

Turning Outreach into an Art

Cain Center for the Arts program reaches 8,000 local students



A conceptual rendering of the Cain Center for the Arts in Cornelius.



Members of the Charlotte Ballet performed for members of Lake Norman Charter Middle School earlier this year.

In a world brimming with digital distractions, do our children stand a chance of appreciating the arts? Justin Dionne says they do, and he can tell you the exact moment that confirmed it for him.

"A Charlotte Symphony string quartet was performing for an auditorium full of children in Mooresville," says Dionne, executive director of Cain Center for the Arts. "I was wondering how this would work. Classical music could be a tough sell for today's kids. But as soon as the music started, I saw a couple

hundred children who were mesmerized."

That's the magic of the arts, and it's what the Cain Center brought to more than 8,000 local students through a 2019 outreach program. Schools in north Mecklenburg, south Iredell, east Lincoln and west Cabarrus counties were visited by esteemed arts organizations including Charlotte Ballet and Children's Theatre of Charlotte. Cain Center is seeking sponsors for a second round of outreach next spring.

Access to the arts can change

lives whether you grow up to be an opera singer or an accountant, says Dionne. "It teaches leadership, team work and communication. No matter what field you enter, exposure to the arts will make you better at whatever you do."

Fortunately for the Lake Norman region, Cain Center for the Arts plans to bring the magic of the arts to people of all ages. With a foundational gift of \$5 million from Bill and Ericka Cain, a \$2 million leadership gift from Kathryn Keele, and additional founding donations,

the nonprofit is more than \$15 million through a \$25 million fundraising campaign for a downtown Cornelius space dedicated to performances, exhibitions, education and more.

"We want Cain Center for the Arts to represent the artistic visions and identities of the communities that make up this region," says Dionne. — *By Grace Kennedy, photography provided by Cain Center for the Arts*



To learn how you can help, visit www.cainarts.org.