

Cape May Stage celebrates the life, legacy of Dr. Ruth

By **LYNNE MARTENSTEIN**
Special to the Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — “Becoming Dr. Ruth,” now at Cape May Stage, definitely packs a punch emotionally. It also involves a lot of actual packing as the good doctor lovingly wraps and boxes treasures throughout the play that she’s collected over a lifetime. Each keepsake prompts a story.

The play takes place in New York City in 1997, two months after the death of Dr. Ruth’s husband of 36 years, Fred Westheimer.

“I am so glad you are here,” she tells the audience. “It is much better than talking to myself.”

Carolyn Mignini does an excellent job portraying the diminutive powerhouse in this one-woman show. The latter’s life is one of triumph and tragedy, which she approaches with a joy that is uplifting and infectious. Ultimately, Dr. Ruth’s story is about survival and resilience, not sex.

Karola Siegel was born to Orthodox Jewish parents in Frankfurt, Germa-

ny, in 1928. Her parents sent her to Switzerland when she was 10 to protect her from the Nazis. Sadly, she never saw them again. Both died during the war.

A teenage Siegel made her way to Palestine, where she was given the Hebrew name of Ruth and found work on a kibbutz. A year later, she moved to Jerusalem and joined the Jewish underground.

“I was short (4 feet, 7 inches) and fast, so I was used as a messenger because there was less of me to shoot at,” she explains.

Siegel’s long-term goal was to be an educator, however, which she achieved at the age of 42 when Columbia University awarded her a doctorate in education. A decade later, she parlayed what had become a thriving sex-therapy practice into a media stardom on radio and, ultimately, television. At its peak, her TV show drew 2 million viewers weekly.

Roy Steinberg, Cape May Stage’s producing artistic director, briefly worked with Dr. Ruth on her TV show. Call-in ques-

tions from viewers were a highly popular feature on the show. To ensure callers’ privacy, the show used professional actors to pose callers’ questions to the doctor. One of those actors was Steinberg. Another was his wife, Marlena Lustik.

Mignini delivers a powerful performance in “Becoming Dr. Ruth,” capturing the sex therapist’s wit and compassion. When she got the part, she enlisted a dialect coach she had worked with previously to help her capture Dr. Ruth’s German-French-Israeli-American accent.

Mignini was immediately drawn to the part when she was approached about playing the role.

“I fell in love with her,” she explained. “What a heroic, beautiful spirit she has. It’s not just the details of what she went through. I have a feeling that this journey of being a healer in the world happened to her, but she was born with that spirit and a hunger for life.”

Many people may recognize Mignini from her work on Broadway, tele-



Provided

Carolyn Mignini stars as Dr. Ruth Westheimer in ‘Becoming Dr. Ruth,’ opening June 5 at Cape May Stage.

vision and film. Among her credits are a co-starring role in the original Broadway production of “Fiddler on the Roof” with Bette Midler, and numerous appearances on hit TV shows such as “Blue Bloods,” “House of Cards,” “Mad About You” and “Murphy Brown.”

Aside from the talent,

the play gets high marks for its set design. The production team has created an imposing 11-foot-high, three-sided set of bookshelves to not only emphasize Dr. Ruth’s petiteness but to make her trip down memory lane a little more challenging when she retrieves items from higher shelves.

There also is a large picture window center stage that doubles as an oversized picture frame displaying photos of key people in Dr. Ruth’s life.

“Becoming Dr. Ruth” was written by playwright Mark St. Germain. It is Germain’s second production at Cape May Stage. The theater produced one of his earlier works, “Freud’s last Session,” in 2012.

“Dr. Ruth triumphed over adversity by celebrating life and having an indomitable sense of humor,” Steinberg said. “Cape May Stage celebrates its 35th anniversary this season with its own ‘joie de vie’ and a sense of humor. Both of us share a mission of repairing the world.”

Cape May Stage presents “Becoming Dr. Ruth” June 5-30. Performances are at 7 p.m. Wednesdays through Saturdays and 3 p.m. Sundays. Call (609) 770-8311 or visitcapemaystage.org for tickets or more information.

