Hancock College unveils $5.5 million renovation project

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Mark Boher, Artistic Director at PCPA, points the new catwalks at the PCPA Marian Theater, the theater under went a $5.5 million dollar renovation including two new catwalks for better lighting.

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The Pacific Conservatory of Performing Arts this month capped the majority of a nine-month renovation project and registered record-breaking first-day ticket sales, just a week before launching its new season.

Artistic director Mark Boher said during a tour of additions to the PCPA building on Hancock College’s campus that “Mary Poppins” — the first show in the Theaterfest lineup — brought in more than $40,000 in the first day of ticket sales Oct. 11.

“It’s going to be packed for ‘Mary Poppins,’” he said.

Boher led reporters in a tour through internal hallways, backstage areas and upper level structures of Marian and Severson theaters Monday as he pointed out finished elements of a $5.5 million renovation project.

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Visible differences include updated floor, wall and mirror finishes for the PCPA dance studio, backstage dressing areas and restrooms; a new roof for the Severson Theatre; new carpeting; an extended lobby area; and a built-in concession stand.

But Booher said the audience may not visibly notice the most costly changes that impact both performance and audience experience such as:

• An additional hallway that will allow actors to move from backstage to stage and between theaters without cutting through the paint shop;

• New heating, ventilation and air-conditioning systems;

• A new fire alarm system that will allow workers to better control smoke and haze effects with fewer false alarms;

• Lighting in the Marian Theatre that allows users to electronically change colors and control positioning;

• A two-level curved catwalk above the Marian Theatre stage;

Final updates such as door hardware, last coats of paint
and signage will continue through January.

The PCPA building has not been renovated since the Hancock location opened in 1968. Booher said the recent work is part of the college’s effort to address building code compliance issues, add greater wheelchair accessibility and improve general functionality.

He said the renovations did not result in greater seating capacity but that everything that happens backstage affects performance on stage.

"When you show up to work and it’s a professional workspace, you do better work," he said.