Holiday Event Roundup

By Graelyn Brashear



Christmas in the Mansion at Georgian Court University.
Photo Credit: Georgian Court University

Holiday concerts, shows, exhibitions and historical events abound this season in Ocean County. Whether you want to sit back and take in a classic ballet, explore history through a traditional holiday festival or listen to a choir of young voices sing seasonal favorites, Ocean County's arts and cultural organizations have something for you.

Sounds of the season

From small ensemble shows to full orchestra performances, there are many musical tributes to the holidays scheduled in and around Ocean County this winter.

The Ocean County College Concert Band will play a holiday show titled *It's Beginning to "Sound" A Lot Like Christmas* at the college's Arts and Community Center in Toms River at 2 p.m. and again at 8 p.m. Saturday, December 3, offering instrumental versions of carols and other holiday songs.

Georgian Court University in Lakewood holds its 12th annual Christmas at the Court concert on Sunday, December 11 at the campus Casino Auditorium. The event features the well-loved Orchestra of St. Peter by the Sea, led by conductor Father Alphonse Stephenson.

Tickets are also available for a number of other holiday musical performances at the university's Casino. The Georgian Court University Concert Band plays Monday, December 5. The Court Singers and Guitar Ensemble perform Monday, December 12 and the university's Choral Christmas Concert will be Saturday, December 17.

The Strand Center for the Arts in Lakewood has a diverse lineup of concerts for the season. Gaelic musicians, singers and dancers come together onstage at the Strand at 8 p.m. Friday, December 9 for Irish Christmas in America, a family show filled with Irish ballads and carols. The American Boychoir, an elite Princeton-based choral ensemble featuring boys in grades 4 through 8, will perform a holiday concert at 8 p.m. Friday, December 16. And independent radio station 90.5FM The Night brings a holiday edition of its popular Songwriters by the Sea concert series at the Strand at 8 p.m. Saturday, December 17. Marshall Crenshaw, Willie Nile

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and Rhett Miller of the Old 97s will join hosts Joe D'Urso and Joe Rapolla and a few up-and-coming local artists.

There are also smaller, more intimate performances planned for various venues. On Wednesday, December 14, enjoy a local flute ensemble's take on holiday classics at the Festive Flutes concert at the Robert Anstett Cultural Arts Center in Brick. The recital is at 7 p.m. and includes pieces arranged for piccolo, C flutes and alto flute.

At 7 p.m. Monday, December 19, the Long Beach Island Branch of the Ocean County Library in Surf City hosts a Holiday Strings Concert featuring the Southern Regional High School Strings students conducted by Jaime Chavan.

On stage

A trip to the theater is a beloved holiday tradition for many families, and there's plenty of opportunity to catch a live show or two at a local venue.

The Strand will bring Dickens to life with *Scrooge: A Christmas Carol*, performed by members of the Riddlesbrood Traveling Theater Company and students of the Strand School of the Arts. Tickets are available for two shows: 2 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, December 3 and 4.

Want to see a world-class production of *The Nutcracker* without having to travel to New York or Philadelphia? The Moscow Ballet will perform Tchaikovsky's classic ballet at the Strand during its 19th American tour. The show is at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, December 7.

Also at the Lakewood theater this winter is *A Very Merry Broadway*, a musical revue of holiday favorites and Broadway classics sung by three touring stage talents. The show is at 8 p.m. Saturday, December 10.



Georgian Court University
Photo Credit: Georgian Court University

Two other Christmas-themed musical revues are coming up on other county stages.

To LBI's Surflight Theatre comes *Plaid Tidings*, a holiday-themed sequel to the musical revue *Forever Plaid*. The show features the '50s-style close harmonies of four young crooners who offer up Christmas standards with a twist. Performances run from late November through Sunday, December 18. Visit Surflight's website for a full list of run dates.

The brand-new Ocean Professional Theatre Company's debut performance will be *Christmas of Swing*, a holiday follow-up to *Sisters of Swing*, about the life and music of the Andrews Sisters. In this show, LaVerne, Maxene and Patty are preparing for a big show in 1944 when they receive a box of letters home from GIs. As they read through the letters, the audience also gets to hear their close-harmony renditions of popular holiday tunes. See the play at Ocean County College's Arts and Community Center at 2 p.m. December 8, 10, 11, 13, 14 or 18 or 7:30 p.m. December 9, 10, 16 or 17.

