

# Sound of Music

## Organization provides an outlet for Valley musicians



By **JULIE DANIEL**  
Valley Press Staff Writer

Self-described as “a nexus for information about song, dance and storytelling in and around the Antelope Valley”, **Desert Song Productions** helps to nurture cultural understanding of music through up-close and personal performances throughout Southern California's high desert.

Co-founder and CEO Wayne Slater-Lunsford assists AV artists with technical support and in finding venues to share their music with the public.

Desert Song Productions represents more than 20 entertainers, signed and unsigned, who play an array of musical genres. Slater-Lunsford's performers include vocalists Joan Enguita, The Darrington Family Band, Doug Moon, Silent Planet, Paul Hendel and Linda Geleris.

Slater-Lunsford acts as a middle man when providing venues including HeathTree Wellness and Fitness Center, The Larry Chimbole Cultural Center and Lancaster United Methodist Church with entertainment while providing entertainers with work. He also hosts concerts in his home and co-ordinates a House Concert series for the area.

Slater-Lunsford's love for music began in Jacksonville, Fla., where he was part of the folk music scene, singing and playing guitar. After settling in California, he joined the **California Traditional Music Society** and Antelope Valley Folk Music Club, and is the guitarist and lead vocalist for the contra band **Danance**.

"We aren't here to replace anyone," said Slater-Lunsford. "If an artist wants to sign with a label, by all means, they should do it. We are just here for them in the meantime."

Desert Song Productions has seen a lot of ups and downs in the few years it has existed.

The organization began in 2003 when Larry Wines, the first of three co-founders, came up with an idea for a barbecue with Western music to raise money for the Antelope Valley Therapeutic Riding Stables, after the facility had helped him recover from extensive injuries.

In 2004, Wines recruited his friends Christine Hingley and Wayne Slater-Lunsford, to stage the first Desert Song Music Festival to raise money for Project Hope. The event was so popular that they decided to manage annual festivals that always gave back to a charity organization, and included workshops to build up the knowledge and skills of the attendees.



**RON SIDDLE/Valley Press**

**NURTURING MUSIC** - Wayne Slater-Lunsford of Desert Song Productions poses in his Lancaster home while viewing a DVD of musical group **Acoustic Eidolon**. The duo will perform a living-room concert at 3 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 27. Call **(661) 339-2655** or surf to <http://desertsongfest.org> for information.

"We came up with a whopper of a festival," said Slater-Lunsford. "We had six different stages all playing at once." The festival took place at Antelope Valley college, featured 40 artists and was the largest one-day festival in California that fall. All benefits went to Project HOPE.

"Each stage played for six hours; that's 36 hours of music in one festival. It was huge," said Slater-Lunsford. "We lost some money, but Hope got some great publicity. All of the artists had so much fun they begged to do it again next year, so we did."

After the 2004 festival, Wines left the area to host a radio show in LA. He had been their artist liaison and chief fund raiser. Hingley and Slater-Lunsford worked harder than ever to build a strong organization.

While it was an entertainment success, and created a wonderful opportunity for artists to meet each other and gain new fans, the lack of sufficient volunteers and sponsorship made it a logistical nightmare. Despite the good intentions of the organization to provide a music festival "featuring everything from blues to bluegrass and country to Celtic," as well as helping a charity organization, the number of volunteers needed to stage the huge event fell short again in 2005.

That year, the festival - half the size of the 2004 event - also raised money for Project HOPE and proved to be a big hit for all of the artists involved.

However, in the two years that followed, the festival did not return because it was simply impossible to sustain without more volunteers and sponsorship. The organization hopes to stage the event again, after building up its volunteer ranks and finding more sponsors.

Desert Song shifted their focus to lining up venues with artists, and co-operating with established recurring events. "The artistic culture in the AV just wasn't big enough to support such a festival at the time. Then last Christmas, Christine (Hingley) suddenly fell ill and passed away, I was just lost," said Slater-Lunsford. "So we moved on to other things; now I am looking to support more folk music."

Today, Desert Song Productions is led by Slater-Lunsford, with sound technician David Edwards, artist liaison Joan Enguita, and empresario Cody Montgomery.

Desert Song hopes to add the California Poppy Festival, Palmdale Playhouse and the Antelope Valley Fair and Alfalfa Festival to the list of venues at which its artists perform.

"But," Slater-Lunsford added: "When we do another festival, it will still feature workshops and performances that are up-close and personal."

For more details about Desert Song Productions, visit their Web site:

<http://desertsongfest.org>

or call (661) 339-2655

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Desert Song Productions has seen a lot of ups and downs in the few years it has existed.

The organization began in 2003 when Larry Wines, the first of three co-founders, came up with an idea for a festival to showcase local musical talent while raising money for charity organizations.

In 2004, Wines, with friends Christine Hingley and Slater-Lunsford, staged the first Desert Songs Music Festival to raise money for the Antelope Valley Therapeutic Riding Stables after the facility helped Wines recover from extensive injuries. The show was so successful they decided to manage annual festivals that always gave back to a charity organization.

"We came up with a whopper of a festival," said Slater-Lunsford. "We had six different stages and all playing at once."

The festival took place at Antelope Valley College, featured 40 artists and was the largest one-day festival in California during the fall.



RON SIDDLE Valley Press

**NURTURING MUSIC** - Wayne Slater-Lunsford of Desert Song Productions poses in his Lancaster home while viewing a DVD of musical group Eidolon. The group will perform a living room concert at 3 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 27. Call (661) 4789039 for location directions.

All benefits went to Project HOPE.

"Each stage played for six hours; that's 36 hours of music in one festival. It was huge," said Slater-Lunsford. "We lost some money, but the charity made some too. All of the artists had so much fun they begged to do it again next year, so we did."

Despite the good intentions of the organization to provide a music festival featuring everything from blues to bluegrass and country to Celtic as well as helping a charity organization, the number of volunteers needed to stage the huge event fell short in 2005.

That year, the festival - half the size of the 2004 event - also raised money for Project HOPE and proved to be a big hit for all of the artists involved.

However, in the two years that followed, the festival did not return. The organization hopes to stage the event again.

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Today, Desert Song Productions is led by Slater-Lunsford, sound technician David Edwards, Enguita and Cody Montgomery who do everything from recruit talent to act as liaisons.

"We have a good time doing open mikes and music concerts. If you listen closely to the way some people read poetry, you can just see the hits in them," said Slater-Lunsford.

Desert Song hopes to add the California Poppy Festival, Palmdale Playhouse and the Antelope Valley Fair and Alfalfa Festival to the list of venues at which its artists perform.

But, Slater-Lunsford added: "When we do another festival, it will also be about education, and feature workshops."

For more details about Desert Song Productions, visit one of their Web sites - [launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/desertsong1](http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/desertsong1), [www.myspace.com/desertsongproductions](http://www.myspace.com/desertsongproductions) or [www.desertsongfest.org](http://www.desertsongfest.org) - or call (661) 478-9039 .•

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