

## [On the road with TCA: Performing Arts Center at Sam Houston State University](#)

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By Jim Bob McMillan, TCA deputy director

I was lucky to have an individualized tour of the new [Sam Houston State University Performing Arts Center](#) by Dana Nicolay, College of Arts and Sciences associate dean, professor of dance and chairman of the [Huntsville Arts Council](#), on September 23, 2010. Accompanying me on the tour was Linda Pease, director of the [Wynne Home Art Center](#) and the [Huntsville Cultural District](#).



Kinetic Sculpture by Tim Prentice on Exterior of SHSU Performing Arts Center

The board of regents of the Texas State University System recently announced that the new Performing Arts Center would be named in honor of outgoing [President James Gaertner](#) and his wife Nancy. Linda, Dana and I were lucky enough to have Nancy Gaertner join us on our tour, and we stopped by James Gaertner's new office in the Center during the tour.

“Nancy and I have enjoyed the performances of our students, faculty and visiting professionals in music, dance and theatre and been so impressed with their talents. We have among the best programs in dance, theatre and music in the region, exceptionally talented students and faculty and now we have facilities that are equal to their talents.



Photography Collage by Joe Aker

“I believe our new concert hall is the equal to the best in Texas,” James said. “I can’t wait for students and the community to experience performances here.”



Glass Sculpture by Jason Lawson

The recently completed \$38.5 million 91,976 square foot Performing Arts Center features a recital hall that seats 175, a dance theater that seats 160, and a concert hall of approximately 800 seats. It also features an outdoor performance area, practice rooms for dance and music, offices, shop and backstage areas, as well as beautiful public art.

“We are very excited to have a location that brings the dance, music and theater departments together,” Dana Nicolay said as we toured the facility and saw how the new building connects to the University Theater Center and increases set construction and storage.



Sculpture by James Surls at SHSU Performing Arts Center

Linda Pease sat on the committee that chose the public art for the center, and she said the selection process was handled very professionally. Showcased in the grand entry is a hanging sculpture by [James Surls](#), internationally known artist, alumnus of Sam Houston State and 2006 [Texas State Visual Artist 3D](#).

The new building also features installations of sculpture, mosaics and murals that were commissioned from Texas artists for the center, including a glass bas relief by Kathleen Ash from Manchaca, a hanging lighted glass sculpture by Jason Lawson from Fischer, and collages by nationally recognized photographer Joe Aker and Sam Houston State University faculty member Rebecca Finley. In addition, the committee commissioned Connecticut based Tim Prentice, to design a kinetic sculpture for the exterior of the building.



Bas Relief by Kathleen Ash

Linda Pease stated that members of the committee felt strongly that Charles Pebworth had to be included in the art for the Center. Pebworth first came to Sam Houston State University in 1957 as an instructor in basic design. He soon began teaching painting and

before long developed and taught a course in ceramics and eventually sculpture. He stayed at SHSU for 36 years, retiring in 1993, and was a seminal force in the art education arena.



Photography by Rebecca Finley

To mark the grand opening of the Center, Sam Houston State University will present an evening filled with performances of music, dance and theater during a celebration on Sept. 30, 2010. The evening will include a ribbon cutting, performances to showcase the talents of the departments within the Performing Arts Center and opportunities to tour the building.

The new Performing Art Center will feature several performances throughout the year by students, faculty and other professionals, including a concert by the [Houston Symphony Orchestra](#) on Oct. 29, 2010 and performances by the [Dominic Walsh Dance Theater](#) (TCA [Texas Touring Roster](#)) on Oct. 29-30, 2010.

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