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Step back in time

Several area groups and institutions will give holiday fun an historical twist this season.

The Ocean County Historical Society will host its annual Christmas Tea in the Victorian tradition at its Toms River museum at 1 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. Thursday, December 8. Guests can enjoy tea, scones and other treats surrounded by period holiday décor as they listen to a classical guitarist perform. Georgian Court University's yearly historic holiday performance, Mrs. Gould's Annual Holiday Social, will run throughout December. An actress portraying the Gilded Age mistress of the estate that would become the University offers local history and a window on another era. The event, now in its tenth year, takes place in the University's Mansion.

Head back to the Tuckerton Seaport for Christkindlmarkt, an event in the spirit of the central European tradition of outdoor holiday fairs. From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, December 10 and 11, gather under heated outdoor tents to enjoy hot cider, roasted chestnuts, carolers, horse-and-cart rides, decoy carvers, quilt making, wine tasting and more.

Deck the walls

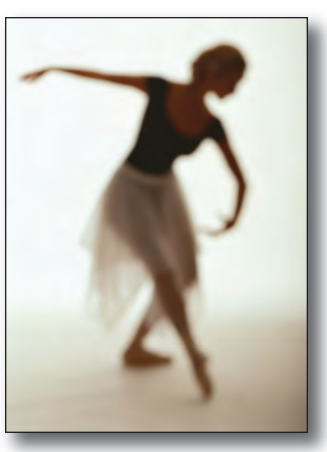
See and shop for artwork this season at two area exhibitions that put the work of local artists within reach.

The Long Beach Island Foundation of the Arts and Sciences in Loveladies offers its Small Works show through Dec. 19. The juried exhibition showcases smaller pieces – no larger than a foot square for two-dimensional pieces and no larger than 8"x8"x8" for three-dimensional works – by emerging and established artists.

The Ocean County Artists Guild in Island Heights will hold a Victorian Open House and reception for its Members Holiday Show from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, December 3. The show aims to include artwork that appeals to holiday shoppers, including many smaller framed pieces.

Just for kids

The Arts and Community Center at Ocean County College has two holiday shows designed to delight kids of all ages.



First is a child-friendly production of *The Nutcracker* from Ballet for Young Audiences, a New York-based nonprofit that aims to introduce youngsters to the world of ballet. The show is at 1 p.m. Sunday, December 4.

Next comes the Yates Musical Theatre's rendition of *A Christmas Carol* at 1 p.m. Saturday, December 17. The Bloomfield-based nonprofit arts organization specializes in musical theater for kids.

The Manchester Branch of the Ocean County Library is offering up a family-friendly holiday concert with nationally acclaimed children's music artist Yosi. The composer-performer will lead sing a longs for kids with favorite Christmas, Hanukah and Kwanzaa songs.

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For more information and tickets, contact these hosting venues and organizations. Be sure to call ahead to confirm times and dates and reserve tickets.

Georgian Court University, 900 Lakewood Road, Lakewood, 732-987-2263; www.georgian.edu.

The Long Beach Island Foundation of the Arts and Sciences, 120 Long Beach Blvd., Loveladies, 609-494-1241; www.lbifoundation.org.

Ocean County Artists' Guild, 22 Chestnut Ave., Island Heights, 732-270-3111; www.ocartistsguild.org.

Ocean County College's Arts and Community Center, 1 College Drive, Toms River, 732-255-0400; http://ocean.universitytickets.com.

The Ocean County Library System, 101 Washington St., Toms River, 732-349-6200; http://theoceancountylibrary.org.

Ocean Professional Theatre Company at the Arts and Community Center at Ocean County College, 1 College Drive, Toms River, 609-312-8306; http://www.facebook.com/pages/Ocean-Professional-Theatre-Company/160388107381962

Robert Anstett Cultural Arts Center, 521 Herbertsville Road, Brick, 732-922-2273; www.festiveflutes.com.

The Strand Center for the Arts, 400 Clifton Ave., Lakewood, 732-367-7789; www.strand.org.

Surflight Theatre, 201 Engleside Ave., Beach Haven, 609-492-9477; http://www.surflight.org.

Tuckerton Seaport, 120 W. Main St., Tuckerton, 609-296-8868; www.tuckerton-seaport.org.