



LIGHT OF DAY... Willie Nile is one of many artists who will perform at the Light of Day WinterFest 2019 to benefit ongoing battle against Parkinson's disease. Outpost in the Burbs, First Congregational Church, 40 South Fullerton, Montclair, will host the event on January 11, followed by more events at other locations.

Light of Day Concert to Benefit Parkinson's Research

MONTCLAIR - With a goal of pushing its 19-year total past \$5.5 million in its ongoing battle against Parkinson's disease, Light of Day WinterFest 2019, presented by the *Asbury Park Press*, is returning to Montclair on Friday, January 11, for Light of Day North Jersey: Songwriters Up Close and Personal, for the world-renowned Light of Day Foundation.

Light of Day North Jersey: Songwriters Up Close and Personal, starring Willie Nile, James Maddock, Danielia Cotton, Williams Honor, and Joe D'Urso, plus Jon Caspi, Christine Martucci, Laura Crisci, and Rick Winowski will be held Friday, January 11 at Outpost in the Burbs, First Congregational Church, 40 South Fullerton, Montclair. Doors open 7 p.m.; Showtime is at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$35 (\$75 VIP meet and greet) and available at www.outpostintheburbs.org.

The 10-day festival will bring over 150 music acts to 30 venues in two New Jersey cities, New York City, Philadelphia, and Rockland County, N.Y., January 11 to 21, following a holiday season European tour.

In 2018, Light of Day WinterFest raised enough money to catapult its 18 year cumulative total past the \$5-million mark. Light of Day WinterFest 2019 is expected to push the 19-year total past \$5.5 million. The festival has gained international notoriety for surprise performances by Bruce Springsteen in 11 of its 18 years, including his most recent appearance, in 2015.

Beyond Asbury Park and Montclair, Light of Day WinterFest 2019 will include shows in New York City (January 16 at The Cutting Room), Philadelphia (January 12 at World Café Live), and Rockland County, N.Y. (January 13 at Penguin Rep Theatre in Stony Point).

Willie Nile's gem-filled catalog encompasses blazing rock 'n' roll, thoughtful folk-rock, intimate acoustic balladry and even an album of Bob Dylan covers. And while it's hard to think of many recording artists who are doing some of their best work this far into their careers, Mr. Nile continues to seek out new creative challenges and conquer new musical territory. He's amassed an enthusiastic international fan base along the way that includes such admirers as Bruce Springsteen, with whom he's guested onstage on several occasions, and Pete Townshend, who personally requested him as the opening act on the Who's historic 1980 U.S. tour. The list of avowed Nile fans also includes Bono, Lou Reed, Paul Simon, Ian Hunter, Graham Parker, Jim Jarmusch, Little Steven and Lucinda Williams, who once remarked, "Willie Nile is a great artist. If there was any justice in this world, I'd be opening up for him instead of him for me." Mr. Nile is one of the few artists to have participated in Light of Day every year since the beginning.

A rock & roll lifer, James Maddock has been carving his unique path since the 1980s, when the British-born singer/songwriter kicked off his career with a raw, soulful voice; a storyteller's sense of narrative; and the ability to blur the lines between folk, classic pop, and rock. Since those early days in London, he's ridden the wave of a music industry that's ebbed, flowed, peaked, and crashed. Mr. Maddock has stayed afloat throughout the entire ride, enjoying a brush with commercial success during the late 1990s — including a major-label record deal, a Top 5 AAA radio hit, and a song placement on Dawson's Creek — before transforming himself into an independent solo artist during the decades that followed. Bruce Springsteen is a fan. So is David Letterman. Listening to Mr. Maddock's newest record, "If It Ain't Fixed, Don't Break It," it's easy to see the appeal.

Danielia Cotton closes her latest record, "The Mystery of Me," with a message of resilience. "The dark spots will appear," she sings on the title track. "Just remember, you're still

here." Ms. Cotton penned, "The Mystery of Me" — a lovely ode to self-acceptance — in just one night. The album's 10 tracks feature an eclectic mix of rock and soul, from the soaring "Set Me Free" to the deeply personal "Drink" and the upbeat "4 Ur Life," which pulls inspiration from classic Motown, as well as Sly and the Family Stone, in this we find Ms. Cotton coming to terms with her newfound happiness. The song's carpe-diem message also makes it a call to arms for the younger generation in our current political climate, she adds. "I just feel like we need that right now. It's saying something that needs to be heard, but not in a way where you're like 'goddamn.' It's not throwing it in your face, but it's also like 'this is it, the moment it changes.'" It's a strikingly optimistic message, one that Ms. Cotton's arrived at after enduring some incredibly difficult times — where she dropped into an abominable low. But "The Mystery of Me" sees the Hopewell, N.J.-born singer/songwriter rising from the ashes of that tumultuous period and finding a new healthier perspective. "This is sort of the album that's coming up to the other side," she says. "This is me standing more solidly on the ground."

