



Photos by David Bazzone

The History of a Community Stage

The Lobero Theatre has a varied history of uses. Built originally as an opera house in 1873, it was re-built in 1924 to serve as home to the Drama branch of the Community Arts Association. It has since been home to theatre, dance, film, and has become a celebrated venue for music of all types, from chamber to choral, rock 'n' roll to jazz.

The performing arts are central to the Lobero and its mission, but history shows that this is also Santa Barbara's Town Hall, and has served in many capacities over the decades. When the community has a need to gather, the Lobero is the place to which we turn.

After the 1925 earthquake, the relatively unscathed theatre became a shelter for local citizens. Since then, the Lobero has accommodated lectures, shareholder meetings, graduations and workshops. It has many times been a forum for political debate, and a pulpit for religious assemblies. The stage has hosted wedding celebrations, birthday fetes and bat mitzvahs. Families have also gathered here to say goodbye to loved ones, including local heroes like Bob Smith and Jonathan Winters.

The Lobero is Santa Barbara's home for youth performances, and many of you, your children, or your grandchildren have performed on its stage. From ballerinas attending local dance schools, to fledgling rock bands, to young musical theatre actresses and actors with dreams of Broadway. The Lobero is their theatre, their first real stage, and a place they will always remember.

It is a remarkable history, and oh what stories this stage could tell! Santa Barbara has changed dramatically in 142 years, and the Lobero has always been at the heart of it all. Whatever the next century brings, you can be sure that this theatre will remain the historic home for our vibrant arts community.

