

SSTI Summer Theatre Trifecta

Written by Erin Laytham Lentz

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Ben Wolfe, well-known pillar of the local theatre community, will produce three professional shows this summer through a unique collaboration of Broadway directors, a cast of New York performers and elite young actors.

The unforgettable series kicks off with *Catch Me If You Can, A New Musical*, June 24th-July 3rd at the

Seahawk Cultural Center. It's followed by *Almost Heaven, John Denver's America*

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July 20th-Aug 7th
at Main Street Theater and concludes with
the Tony-Award winning musical
Pippin

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July 29th-Aug 7th
at the Seahawk Cultural Center. A summer season ticket to all three shows is just \$75.

The Southeastern Summer Theatre Institute program (SSTI), now in its ninth season, hardly resembles its first summer. The idea was born when Wolfe, a young college student pursuing a theatre degree, was approached by a parent to produce a summer camp. The first production, held in an old church, set in motion the institute that exists today, which is a full-on destination boarding summer program. Each year, actors audition around the world to secure one of the coveted 25 spots in each of the productions. “The program has grown beyond my wildest dreams,” said Wolfe. “If you had asked me at 20 if my full-time job would be with SSTI, I never would have imagined it,” he added.

This year, Wolfe is thrilled to be moving the entire program exclusively to his home, Hilton Head Island. Actors and families from 26 states and 4 countries will arrive on the island this summer, many for the first time. The opportunity to bring quality, professional, musical theatre to the island while creating a calculated 400k economic impact is an impressive feat. How does one dynamic individual put such a task into motion? Wolfe credits the SSTI staff as the driving force behind the program’s continued success. This year audiences will see a production team with credentials unlike anything this island has seen, such as directors that are creative alumnus of Tony-winning Broadway productions. “We have these weekly staff conference calls and they’re literally leaving a production meeting for an upcoming Broadway musical to hop on the line and talk about their direction at SSTI! I can’t believe it,” Wolfe excitedly stated. And this talent and level of accomplishment is prevalent across the board. The set designer for *Catch Me If You Can* just finished working on the set of *The Elephant Man* on Broadway starring Bradley Cooper. The cast and the audiences will reap the benefits of these seasoned talents and the work they will bring to local theatre this summer.

Meet The SSTI Directors

Joe Barros, Director/ Choreographer, *Catch Me If You Can* After finishing three new

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