Straight from Asbury Park's legendary music scene, comes Williams Honor, an unstoppable collision of likeminded influence, chemistry and a true love for country music. Singer and performer powerhouse Reagan Richards and producer/multi-instrumentalist Gordon Brown have come together to show the world their love for modern country by building on the years of tradition, harmonies and story songs the genre continues to pride itself on. After spending years separately in Nashville and never running into each other, they both were writing, recording and touring for other projects and artists. They felt the need to live up to the legend of where they came from with their own version of country by the sea.

Just returning from Light of Day Europe, Joe D'Urso and Stone Caravan, an Americana/Jersey Shore/Rock & Roll band, are a Light of Day fixture, who, like Willie Nile, have played WinterFest every year since its inception. Their brand-new 14th CD, "Jersey Diner," features 11 songs written by Mr. D'Urso and three tunes penned by Tom Waits, Bruce Springsteen and Sandy Harry Chapin.

Michele Ragusa to Guest Instruct

SCOTCH PLAINS — Actress Michele Ragusa will be teaching a song interpretation and audition prep workshop as a guest instructor at Theatrical Artist's Prep in Scotch Plains. The workshop will only have 10 students and is open to teens and adults 14 and older. It will run from Sunday, January 13, to January 20, and will take place on Sundays from noon to 3 p.m.

Ms. Ragusa is an actress with credits that span from Broadway to television. She plans to use her extensive experience to help students learn to connect with their audition songs and leave a lasting impression on casting directors. Theatrical Artist's Prep is located at 401 Park Avenue, Unit B, Scotch Plains. Students must send an electronic headshot and resume, as well as a 16-bar song choice to TheatricalArtistsPrep@gmail.com, in advance. The workshop cost is \$280 per student. For more information regarding the workshop, please contact Samantha Hahn-Simpson.

Support Local Journalism



Grant to The Theater Project Supports Young Playwrights

UNION — The Theater Project, presenting programs in Cranford, Maplewood, Union and Rahway, recently received a \$500 grant from Investors Foundation. The grant will help further Theater Project's mission of encouraging the next generation of writers by supporting its 17th annual Competition for Young Playwrights.

"We are deeply grateful for this gift," said Theater Project Artistic Director Mark Spina. "Now more than ever, young people need to be encouraged to develop critical thinking skills through arts participation, and the grant from the Investors Foundation supports them by helping us provide public recognition of their work."

Every year, The Theater Project receives short plays from students all over New Jersey. Winners receive cash prizes and see their work per-

formed by professional actors at the March awards ceremony. On the day of the ceremony, the judges and members of The Theater Project's Adult Playwrights Workshop also offer half-hour tutorials to any interested contestant. Several past winners of the Playwrights Competition have gone on to pursue degrees in theater and playwriting, and they often return to this event to present prizes and share their journeys with the newest honorees.

This year's submission deadline is January 21, 2019. The website contains all the necessary entry guidelines and formatting rules: TheTheaterProject.org.

The Theater Project is an award-winning professional company in Union, NJ, where it will offer a summer theater festival in 2019. The company also offers events in Cranford, Maplewood and Rahway.

History of Josephine, The Empress Gardened

CRANFORD — Garden Historian Lesley Parness will give a special presentation, "Josephine — The Empress Gardened" on Tuesday, January 22, at 7 p.m. at the Cranford Community Center.

The event is hosted by The Hanson Park Conservancy. Ms. Parness will discuss how French Empress Josephine's fine taste informed 18th and 19th century style, from couture fashion to interior design. Likewise, she was influenced by her Caribbean heritage, her narrow escape from the guillotine, and her legendary love for flowers.

When divorced from her husband, Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte, this powerful style-maker and lifelong fashionista focused her energies on her estate, Malmaison. There, Josephine's passion for plants grew and bloomed. Her legendary love of roses stopped a war, cost a fortune, set explorers to sail, and started a

floral industry that endures today.

