

StageWEST Arts Collective

Rebrands for the Future

CELEBRATING 39 YEARS OF ARTISTIC EXCELLENCE IN GARRETT COUNTY

Written by:

Shelia McCracken

Garrett Lakes Arts Festival (GLAF) has officially rebranded to StageWEST Arts Collective, marking a significant milestone in the organization's nearly four-decade journey as a cornerstone of the cultural and artistic community in Garrett County and the surrounding region. With support from the Maryland State Arts Council, StageWEST is proud to unveil a refreshed identity that better reflects its year-round commitment to performing arts, education, and engagement for all.

The rebranding effort comes as part of a comprehensive strategic planning process, which included feedback from over 300 respondents and in-depth interviews with more than 20 key stakeholders. Through this process, StageWEST has reaffirmed its mission and vision, ensuring it remains a relevant, sustainable, and inclusive cultural force for years to come.

A RICH HISTORY OF COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

StageWEST's origins trace back to 1986, when a small group of passionate local residents, including violinist Erick Friedman and Garrett County native Kathryn Sincell, came together with a shared vision: to rekindle



the spirit of the Mountain Chautauqua and promote cultural and artistic activities in the region. Their efforts led to the establishment of a music festival, and over time, the organization expanded to support a broader array of performing arts.

From the beginning, the vision was clear: to provide the community with access to high-quality performances, promote education in the arts, and offer residents and visitors alike an opportunity to engage with the creative process. The roots of StageWEST have always been deeply connected to the people of Garrett County, and that connection continues to be at the heart of the organization today.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS — Front left to right: Frank Shap, Barry Weinberg, Laura Dahlan, Lenina Close, Amy Bortz (Board Chair), Marian Emr (Secretary), Matia Vanderbilt, Ruth Beitzel, and Fred Fox.

Back Row left to right: Sue Arnson, Laura Robinson, and Andrew Harvey (Vice Chair).

Not Pictured: Mary Helen Spears, Suzi Sincell and Shelia McCracken (Executive Director).

NEW VISION AND MISSION

In its rebranding, StageWEST has refined its Vision and Mission to provide clear direction and inspiration for the future:

- **Vision:** *"Inspiring people through performing arts."*
- **Mission:** *"Present performing arts that entertain, educate, engage, and inspire while fostering a lifelong appreciation for the arts and humanities."*

The new name, StageWEST, reflects the organization's broader focus and commitment to inclusivity. While the name has a subtle nod to the region of Western Maryland, it also deliberately avoids geographical or demographic constraints, embracing a more universal approach. The new logo, featuring varied font treatments, symbolizes the diversity of programming StageWEST offers, with an updated color palette that bridges recognition from its GLAF roots.

The new identity is playful, clean, and designed to appeal to both existing patrons and potential new audiences. The fresh visual aesthetic is part of the organization's ongoing efforts to remain dynamic and adaptable to the changing cultural landscape while maintaining a strong sense of community identity.

CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO THE COMMUNITY:

StageWEST's rebranding does not change its core mission: to offer world-class arts programming that

is both accessible and inclusive. The new Performing Arts Center at Garrett College serves as the heart of StageWEST's performances, where audiences can enjoy a wide range of productions from symphonies and jazz ensembles to ballet, Celtic dance, and even magic shows. All performances are open to the public, with students and children receiving complimentary admission when accompanied by a paying adult.

Beyond public performances, StageWEST is deeply invested in supporting local students and fostering creativity within the community. Through the Arts in Education program, StageWEST has developed an essential partnership with Garrett County Public Schools (GCPS) to help support the Maryland State Department of Education's fine arts curricula requirements. For 39 years, StageWEST has been a vibrant force in Garrett County, hosting 9-12 performances annually, including 3-5 educational outreach events. This collaboration allows StageWEST to provide free arts programs across multiple disciplines, including music, dance, and theater, that complement the school's existing educational framework. This partnership benefits students in all grade levels, ensuring that they receive exposure to the arts while meeting state educational standards.

