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PRESS RELEASE

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NJ's Theatre Alliance's Stages Festival returns to 14 OCL branches

TOMS RIVER - New Jersey Theatre Alliance's "Stages Festival" will celebrate its 19th year of bringing professional, Broadway-quality programs to Ocean County Library and presents them to the public, free of charge.

The program was created in 1981 to encourage New Jersey residents to attend their local professional theaters by making the experience affordable, accessible and fun. Since its inception the program has served over 190,000 people of all ages.

The Alliance will present eight programs by four New Jersey theater companies at 14 Ocean County Library branches during March.

Children and families can enjoy such presentations as "Stone Soup and Other Tales," presented by Pushcart Players, is a charming blend of carefully selected folk tales from around the world. Supporting the literacy movement's emphasis on the joy of reading, this dynamic and participatory program is not to be missed by young viewers and families.

The performance will be held 6 p.m. Thursday March 10 at Manchester, 21 Colonial Dr., 732-657-7600.

They can also enjoy "Alice in Wonderland," presented by the Pushcart Players, one of the world's best-known children's story. Adapted from Lewis Carroll's classic books and filled with madcap characters and pure nonsense, this intriguing tale about a curious and proactive young girl has enchanted readers for many generations.

It will be performed at four library branches:

Toms River, 101 Washington St., 732-349-6200 or 609-971-0514, 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 9;

Brick, 301 Chambers Bridge Rd., 732-477-4513, 6:30 p.m. Monday March 21;

Stafford, 129 N. Main St., Manahawkin, 2 p.m. Saturday March 26;

Pt. Pleasant Beach, 271 McLean Ave., 3 p.m. Wednesday March 30.

The Pushcart Players will present the popular story, "Peter and the Wolf," at two branches:
Pt. Pleasant Borough, 834 Beaver Dam Rd., 732-295-1555, 11 a.m. Saturday March 5;
Lacey, 10. E. Lacey Rd., Forked River, 609-693-8566, 11 a.m. Saturday, March 19.

With a different musical instrument representing each character, this adventure of a spirited young boy meeting danger with courage, creativity and leadership teaches the values of love, friendship and caring.

And the Centenary Stage Company will present "Miss Nelson is Missing," for children in grades K through fourth. This story, about a teacher who can't control her class because she is too nice disappears, and Viola Swamp steps in as her substitute. With the big test looming, the kids suddenly realize how much they miss Miss Nelson and they'll do anything to get her back.

The play will be presented at three branches:

Jackson, 2 Jackson Dr., 732-928-4400, 12 p.m. Saturday March 5;

Little Egg Harbor, 290 Mathistown Rd., 609-294-1197, 6 p.m. Tuesday March 15;

Barnegat, 112 Burr St., 609-698-3331, 2 p.m. Tuesday, March 29.

For teens, "New Kid," presented by the George Street Playhouse, addresses racism, prejudice, peer pressure and conflict resolution. It prompts its audience to explore issues of moving to a new place, being the outsider, and making and keeping friends.

It will be performed 11 a.m. Saturday March 12 at the Plumsted branch, 119 Evergreen Rd., New Egypt., 609-758-7888.

Teens will also enjoy the Centenary Stage Company's "A Thousand Cranes" 11 a.m. Saturday March 12 at the Waretown branch, 112 Main St., 609-693-5133.

It is based on the true story of a young Japanese girl, Sadako Sasaki, who inspired an international peace movement. Befallen by radiation sickness, she remembered an old story: if a person will just make 1,000 paper cranes the gods will grant her wish and make her healthy. Sadako did not live long enough to finish her cranes but her friends took up the task and built a monument for her and all the children killed by the atomic bomb.

Families will enjoy "Victorian Magic," presented by East Lynn Theater Company. Actor Robert Aberdeen will delight audiences of all ages with his magical sleight-of-hand. Be careful, this family performance includes audience participation!

The performance will be held 7 p.m. Monday March 21 at the Beachwood branch, 126 Beachwood Blvd., 732-244-4573.

Families will also enjoy the East Lynn Theater Company presentation of the "Holmes and Carter Radio Style Mysteries" 6:30 p.m. Monday March 21 at the Long Beach Island branch, 217. S. Central Ave., Surf City, 609-494-2480.

In the days before television, families used to huddle around the radio to listen to comedies and dramas. ELTC recreates "Sherlock Holmes Adventures of the Red Headed League" and "Nick Carter and the Voice of Crime" in the style of a 1930s radio broadcast, complete with sound effects and commercials.

The programs are made possible in part from grants from The New Jersey State Council on the Arts, Bank of America, and The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey.

All of the programs are free and open to the public but registration is required.