Because of the mature content, this play is not recommended for persons 16 years of age or younger.

Villas man arrested on drug, weapons charges

ERMA — Lower Township police and the Cape May County Prosecutor’s Office arrested a Villas man on charges of distribution of controlled dangerous substances (CDS) and firearm offenses.

According to authorities, Sergio Jimenez, 30, of Langs Avenue, was arrested May 29 following court-authorized search warrants on his person, residence and multiple motor vehicles.

As a result of the searches, about 10 ounces of cocaine, 1 pound of marijuana, 54 oxycodone pills and a .40 caliber Glock 22 handgun with a high-capacity magazine containing 15 rounds of hollow-point ammunition, about \$85,000 in currency and various calibers of ammunition and drug paraphernalia were seized, authorities said.

Jimenez was charged with one count of maintaining a facility for manu-

facturing CDS, one count of possession of cocaine, one count of possession with intent to distribute cocaine, one count of possession of OxyContin, one count of possession with intent to distribute OxyContin, one count of possession of marijuana, one count of possession with intent to distribute marijuana, one count of possession of a firearm while committing a CDS offense, one count of possession of

a high-capacity magazine, one count of possession of hollow-point ammunition, one count of certain person not to possess a weapon, one count of certain person not to possess ammunition, one count of possession with intent to distribute drug paraphernalia and one count of money laundering.

Jimenez was lodged in the Cape May County Jail pending court proceedings.

Cape Regional, Cooper merger

Continued from Page A1

ed health care delivery system serving residents throughout Cape May County.

“We are happy to have this final approval so we can finally focus on providing the highest quality of care to the residents and visitors at the shore. Together, we are positioned well to address the evolving health care needs of this region and provide a more integrated health care experience from primary care to the most complex specialty

care,” said Dr. Anthony J. Mazzarelli, co-CEO of Cooper.

“Today’s approval marks a moment of great promise, as two anchor institutions in the southern New Jersey region are now cleared to join forces to better serve communities across South Jersey,” said Kevin O’Dowd, co-CEO of Cooper. “We look forward to working with our soon-to-be new colleagues to build upon their tremendous tradition of service to the residents and visitors of Cape May County.”

The combined health system will have:

- Two hospitals with more than 900 licensed beds
- Revenue exceeding \$2.2 billion annually
- Nearly 11,000 combined team members
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- More than 550 advanced practice providers
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TIDES: June 5-12, 2024

DATE	HIGH		LOW	
	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.
5	7:43	8:05	1:35	1:24
6	8:36	8:53	2:27	2:13
7	9:26	9:39	3:16	2:59
8	10:14	10:24	4:02	3:44
9	11:02	11:10	4:50	4:30
10	11:52	11:56	5:39	5:19
11	12:42	12:42	6:28	6:12
12	12:43	1:32	7:15	7:05

MOON PHASES
New moon, June 6 • first quarter, June 14

13TH ANNUAL FATHER’S DAY CLASSIC CAR SHOW

Saturday, June 15 • 9:00 AM-1:00 PM

*Front Parking Lot on Bay Avenue

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Activities for an Abundant Life

Join us at United Methodist Communities at The Shores for insightful and fun events!

MEMORY SCREENING EVENT

Tuesday, June 18
10:00 AM-12:00 PM

In advance of The Longest Day, a nationally recognized day in the fight against dementia, we will provide free memory screenings. Results are not a diagnosis but can suggest if you should see your physician for an evaluation.

Please RSVP to Michele Musto at 609-399-8505.

Cape May Star & Wave
167 YEARS OLD • 1854-2022

CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE (ISSN 519-020)
Volume 170 Number 23

Published weekly by Sample Media, Inc.,
963 Lenape Drive, Lower Township, NJ 08204

Published Weekly (52 times a year)

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE: By mail for \$42 a year; \$75 for two years; \$22 for six months. Periodical postage at Cape May Court House, N.J. and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to the Cape May Star and Wave, P.O. Box 2427, Cape May, N.J. 08204.

2201 Bay Avenue, Ocean City, NJ 08226
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