In addition to its work with GCPS, StageWEST also invites students from Calvary Christian Academy and homeschool communities to participate in its programming. The organization is committed to fostering hands-on learning through intimate masterclasses, where students receive one-on-one instruction from visiting artists. These



educational workshops are designed to be both fun and informative, making arts education accessible to all students, regardless of background.

Through its outreach initiatives, StageWEST continues to provide vital arts education that encourages young people to appreciate the creative process, think critically, and engage with the world around them.

A DIVERSE 2025 SEASON: EXPANDING ARTS ACCESS

StageWEST's future is bright with a full slate of exciting performances and events on the horizon for the 2025 season. Some of the highlights include:

- **Maryland Symphony Orchestra** (June 14, 2025) – A breathtaking performance by one of the state's premier orchestras, bringing classical and contemporary music to Garrett County.
- **Jim Curry's Tribute to John Denver: "Take Me Home"** (June 20, 2025) – A heartfelt tribute concert to the legendary musician John Denver, celebrating his musical legacy and enduring influence on the world.
- **2nd Annual Flying Ivories Dueling Pianos Fundraising Event** (August 16, 2025) – A lively and interactive fundraising event where two pianists go head-to-head in a musical duel. The event, dubbed "Keys for a Cause," will help raise crucial funds to support StageWEST's ongoing arts programming.
- **The Magic Duel Comedy Show** (September 13, 2025) – A unique and entertaining performance blending magic and comedy, where two talented magicians go head-to-head in a lighthearted battle of tricks and humor, bringing laughter and wonder to the community.



Top to bottom: A few of the upcoming events for 2025: Seth Kibel, premier woodwind specialist (July 26, 2025); The Magic Duel Comedy Show, (September 13, 2025); and The Accidental Hero, a multi-media one-man show (November 2, 2025).

See artsandentertainment.org for Season Schedule



- **Darrah Carr Dance**

(October 17, 2025) –

A captivating performance from Darrah Carr Dance, bringing the vibrant energy of Celtic dance to Garrett County. Known for its innovative fusion of traditional Irish step dance and contemporary movement, this performance is sure to inspire audiences with its athleticism and artistry.

Shelia McCracken, Executive Director of Stage WEST, shared, “These events, alongside Stage WEST’s continued outreach and performance efforts, demonstrate the organization’s dedication to creating an accessible and inclusive cultural environment where everyone can experience the joy and inspiration of the arts.”

As Stage WEST enters its next chapter, the future looks incredibly promising. With the rebranding effort complete, Stage WEST is poised to continue as a vital cultural resource for Garrett County and the surrounding region. Its diverse offerings and commitment to arts education ensure that the arts will remain a vibrant part of life in Western Maryland for generations to come.

Stage WEST Arts Collective (formerly Garrett Lakes Arts Festival) is a non-profit organization dedicated to presenting diverse performing arts that entertain, educate, engage, and inspire audiences in Garrett County, Maryland, and the surrounding region. Through year-round performances, educational outreach, and community events, Stage WEST fosters a lifelong appreciation for the arts and humanities while celebrating the cultural heritage of the region.



THE DEEP CREEK EXPERIENCE

EXPLORE THE GREAT OUTDOORS

 **Maryland**
GARRETT COUNTY

888.387.5237 | visitdeepcreek.com



Where the grind never stops.

TRADER'S
COFFEE HOUSE 

301.387.9246 | traderscoffeehouse.com
21311 Garrett Highway Oakland, MD 21550

ESTD **BRENDA'S** 2001
NEW YORK STYLE PIZZERIA

Great food with a lake view!

301.387.1007 | brendaspizzeria.com
21311 Garrett Hwy Oakland, MD 21550

Order Online!




FIREWATER
KITCHEN + BAR

SIP. DINE. UNWIND.

301.387.6408 | firewaterkitchen.com
20128 Garrett Highway Oakland, MD 21550




ACE'S RUN
RESTAURANT & PUB

A dining experience the whole family will enjoy!

acesrun.com
301.387.6688
20160 Garrett Hwy
Oakland, MD 21550

Visit our website for updated hours!