C](#)’s is to transform it into “an ongoing series of programs that help empower people of all-ages through meaningful and qualified musical facilitations,” says Mantie.

Music helps us express our artistic side. As a result, we can achieve great satisfaction and an improved quality of life. Music has the capacity to change our lives and enrich learning. Together, we all play a part in embracing the arts and because of local partnerships and a community of music educators, we now have a place where we can engage in music-based experiences.

Students interested in participating in the program are not required to audition. Prior experience is also not required and the program is open to all age groups. Courses are six weeks in duration at a harmonious cost of just \$30 to \$59. So, activate your song-writing-abilities, strike a cord, hit a high note, dance —you will never miss a beat. Come discover the realm of music that can be a delightful endeavor. Classes start March 10, 2017 and if you are looking to extend your learning after the class ends, [CM@C](#) has available resources for future opportunities.

To learn more about Community Music @ The Center, or to register for classes, call 602.254.3100 or visit their website: <http://phoenixcenterforthearts.org>.