Ms. Parness is the retired superintendent of horticultural education at New Jersey's Morris County Park Commission where she oversaw programming at The Frelinghuysen Arboretum, Willowood Arboretum and Bamboo Brook Outdoor Education Center. She is a member of the Herb Society of America, The Council on Horticultural and Botanical Literature, and Garden State Gardens, a consortium of New Jersey's public gardens of which she is a founding member.

The Cranford Community Center is located at 220 Walnut Avenue in Cranford. The program is free and open to the public. No registration is required, but seating is available on a first-come, first-serve basis. This presentation is sponsored by the Hanson Park Conservancy. To learn more, please visit www.hansonparkconservancy.com.

Arts and Entertainment Events at Area Libraries

Literary Café at Library this Saturday

CRANFORD -- The library will hold its Literary Café on Saturday, January 12, from 11:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Literary Café is a book chat program. The format is simple: Bring a few of your recent favorite books and tell the other members of the group what you like about them. If you don't have a copy of the book you want to talk about, that's okay, too. The books can be new or old, fiction or non-fiction, classic or contemporary. There is no required reading, and you will have the opportunity to learn about books recommended by other group members. Refreshments will be served, courtesy of the Friends of the Cranford Public Library. Registration is not required. Admission is free and all are welcome. Sessions take place in the Raddin Room at the Cranford Public Library, located at 224 Walnut Avenue.

Play Reading at Cranford Library

CRANFORD — On Saturday, January 12, from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Cranford Public Library, located at 224 Walnut Avenue, The Theatre Project will present a staged, script-in-hand reading of an original play, followed by a discussion with the playwright, director and cast. The Theater Project is an acclaimed professional theater group and the winner of two NJ Tony Awards. This program is sponsored by the Friends of the Cranford Public Library. Admission is free and all are welcome.

Tai Chi on Tap at Westfield Library

WESTFIELD — Learn all about Tai Chi, the Chinese tradition of martial arts movements that has become a gentle way to exercise and reduce stress, with Certified Tai Chi Instructor Gang Huan, Thursday, January 10, from 7 to 8 p.m., at the Westfield Memorial Library. This program will teach the ways of Tai Chi, and then show the class its various movements. The library is located at 550 East Broad Street.

Knitting Club at Garwood Library

GARWOOD — An adult knitting club will take place Thursdays and Mondays at 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. at the library. The Knitting Club is open to all levels. Whether you're a beginner or you want to share your vast knowledge of knitting, spend an hour being creative and socializing. No Registration required. Check the library calendar for any holiday closings or changes to the schedule. The Garwood Public Library is located at 411 Third Avenue. Call (908) 789-1670 for more information.

Screening of *Notting Hill* at SP Lib.

SCOTCH PLAINS — The library's Friday Film this Friday, January 11 is *Notting Hill*. It will be screened on January 11 from noon to 2 p.m. Each Friday the library will screen a film downstairs as part of its Friday Films.

Every Friday in January, the library will be showing movies starring Julia Roberts. No registration is necessary. *Notting Hill* (PG-13, 124 min.) is about an American movie star who falls for a shy Brit who owns a bookstore in the title neighborhood. Also starring Hugh Grant.

The Scotch Plains Public Library is located at 1927 Bartle Avenue, Scotch Plains.

Reception for Abstract Artist on Jan. 13

SCOTCH PLAINS — A gallery exhibit and reception will be held at the Scotch Plains Public Library on Sunday, January 13, from 2 to 3:30 p.m. It will feature the abstract artwork of Lana Liddy-LaPadura that will be on display through Tuesday, January 29 in the downstairs gallery space. The Scotch Plains Public Library is located at 1927 Bartle Avenue.

Ms. Liddy-LaPadura is the 2018 winner of the "Judges Choice Award" at the Roselle Park Juried Arts Festival. Find out more about her work at www.lanaliddylapadura.com.

Jewelry Making at the Scotch Plains Library

SCOTCH PLAINS — A Jewelry Making Club workshop will be held January 14 from 10 to 11 a.m. at the library. Registration and your own materials are required. See <https://www.scotlib.org/event> for materials needed and how to register online. The public is invited to join the fun of the Jewelry Making Club and be amazed at what can be done under the expert guidance of instructor Perthea Brown. This month's project will be a bracelet made with hemp cord and seed beads. The Scotch Plains Public Library is located at 1927 Bartle Avenue.

