

Students Ready To Shine For SIUE East St. Louis Center For The Performing Arts Annual Holiday Performance

by Megan Wieser

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EAST ST. LOUIS - With measured concentration and deliberate moves, fingers poise over piano keys, eyes follow sheet notes and feet keep step to rhythmic beats – all to musical tunes of Christmastime favorites.

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville Center for the Performing Arts students will present their free annual holiday performance, which will be a mini-presentation, at 6 p. m. Thursday, Dec. 16 in the Multipurpose Room in Building D at the East St. Louis Higher Education Campus, 601 James R. Thompson Blvd. in East St. Louis.

“Our students and staff have been fervently practicing to present a wonderful, exciting and joyous performance,” said Performing Arts Program Director Homer Simmons. “Our annual holiday performance promises to be entertaining and uplifting.

“We will follow federal and SIUE COVID-19 guidelines during the concert, and students will be masked while performing.”



Performances will range from musical numbers on the piano, chimes, and drums to dance numbers that include jazz, ballet, hip-hop, and Dunham Technique.

Some of what the audience can expect to hear includes “Jingle Bells” on the piano and “Sleigh Ride” on the chimes. Such dance numbers as “A Christmas Dream” and “Frecube” will be performed.

“The students’ ability to display a wide variety of talent is commendable,” said Jack Williams, Performing Arts coordinator.

Performing Arts teachers include: Mary Jo Pembroke, PhD, piano and chimes instructor, Gerald Babatunde Williams, African drum and dance choreographer; and Jay’ Kayla Winford, Dunham Technique, hip-hop, and modern dance choreographer.



The [SIUE East St. Louis Center for the Performing Arts](#) has a long, rich history. The legendary dancer, anthropologist, and social activist Katherine Dunham founded the Center for Performing Arts at the SIUE East St. Louis Center in 1964. At its peak in the 1990s, the East St. Louis Center for the Performing Arts provided year-round instruction to more than 1,000 youth and became a training ground for professional artists of all disciplines. For decades, the East St. Louis Center for the Performing Arts provided performing arts classes to students and community members to develop local talent and to cultivate a love of the arts. Classes often culminated in musical and theatrical productions.

With a focus on empowering people and strengthening communities, the [SIUE East St. Louis Center](#) is dedicated to improving the lives of families and individuals - from pre-school through adult - in the Metro East. Head Start/Early Head Start and a charter high school are among the programs that offer the community renewed hope and an opportunity to reach educational, career, and life goals. The Center also assigns first priority to encouraging, supporting, and improving the educational success of the residents of East St. Louis and surrounding urban communities. The Center provides comprehensive programs, services, and training in the areas of education, health, social services, and the arts.