

SATURDAY & SUNDAY,  
JULY 10 & 11

Art Show & Sale, St. Francis Center, gymnasium, 47th St. & Long Beach Blvd., Brant Beach (494-8861) Admission, free. *Sat.*, 9:30 am-5 pm; *Sun.*, 9:30 am-2 pm.

## KID STUFF

Art Classes & Activities Offered, LBI Foundation of the Arts & Sciences, 120 Long Beach Blvd., Loveladies (494-1241, ext. 300) Call for schedule.

**Children's Theater**, LBI Foundation of the Arts & Sciences, 120 Long Beach Blvd., Loveladies (494-1241, ext. 300) Admission, \$6, payable at the door. 7 pm. *July 5*, Wagner Marionettes; *July 12*, Puppet Theatre Inside and Out.

**Children's Theater**, Surflight Theatre, Engleside & Beach aves., Beach Haven (492-9477) Ticket, \$8. 6 pm. *June 23-27*, "Pinocchio"; *June 30-July 3*, "Mary Poppins"; *July 7-11*, "Wizard of Oz."

**Ocean County Library Summer Reading Program**, ([www.oceancountylibrary.org](http://www.oceancountylibrary.org)) Children, teens and families may register at any branch. Many events are planned, and those who read any five books will receive a certificate of achievement and a ticket to a Lakewood BlueClaws baseball game.

### MONDAY-FRIDAY, THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2

**Vacation Club**, St. Francis Center, 47th St. & Long Beach Blvd., Brant Beach (494-8861) This fun program for ages 6-13 offers swimming in the center's pools, arts, crafts, tennis, basketball, trips and much more. It is conducted by experienced staff with CPR certification.

### MONDAY, JUNE 28

**Sidewalk Art**, Stafford Branch Ocean County Library, 129 North Main St., Manahawkin (597-3381) All ages are welcome. 10:30 am-noon, rain or shine.

**"Stuck on the Wall,"** Island Branch Ocean County Library, 217 South Central Ave., Surf City (494-2480) This program is for ages 5 and above. 3 pm. Call to register.

### MONDAYS, JUNE 28-JULY 19

**Meet Your Favorite Character**, Melt-down, 133rd St. & Long Beach Blvd., Beach Haven Terrace (207-0527) Those who wish are invited to bring a camera. 6-8 pm. *June 28*, Buzz Lightyear; *July 5*, Bob the Builder; *July 12*, SpongeBob SquarePants; *July 19*, Winnie the Pooh.

### WEDNESDAY, JUNE 30

**"Give a Hoot" Drop-in Program**, Island Branch Ocean County Library, 217 South Central Ave., Surf City (494-2480) Library hours.

### THURSDAY, JULY 1

**American Girls Program**, Island Branch Ocean County Library, 217 South Central Ave., Surf City (494-2480) This is for ages 6 and above. 11 am. Call to register.

### FRIDAY, JULY 2

**Celebrate July 4th**, Stafford Branch Ocean County Library, 129 North Main St., Manahawkin (597-3381) Kids and families are invited to decorate bike, trikes, strollers, wagons, etc. and have a parade. 10:30 am. Call to register.

### FRIDAYS, JULY 2 & 9

**Fishing Fridays for Kids**, Meet at Wells Mills County Park, Rte. 532, Waretown. Kids ages 9-12 are invited to get involved in what can be a lifetime activity. Fishing poles, bait and tackle are provided. Kids should wear old clothing and bring sun-

# SURFLIGHT REVIEW

## 'State Fair' Is Simply Stunning

By TOM WRONA

I came to see a train wreck. Let me explain why. As you may recall from prior years, the Surflight's first two shows of the summer season open on Wednesdays. That means that to make my late Tuesday night deadline, I have to catch dress rehearsals for those two shows. The dress rehearsals vary greatly in quality. "Mame," back in 2002, was very rough with frequent miscues and interruptions. "Funny Girl," this year, was indistinguishable from an actual performance. Maybe that's a testament to Surflight's ever-increasing professionalism.

So I was taken by surprise when Surflight production manager Gail Anderson phoned me on my way to the theater a week ago Tuesday to tell me that they weren't having a dress rehearsal that night at all! She assured me the show was in fine shape but that they just had too many technical glitches to work out. I had to inform my editor that there would be no review that week and she had to scramble to fill up the space. So now you know why you missed me last week. (You did miss me, didn't you?)

Not only did I have my Tuesday night off but since I didn't have to submit my review for another week, I could go to any performance before then. But I just had to go to opening night. If Surflight was still not ready and the show crashed and burned, I wanted to be there to see it happen. And to tell you all about it.

