

A celebration of the arts

Annual Lincoln Park event marks 20th anniversary

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DANVILLE — For 20 years, Danville's arts community has gathered together in the shade of Lincoln Park's towering trees and celebrated the rich vein of culture that enhances life in this city.

Each year, the celebration of the artistic talent that makes Danville unique grows as new artists and spectators participate. This year's event on June 21 and 22 will be no exception.

"We're really excited about this year's 20th anniversary of Arts in the Park," Larry Weatherford, Arts in the Park president, said. "I've been involved with this almost since its inception. I've seen it grow and evolve year by year."

This year's event will continue the long-standing tradition of an outdoor art show established by Danville Art League.

The league initiated Art (singular) in the Park in 1955. That has grown to include more exhibitors from more states and expanded to include craftspeople who work in a variety of media, as well as members of the Danville Art League. When performances were added 20 years ago, the event's name was changed to Arts (plural) in the Park and even more local talent had a chance to shine.

According to Weatherford, "This year's onstage performance schedule includes many of our local performing arts organizations and musical groups, and as always, we've added some special features. Exorna, a Celtic/Irish band that's based out of Bloomington, Ill., will join us this year.

"Over the years, we've scheduled a bagpipe band when we were able to match their busy schedule with ours, and this is one of those years," he said. "We were able to get the Fountain Trust Pipe Band to be a part of the event. Both of those groups will perform on Sunday afternoon."

Many long-time favorite local groups will appear at AITP this year. The event provides a sampler of the variety of arts groups in Danville, but with no charge for admission.

DSO

Danville Symphony Orchestra Music Director Jeremy Swerling called the weekend celebration of the arts "the only significant outdoor arts event in the county."

Swerling called the Lincoln Park bandshell and the park that surrounds it "a very nice venue.

"It took us many years to get the shell built," he added.

The maestro agreed that event serves as an opportunity for community participation in the arts.

"We use it to showcase local talent," Swerling said. "And a free public concert is part of our mission."



File Photo / Commercial-News

Michigan's Sherry Hatt talks about her stone artwork with a potential customer at a past Arts in the Park.

DLO

The equivalent of a free ticket to a sampler from Danville Light Opera's past, present and future seasons will be offered as part of the event. Members of the community theater group will perform songs from each group of shows.

"We try to include as many group numbers as possible from the past season," Belinda Smith, DLO board member, said. She and Kathleen Spain-Swiersz co-chair the musical theater group's portion of Arts in the Park.

"We want to give as many people as possible an opportunity to perform during this event," Smith said. She is the wife of Commercial-News editor Larry Smith.

In addition to highlights from last season's shows and "Do Black Patent Leather Shoes Really Reflect Up?" These shows haven't been cast yet, so veteran DLO performers have been chosen to sing selections from them.

"We hope these performances spark interest in people to audition," Smith said.

Laurel's

It's been 17 years since students from Laurel School of Dance first appeared at AITP.

"We love to do this," Laurel Soderstrom, the school's owner, said. "And since the stage has been built and we have dressing rooms, it's a very professional environment.

"I bring only my top dancers to perform,"

Soderstrom said. "We're not doing a recital. It's the major numbers from our competitions that the audience sees."

Dignitary

One first-time guest at Arts in the Park is almost 200-years-old, and so is his wife.

President Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln will attend both days of AITP and speak about Gettysburg. Max and Donna Daniels, two of the nation's top presenters, will arrive in Danville Friday night.

"With the Lincoln Bicentennial Celebration getting under way this year, we felt that it was a wonderful opportunity to tie AITP into that," Weatherford said.

"During the course of the weekend, the President will be accompanied by a military escort. Members of the Illiana Civil War Historical Society will serve in that capacity."

Weatherford added, "We truly appreciate the community support that helps us make Arts in the Park happen every summer."

EVENT SCHEDULE

SATURDAY, JUNE 21

10 a.m.: Red Mask Children's Theater.

11 a.m.: Laurel School of Dance.

Noon: Lincoln Park Theatre Company.

1 p.m.: Danville Chapter of Sweet Adelines.

1:30p.m.: Visual arts awards.

2 p.m.: Wabash Valley Area Band.

3:30p.m.: The Lincolns on Gettysburg.

4:30 p.m.: Doc Ashton and the Root Canals.

6 p.m.: Vermilion Festival Chorus.

8 p.m.: Danville Symphony Orchestra.

SUNDAY, JUNE 22

10 a.m.: Ensemble Schubertiad.

12:15 p.m.: The Lincolns on Gettysburg.

1 p.m.: Exorna (Celtic/Irish band).

2 p.m.: Fountain Trust Pipe Band (bagpipers).

3 p.m.: Danville Barbershop Chorus.

4 p.m.: Dave Schroeder Quartet.

5 p.m.: Danville Light Opera.

7 p.m.: Danville Municipal Band.

A complete Arts in the Park schedule will appear in Wednesday's Commercial-News.