

Tuesday, September 8, 2009

\$18 million arts venue debuts at Newport Coast school

Top-end technology for theater, music, film and more.

By **JEFF OVERLEY**

THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

NEWPORT BEACH – Starving artists they ain't.

Young thespians and virtuosos at Sage Hill School, a private high school in Newport Coast, now have – ahem – state-of-the-art everything, thanks to a new \$18-million wing equipped with the latest technology for theater, film and more.

For a campus where musicals have often been staged on basketball courts inside rented tents, it's a big step up.

"Like going from a buckboard (horse-drawn wagon) to a Rolls-Royce," is how Chris Marshall, arts department chairman, described the difference.

Dubbed "Studio," the 30,000-square-foot arts building debuts this week and will give each of the school's 400-plus students the best of the best, such as digital theater acoustics that let crews amplify or muffle echoes with the touch of a keyboard.

The set-up can "make it sound like you're in a cathedral" by virtually "changing the size of the room," Marshall said.

While emphasizing ceramics, dance, choral music and other classical art genres, the department also embraces film and sound editing that might lure in less "artsy" types, said Torrey Olins, manager of Sage Hill's alumni program.

"Not what you think of when you think of the traditional (definition) of art," she said of the high-tech fields students will encounter.

And the Studio building is probably not what returning students think of when they think of Sage Hill's arts department. Looking around the new digs – with the slate floors, exposed cedar planks and tall windows – senior Jazmin Gardner had a simple description of the old classrooms: "Nothing like this."

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