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Cape May Stage Brings Stories to Life During The New Jersey Theatre Alliance

12th Annual Family Week at the Theatre and The Stage Festival

One of the oldest traditions of our civilization is that of the storyteller. We tell stories to teach and enlighten, to entertain and delight. In their many forms, stories have long served as a way to bring people together both as a community and, more importantly, as a family.

It is with this idea in mind that Cape May Stage, Cape May's premier professional Equity theatre, in cooperation with the New Jersey Theatre Alliance, has designed their contributions to the 12th Annual *Family Week at the Theatre and Stage Festival* event. This annual statewide program, beginning March 4 and running through March 31, offers free and discounted tickets to attendees, and was developed to encourage families to attend professional theatre together by making the experience affordable, educational, and exciting. *Family Week at the Theatre* has been very well received throughout the state, and this year will be no exception. During the month of March, there will be a number of free arts-related events available to the residents of Cape May County.

Cape May Stage's offerings include events for people of all ages. For the very youngest (and their parents) local libraries will be holding special storybook reading sessions on Saturday mornings in March from 10 AM – 11 AM. These readings will be held on March 7 and March 21 at the Lower Township library branch (located on 2600 Bayshore Road in Villas), and on March 14 and March 28 at the Upper Township branch (located on 2050 Route 631 in Petersburg). Children who attend will have the opportunity to listen to an exciting adventure or

fairy tale story read by local performers, and will create a picture to take home from their favorite part of the story.

For those young people looking to take a more active role in storytelling, Cape May Stage will be offering a weekly acting course for teenagers ages 12-17. The class will be held every Wednesday afternoon in March from 4 PM – 6 PM. Cape May Stage's Education Outreach Coordinator, Donald Toal, will be teaching the courses, and is very excited for the opportunities it offers. Toal comments, "This is an ideal course for any young actor who loves being on stage. Even if you don't have acting experience (or even if you do), these courses give you the chance to explore what it takes to create a world full of living, breathing characters, and share that world with an audience that has never seen it before." The students will study essential acting techniques that focus on creating honest, believable, and (especially) fun performances. This includes physical movement and vocal techniques, improvisational acting, and monologue/scene work. Advance registration for the course is encouraged but not required, but attendance for all four sessions is preferred and will allow students to get the most out of the program. Classes will be held at the Robert Shackleton Playhouse on the corner of Bank and Lafayette Streets in Cape May.

Children are not the only ones that can take advantage of the fun of Family Week—exciting programs are also offered for adults as well. Visitors to senior recreation centers in Cape May County will be treated to a trip back in time, in the form of a live reading of the classic radio play, *Sorry, Wrong Number*. Local performers will bring this classic broadcast, originally performed by Agnes Moorehead in 1943, to life, complete with traditional radio music and 'advertisements.' The audience members will also have the opportunity to get a taste for acting themselves, through participation with the performers in several improvisational acting exercises. This unique event will be held on Mondays in March. The first reading is scheduled for March 9 from 10:30-11:30AM at the Stainton Senior Center on Asbury Ave in Ocean City, with the second scheduled for Monday, March 16 at the Lower Cape Senior Center in Villas from 10:45-11:45 AM.

All of these programs offered are free and open to the public, and a great opportunity to enjoy the theatre arts at its finest. For more information, please contact Cape May Stage at (609)- 884-1341.

Family Week at the Theatre is a co-sponsored project of The New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts and Discover Jersey Arts. Visit www.JerseyArts.com for more information about other arts programming happening around the Garden State.

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Photo credit: Tina Giaimo

Pictured: Cape May Stage Education Outreach Coordinator Don Toal instructing an acting class in improvisation and performing.