A Navajo hoop dancer, a Salt Lake City Shakespearean theater troupe and Japanese-inspired Moab Taiko Dan drummers are among the unique acts performing this weekend during the 23rd annual Moab Arts Festival at Swanny City Park.
Additionally, 100 artists from Utah, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Arizona and Colorado will display and sell their hand-crafted wares – including jewelry, fine art, wearable art, pottery, textile art and photography.

Teresa King, who owns Canyonlands Copy Center and Moab Happenings, and is a member of the board of directors for the Moab Music Festival, founded the arts festival to help promote the arts in Moab.

“One of the things I’m happy about with the festival is how it’s grown over the years to include partnerships in the community,” such as the Moab Multicultural Center, which is helping with the hoop dance event.

“There’s something going on all day, both days,” King said.

One thing that’s nice is being able to talk to the original artists when they come to town, King said. Plus, the festival introduces artists to retailers in town who sometimes end up carrying their work.

It’s an interesting mix of artists, King said, including 10 to 15 local ones.

The Moab Taiko Dan drumming group is comprised of about a dozen Moab residents who perform melodies together on a variety of different sized drums – some of which have been created from old wine barrels. The group performs each year for the Moab Arts Festival, as well as for the various half-marathon foot races that take place in Moab, drummer Karen Garthwait said. Members and apprentices practice weekly.

Taiko drumming was used traditionally in Japan to communicate messages throughout a village. In the 1950s, the practice was turned into an art form that can include drumming, dance, vocalization, flute and spirituality. The Moab Taiko Dan group celebrated its 20th anniversary last October. The group will perform on Saturday, May 23, at noon on the park’s pavilion stage.
Nineteen-year old Navajo hoop dancer Joseph Secody will perform on Saturday at 2 p.m., thanks to the sponsorship of the Grand County Native American Club, the Moab Valley Multicultural Center and the Utah Humanities Council. Secody grew up competing in powwows across the Southwest, and is known for his many styles of dancing, including grass, hoop, ballet and hip hop. Secody took sixth place at the 2015 Heard Museum World Championship Hoop Dance contest in February.

Grassroots Shakespeare is a collaborative touring ensemble of multidisciplinary artists who produce open-air theater inspired by Shakespeare’s original staging techniques. The troupe will perform Shakespeare’s “Comedy of Errors” at 4 p.m., both Saturday and Sunday.

Entertainment also includes Moab magician Rick Boretti, who will conduct a magic show at 10 a.m. on Saturday.

Additionally, a host of Moab musicians will perform throughout the weekend. Saturday’s lineup includes Scott Ibex, and Velvet Ants. On Sunday, Dave Steward and Friends will perform. Two different acts – Dustin Cristensen, and Sister Wives – will perform on both Saturday and Sunday.

Children will find plenty to keep themselves busy at the Kids Art Tent.

Various organizations such as Moab Montessori School, Grand County High School honor students, WabiSabi, the Moab Valley Multicultural Center and the Moab Charter School, along with Moab’s “Hurricane Rita” and children’s activities coordinator Susan Baffico, will engage kids in a variety of activities. Paper bonsai tree-making, tie-dying, mask-making, and “deconstruction” of T-shirts into something new and fashionable are among the highlights. Other activities include bingo and free play with puppets, bubbles and hula hoops. Canyonlands PRCA Rodeo will lead pony rides from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday.

The Moab Brewery and Castle Creek Winery will sell their hand-crafted beverages at the wine and beer garden from noon to 6 p.m., Saturday and
Sunday. And, nearby, there will be lots of food vendors from which to choose, including Yia Yia’s Greek Food, Quesadilla Mobilla, Sweetwater Gypsies’ wood-fired pizzas, Zach’s Poppin’ Johnny Ice Cream, Linda Matineau’s drinks and snacks, Corn Shack Corp., Desert Sno, Gourmet Nuts and Moab Brewery.

For a full schedule of events, and more information on each of the artisans and their artwork, plus the musicians who will be performing, check out the Moab Arts Festival newspaper, available at the Moab Information Center, City Market, Village Market, Moab Diner and Dave’s Corner Market.

Anyone who would like to help out with the arts festival is encouraged to call 435-259-2742, or email info@moabartsfestival.org.

“We’re always looking for board members and volunteers,” King said.

23rd annual Moab Arts Festival returns this weekend

When: Saturday, May 23, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.; Sunday, May 24, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Where: Swanny City Park, 400 N. 100 West

Cost: Free

www.moabartsfestival.org; or 435-259-2742