

Community Involvement -- A Los Alamos Tradition in Performing Arts

When young scientists and their families came to Los Alamos in the 1940s they worked six days a week but still found time to socialize with music and dancing. Many of our performing arts groups originated in those days and continue today. Some newer organizations reflect that same zeal for expression and “work hard to play hard” attitude.

The Los Alamos Big Band has 20 members performing at 10-12 public and private events year-round. Their playlist adheres closely to the Swing Era classics that inspired the soldiers and revelers of yesteryear with compositions like “String of Pearls,” “Don’t Sit Under the Apple Tree,” “Route 66,” “Take the “A” Train,” and “Pennsylvania 6-5000.”

The band includes four trumpets, four trombones, five saxophones, and a three-piece rhythm section of piano, drums and bass, plus four vocalists. All members are volunteer, and most are from Los Alamos with a small handful from Santa Fe and Espanola.

The dedicated players rehearse at least once a month and the Band enjoys a good following, including many high school and college-age dancers. “This music is great, it’s part of our American culture,” says Jan McDonald, who has been the group’s music director since its start 20 years ago. “We always includes some of the great songs by Tommy Dorsey, Glenn Miller and other great composers of the era.”

The Los Alamos Light Opera started in 1954 with a production of Finnegan’s Rainbow, and Betty Lou Stein was there. Stein was a singer and dancer before joining the Marine Corps during World War II, and then coming to Los Alamos with her husband who worked for the Atomic Energy Commission. She’s since raised four children here and worked on almost every Light Opera production doing everything from singing to producing. “There’s generally at least 150 people involved at a minimum,” she says. “I always like the people, and getting involved in a production, seeing it come together after all the hard work and dedication.” During rehearsals, cast and crew work three nights a

Fast Facts: Los Alamos Performing Arts

Schedules: visit.losalamos.com/events

Contacts:

Los Alamos Arts Council 663-0477

Los Alamos Big Band, 505-662-6272;

Los Alamos Concert Association 662-9000

Los Alamos Little Theater 662-5493

Dance Arts Los Alamos 672-9462

New Mexico Dance Theater, 505-662-6638

Los Alamos Meeting & Visitor Bureau

662-8105 [mvp@losalamos.org](mailto:mvb@losalamos.org),

Lodging/Packages:

Call Los Alamos Meeting & Visitor Bureau at

1-800-444-0707 or go to the web visit.losalamos.com

LOS ALAMOS *New Mexico*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
visit.losalamos.com

CONTACT: Los Alamos Meeting & Visitor Bureau
800-444-0707 or 505-662-8105

week, and more the week before and during performances. The group's last production was *The Music Man*, but other large productions have included *My Fair Lady*, *Camelot*, and many Gilbert and Sullivan shows. The Light Opera produces a show every other year and its next production will be *A Midsummer Night's Dream* this August at an outdoor venue to be announced.

The Los Alamos Little Theater stages five productions throughout the year, and also hosts play readings and acting and directing workshops. Between 20 and 75 people are involved with each production, all volunteers from throughout the community -- students, scientists, housewives, doctors, etc. "The Los Alamos Little Theatre provides an exciting and dynamic opportunity for people in our community to express themselves creatively," says Patrick Kelly, a volunteer and spokesperson. "Acting, carpentry, makeup, wardrobe, building and landscaping, light and sound engineering, and many other diverse talents are necessary to make each production come together." "Los Alamos Little Theatre was founded in 1943 as a direct result of the isolated experience that came from living in a Secret City," says Kelly. "Things have certainly changed, but Los Alamos still has something of a 'small town charm' and people enjoy that sense of community."

Dance Arts Los Alamos (DALA) and New Mexico Dance Theater offer professional dance instruction for kids and adults, including ballet, modern, tap, jazz dance and yoga classes. Several performances are produced each year, including the DALA production of "The Nutcracker" ... a Los Alamos tradition. "When guest artists visit we offer master classes and focus on the educational opportunities we can offer the community," says director Valerie Silk.

Complete information and updates as well as lodging, maps, and other local information are available at Los Alamos' online visitor guide at visit.losalamos.com