

Paper Mache for 10-17-25 by David Read

For all you culture-vultures out there, we've got an exciting doubleheader coming up this weekend in Yuba-Sutter. First up, our production of the Tony Award winning Broadway musical, "Next to Normal" opens tonight at the Sutter Theater Center for the Arts. And then the Yuba Sutter Symphony performs its annual Fall Classics Concert at St. Andrew Presbyterian Church on Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon. This got me thinking about why local community theaters and local symphony orchestras matter. What does it say about a community and its support of local cultural institutions including museums? We're not talking about the big national institutions like the Kennedy Center, the National Symphony Orchestra and the Smithsonian museums. Convergence Theatre Company, the Yuba Sutter Symphony and Sutter County Museum are as local as it gets. Sure, some of us stray into Sacramento or even to far off places like San Francisco for cultural enrichment, but for a big city kid like me, I have always been so amazed and impressed by what I have experienced culturally right here in town since I moved here sixteen years ago.

Why does any of this matter in the overall scheme of things? Local cultural institutions play an important role in the life of a community. They are not just for performances or exhibitions, they are living spaces where history, creativity, and community identity converge. Their impact extends well beyond entertainment, shaping education, and supporting economic development, social connection, and civic pride. I am a firm believer that community-based cultural institutions reflect the values, stories, and aspirations of the people who live there. When residents attend a play at a local theater, listen to a symphony concert, or walk through a museum exhibit, they are participating in a shared cultural experience that reinforces a sense of belonging. These institutions preserve and interpret local history, showcase community talent, and give residents tangible reasons to be proud of where they live.

Cultural spaces are powerful informal classrooms. Museums bring history, science, and art to life; community theaters offer hands-on opportunities for performance, stagecraft, and storytelling; symphonies cultivate appreciation for music and foster musical education. Children and adults alike can explore new ideas, develop creative skills, and experience artistic excellence without needing to travel far from home. This accessibility makes arts and culture a part of daily life rather than a distant luxury.

As I have often said before, art and culture are powerful economic engines. A thriving cultural scene attracts visitors, supports nearby restaurants and shops, and encourages downtown investments. Cultural events create ripple effects—people attend a concert, have dinner, and explore the area, generating economic activity that sustains local businesses. Additionally, cultural institutions create jobs for artists, technicians, administrators, and educators, strengthening the local economy. A community theater production or museum program can unite a diverse audience in a shared experience, fostering dialogue and mutual understanding. These spaces also give voice to underrepresented communities, allowing stories to be shared and heard in powerful, inclusive ways.

Access to arts and culture simply makes communities more vibrant and humane and enhance our quality of life. A strong cultural infrastructure improves livability, attracts new residents, and helps retain those who already call the community home. Local cultural institutions are essential cornerstones of resilient, creative, and connected communities. They nurture the spirit of a place—and the people who live there. So, what do you say? Never been to a play at the Sutter Theater Center for the Arts or a Yuba Sutter Symphony concert? Give it a try even if it's a bit out of your wheelhouse. Money back guarantee. See me for a full refund if you are in anyway disappointed!