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## Let's Dance at Rheem!

By Sophie Braccini



Just Like Old Times: Big Band Will Overshadow Silver Screen for an Evening

Some of us remember, some of us don't, and some of us recall fondly that which we never lived. The worst of times can also be the best of times - put on hold the more trying events of the 30's and 40's and you have a generation's good old days, where the finest weekend evening's entertainment was to be found where ever the Big Band was swingin'. And on Friday, January 23, Moraga's Rheem Theatre is the place to be; at this winter's Big Band Ballroom Dance, featuring the Big Band of Rossmoor, all of Lamorinda is invited to come dancing!

Presented by the Generations in Jazz Foundation, the Big Band Dance has traditionally been largely a Lafayette and Rossmoor event. "We have held the dance at the Veteran's Hall for the last three years," says Jay Lifson of the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce. "We wanted to try something different and get Lamorinda more involved."

Enter the art deco Rheem Theatre, which was built in 1955. One of the last "classic" theaters built in the Bay Area, the Rheem hosted live Big Bands and dances in years gone by. "We approached the Rheem Theatre and they were very interested," explained Lifson.

"It's a perfect venue for this event," says Theatre co-owner Tom Peterson. "When we rented the facility to the California Academy for Performing Arts for their dance performance I saw how well the staging works. For a Big Band it will be perfect. We already have a large dancing floor, we will remove more seats and add tables; it will be pretty nice."

Maurice "Mo" Levich, Director of The Big Band of Rossmoor and one of the founders of Generations in Jazz, is looking forward to the performance. "As usual, we will be featuring students from Campolindo, Stanley and Acalanes," he says. "We always enjoy playing at a community event where all generations meet."

The Big Band of Rossmoor is an energetic Stage Big Band (a Stage band

incorporates strings, clarinets and flutes to a classic Big Band) and young musicians are invited to share the stage with veteran professionals.

Frank Como, a Rossmoor resident who was the top arranger for Lionel Hampton for twenty years in New York City, writes for the band and arranges pieces so that each musician, including the youngest, shines on stage. The enthusiasm and fun the students have playing with their elders creates the unique sound of the Rossmoor group.

"We are very excited to be part of this fun event," says Edy Schwartz, President of the Moraga Chamber of Commerce, "the Band is amazing and their music always gets people dancing all night long."

The event is co-sponsored by the City of Lafayette, the Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda Chambers of Commerce, Lafayette and Moraga Recreation Departments, Companion Care and Diablo Rapid Print. The Big Band of Rossmoor is sponsored by Kaiser Permanente Senior Advantage.

**What:** Big Band Ball Room Dance

**Who:** The Big Band of Rossmoor and the communities of Lafayette, Orinda, Moraga and Rossmoor

**When:** Friday, January 23, 2009, 7:00-10:00 (doors open at 6:30)

**Where:** The Rheem Theatre, located off Rheem Blvd at 350 Park Street (Rheem Center) in Moraga

**Tickets are \$10** and may be purchased at:

The Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, 100 Lafayette Circle #103;

The Orinda Chamber of Commerce, 26 Orinda Way;

The Moraga Chamber of Commerce, by email to Edy Schwartz,

edy321@comcast.net;

The Rheem Theatre, 350 Park St.

Purchase your tickets in advance, as this event has sold out in the past and space is limited. Call 925-284-7404 or visit [www.lafayettechamber.org](http://www.lafayettechamber.org) for more information.



The King Sisters' opening night at the Rheem Theater in the mid 50's Photo Don Bradley, provided by Rheem Theatre

Reach the reporter at: [sophie@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sophie@lamorindaweekly.com)

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