This is what I have to tell you about *State Fair*: Not only is it one of the very best shows Surflight's ever done, it ticked with the precision of a fine Swiss watch. Remember how I slobbered all over "A Chorus Line" last year about how great it was? (As a matter of fact, I sat next to a lady at *State Fair* who told me she took her family to "A Chorus Line" after reading my review. She loved



John Davidson is perfect as Abel, who's bringing his prized hog to the 1946 Iowa State Fair, along with his daughter Margy, played by Davidson's own talented daughter, Ashleigh.

Jeffrey Stiefel

it, too.) While *State Fair* didn't have the emotional impact on me that "A Chorus Line" did, as pure entertainment, it's every bit its equal. It's fun and funny and dazzling.

Let's start with John Davidson, the show's star. If you know Davidson only from his turns hosting "Hollywood Squares" and "That's Incredible," you might be tempted to dismiss him as some kind of lightweight. Well, Davidson not only has a great voice, he's got charm, charisma and a great talent for comedy. He's perfect as Frake family patriarch Abel, who's bringing his prized hog Blue Boy, along with his whole family, to the 1946 Iowa State Fair.

Davidson brought his own family to Beach Haven for this engagement in the person of his daughter Ashleigh, who plays Abel's daughter Margy. But

young Davidson doesn't need daddy's pull to bootstrap her career. Everything she needs from him she already has: his genes. Ashleigh Davidson is a formidable talent in her own right. She can act, she can sing and she can dance. This kid is phenomenal. And here's the punch line: She's only 17!

That double-barreled Davidson star power might have outshone a lesser man. But Tim Falter's brilliance cannot be dimmed. He plays Pat Gilbert, the cynical newspaperman Margy meets at the fair. I liked Falter in "Anything Goes" last year. I loved him in Surflight's Trump Plaza production of "Singing in the Rain" that just closed. And now that I've seen him in *State Fair*, I realize he's the best dancer I've ever seen live on stage. Falter is a classic hooper in the Gene Kelley and Fred Astaire

mold, and it's a delight to watch him glide across the stage. And he, too, is a great comic actor.

The supporting players are up to the challenge of sharing the stage with these luminaries. Ben Liebert is the perfect sidekick as Charlie, Pat's photographer. Brian Massey, as the farm boy who is Margy's would-be betrothed, strikes just the right note between humor and pathos. Matty Price, as Margy's brother Harry, does fine work, too. But it's the girl Harry falls for who is the show's surprise attraction. Emily Arden is the singer in the traveling big band that's working the fair. It's a small role. But in the hands of newcomer Michelle Dyer, she has the glamour, beauty and singing voice to not only charm an Iowa farm boy, but city boys who have moved to the beach, too.

I didn't tell you about the storyline or the incredible, show-stopping "All I Owe Ioway" number or a lot of other things but I've got to get going - I have to call the Surflight and cudge a couple more tickets before they sell out. I'm seeing this one again.

Evening performances run through July 3 at 8 pm (except June 27 and 28) with matinees at 2 p.m. on June 27, June 29 and July 1.

### Bonus Broadway Buff Trivia Question:

"State Fair" is unique. It's the only Rodgers and Hammerstein musical that ... That what? I'll give you the answer when I review "Cats," the Surflight's next production, in our July 9 issue.

Last time I asked you to name the famous American playwright whose work was often brought to the screen by Fanny Brice's son-in-law, Ray Stark. Stark produced the film versions of "Brighton Beach Memoirs," "Biloxi Blues" and many other Neil Simon plays.

Tom Wrona is a writer and independent filmmaker based in Barnegat. This is his third season as The Beachcomber's theater critic.

screen, bug spray and lunch. 10 am-2 pm. Fee, \$10. Preregistration is required for all programs; call 877-OCPARKS or visit [www.ocean.nj.us/Parks/Default.htm](http://www.ocean.nj.us/Parks/Default.htm).

### SATURDAY, JULY 3

Foul Shooting Contest, Richard A.

Zachariae Field, Division St. & Barnegat Ave., Surf City. The Surf City Taxpayer Assn. hosts the event for girls and boys, tots through teens. 10 am.

### SUNDAY, JULY 4

Family Fun Day, Barnegat Municipi-

pal Dock, East Bay Ave. Barnegat's Planet Playground sponsors the event. 2-9 pm, followed by fireworks.

### MONDAYS, JULY 5-26

Children's Art Classes with Chris Koutsogiannis, Pine Shores Art

Assn., 94 Stafford Ave., Manahawkin (597-3557) Ages 5-8, 10 am-noon; ages 9 and above, 1-3 pm. Fees: member, \$40; nonmember, \$50.

MONDAYS, JULY 5-AUGUST 16  
Stories by the Sea, LBI Community Activities Center, Pelham Ave.