Guided Meditation at Mountainside Library

MOUNTAINSIDE — Sally Youngmans will return to the library for a special fall series on mindfulness on Thursday, January 17, from 7 to 8 p.m. Learning to be more mindful and incorporating techniques that Ms. Youngmans will share have proven to decrease stress and improve overall health and well being. This series is for everyone, from beginners to those with experience. The Mountainside Public Library is located at One Constitution Plaza.



FUN TIMES ON NYE... Maestro David Wroe, pictured center and Broadway singer Cooper Grodin have a bit of fun performing during the New Jersey Festival Orchestra New Year's Eve musical celebration, held at the Westfield High School auditorium Monday evening.

Alexis Morrast Is Set to 'Dazzle' at Watchung Arts

WATCHUNG — Alexis Morrast, the recipient of "The Best Up and Coming Young Artist Award" 2017 by *Hot House* magazine and 2017

winner of "Showtime at the Apollo" is all set to dazzle and dazzle the audience at The Watchung Arts Center on Saturday, January 19, at 8 p.m. The concert will be followed by a dessert reception and an opportunity to meet Alexis Morrast.

Singer/songwriter Morrast, the 17-year-old marvel and native of Newark, now residing in Plainfield, began singing at the age of three. Since that time, she's performed on several stages: the U.S. Open in 2013; the 2015 Central Jersey Jazz Festival in New Brunswick, featuring trumpet

player Sean Jones; NJPAC with Christian McBride; the world-renowned Apollo Theatre, where she emerged as two-time Amateur Night winner and later returned as their Special Guest, and Dizzy's Coca-Cola Club with jazz legend Barry Harris. Furthermore, Ms. Morrast's re-sounding tone was also heard on the Millennium Stage of The Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, and more recently abroad in Cape Town South Africa and Austria. She's worked with greats like Greg Phillinganes, Steve Jordan, Ray Chew, Lisa Fischer, Michael Feinstein and Tony Award winner Christine Ebersole to name a few.

Despite her young age, Ms. Morrast has had the opportunity to "sit in" or work with greats such as Ray Chew, Amina Figorova, Alvester Garnett and the incredible Bertha Hope. She studied under Conrad Herwig, taking part in several jazz events and venues. She feels "blessed, honored [and] humbled" to have been able to meet-and-greet countless musicians and performers including Dionne Warwick, Lalah Hathaway, Twinkie Clark, Danny Mixon and Randy Weston.

Her first artistic influences were her mom, dad, and her aunt Vernell, a recording artist in the group Koffee Brown. She counts Stevie Wonder, Cecile McLorin Salvant, Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan and Lalah Hathaway among the many artists whose instrumental genius, raw vocal talents or a combination of the two have influenced her own musical style.

Tickets for this performance are \$18 in advance, \$22 (\$20 for WAC members, \$10 for students) at the door. Purchase tickets securely through Eventbrite, or by mailing a check to the Watchung Arts Center. Please include an e-mail address and phone numbers with mail orders. During our office hours, you may also purchase tickets in person. The Watchung Arts Center, located at 18 Stirling Road in Watchung on the Watchung Circle, is a multi-disciplinary arts facility serving Watchung, the surrounding communities and the Tri-State Area. To obtain more information about upcoming performances, classes and workshops, and monthly art exhibitions, or for office hours, please visit WatchungArts.org or call (908) 753-0190.



Alexis Morrast

History of the Jersey Shore Presentation

MONTCLAIR — The Victorian Society of America will present The History of the Jersey Shore on Monday, January 21, from 7:30 p.m. at the Montclair Womens Club, 82 Union St., Montclair. Admission: \$5 non-members. Free for members.

Everyone has heard of the pirates of the Caribbean, but have you heard of the pirates of New Jersey? At one time, the coast of New Jersey was infested with pirates and privateers. This and other colorful facts about the New Jersey coastline will be the subject of historian Kevin Woyce's talk on Monday, January 21, at the monthly meeting of the Victorian Society in America's New Jersey chapter. Mr. Woyce will give a tour of our coastal history, from the days of pirates and shipwrecks to the founding of today's popular summer resorts. The presentation will include slides featuring photographs, maps and images of historic places, people and events.

The Victorian Society of America was founded to protect and preserve — as well as to promote understanding, education and enjoyment of — our 19th Century heritage. The Northern New Jersey Chapter of the VSA holds a meeting with a presentation by a guest speaker each month. Meetings are held at the Montclair Womens Club at 82 Union Street in Montclair. Admission is \$5 for non-members. Refreshments are served. For further information, visit the website victoriansannj.org.



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